

# OPINION

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## Working to Truly Mobilize Against AIDS

Tragedy is that we have far to go

BY PHILL WILSON

As a nation and a community, we have come a long way in the 25 years of reeling under the onslaught of AIDS. The tragedy is that we still have far, far to go if we are to bring it under control.



Political leaders were equally slow to react: It was 1987 before President Reagan bothered to address the nation about the carnage his administration callously decided to ignore and 1990 before Congress bothered to create a comprehensive system to make care and treatment affordable for the poorest Americans living with AIDS.

In all sectors, we spent too many of the epidemic's early years caught off guard as HIV wormed its way into our lives. Scientists took years to identify the virus that caused the destruction -- and 15 years to develop medicine that gave people a chance to continue living.

As for black America, we are arguably still working to truly mobilize a defense against the virus. For too many years, our community -- our leaders, our institutions and ourselves -- chose to act like AIDS didn't matter to us. We did this even as we watched our brothers, sis-

ters, mothers, fathers and children get sick and die. And we did this because of our fear -- fear of the people most immediately impacted, fear of engaging yet another momentous struggle for survival, fear

likely to die from it than our white counterparts. And we are not short on such diagnoses in black America. Nearly half of the estimated one million Americans living with HIV/AIDS are black; more than half of

we take action -- as individuals and as a community -- the blackening of AIDS will grow more stark with each year.

We call on the community to embrace proven HIV prevention strategies; to save lives by accessing available treatments ourselves and demanding our governments make those treatments truly accessible to all; and to finally discard the debilitating bigotry, stigma and shame that fuels this epidemic's fire.

In many areas, we are beginning to see such steps taken. The Congressional Black Caucus and brave state legislators around the country have picked up the mantle, driving government to do something about AIDS in black neighbor-

hoods. Many of our civil rights and community leaders have come to see AIDS as a crucial part of their broader work. Our churches and faith leaders are increasingly willing and able to minister not just to their dying church members but to their living communities about sexual health and healing.

As individuals, we must all join this building movement and work to save our own lives as well. AIDS affects our people, which makes it our problem and demands that we find our own solutions. Let's not wait until it's too late. Let's make the next 25 years into a story about how we rose up and healed our communities -- and ourselves.

Phill Wilson is the executive director of the Black AIDS Institute.

**Our fear killed too many black Americans, and continues to do so today.**

of losing focus on the struggles we were already engaged in.

Our fear killed too many black Americans and continues to do so today.

African Americans diagnosed with HIV are now eight times more

the estimated 40,000 people newly diagnosed with HIV each year are black. Yet, we are 13 percent of the population.

These simple facts are unacceptable for a disease we know how to both prevent and treat. But unless

## A Lesson Learned for Supporting War

Lieberman defeat is a wake up call

BY JUDGE GREG MATHIS

It's been over three years since President George Bush ordered his "Coalition of the willing" into Iraq.



Hell bent on "democratizing" the middle-eastern country, the president ignored the warnings of the United Nations and the rest of the international community. Surprisingly, he had the support of the majority of Americans at the time. But that's only because he'd led the country to falsely believe Iraq was hiding weapons of mass destruction and was a threat to our security.

Maybe that's why many Democratic members of Congress also supported Bush's tunnel vision and voted with Republicans to send troops into Iraq. Whatever their reasons, they are now locked in a battle with anti-war voters who want to see the U.S. pull out of Iraq. Connecticut Sen. Joseph Lieberman is the first casualty.

Lieberman lost the Democratic nomination last week for the Senate seat he's held for 18 years to Ned Lamont, a multimillionaire cable TV executive in the state's primary election. Lamont, also a Democrat, campaigned on one issue: the war. New to the political game, he criticized Lieberman's support of the war, calling him President Bush's "lap dog." It is no surprise voters responded to this approach considering more than 60-percent of Americans say they oppose the war in Iraq. Connecticut Democrats turned out in larger than usual numbers for the election. The message they sent is very clear: it is time for this war to end and any politician that supports

it must go.

Since the war began, 2,592 Americans have died and more than 19,000 have been wounded. At the current count, we have spent more than \$300 billion on the war. The President has promised to "bring our troops home" but without an exit plan, this seems unlikely to happen in the near future.

With other pressing social issues -- education and healthcare among them -- many progressive Americans are growing increasingly upset with the resources that are being

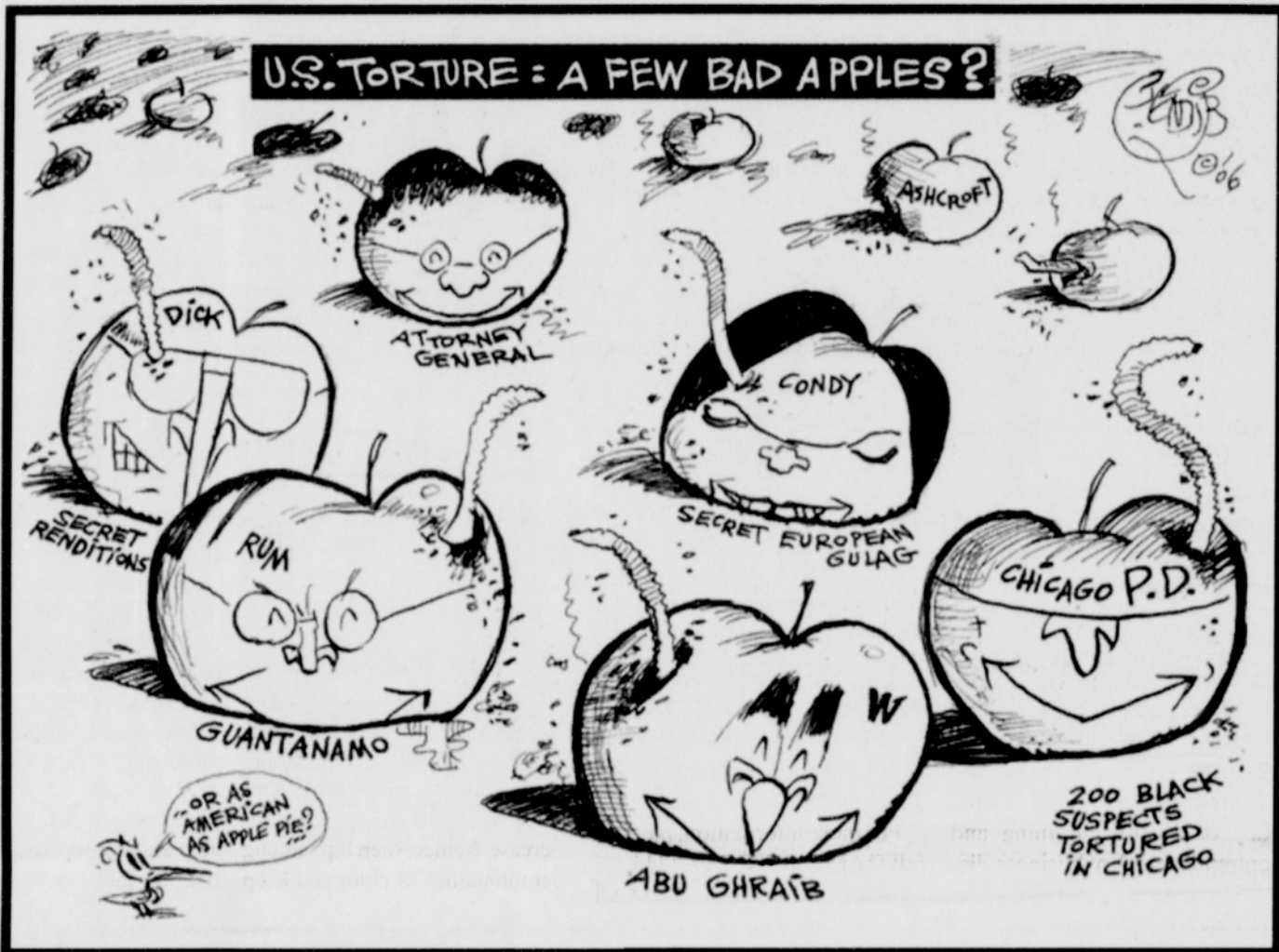
**Democrats must stand on principle and stop wavering in the wind, taking middle ground positions.**

wasted on a war that many experts say the U.S. cannot win.

The Connecticut election was a wake up call to war-supporting Democrats. To keep their current jobs and, in many cases, to climb up that political ladder, they'll have to shift their priorities. Democrats must stand on principle and stop wavering in the wind, taking middle ground positions.

For those who reportedly aspire to higher offices, like Sen. Hillary Clinton, now is the time to move away from the center and take a definite anti-war stance. Lieberman, a highly respected politician, learned his lesson the hard way. For their sakes, let's hope more of these war-supporting Democrats turn things around, before it's too late.

Judge Greg Mathis is national vice president of Rainbow PUSH and a national board member of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.



## Global Warming Harmful to All

But hurts some more

BY C.J. CORREA BERNIER

Environmental problems are becoming the center of international debate concerning the future of our planet. The range of issues is extensive, but global warming seems to be a common subject in most conversations.

The coexistence of environmentalism and economic development and the need for cooperation, fairness and equity among countries seems to be one of the major concerns.

We must keep in mind that the activities of human society on a broad scale are harmful to all, but to some more than others. In the case of global warming, we will suffer along with the planet, but for island

nations that will disappear and for indigenous communities, it is the literal destruction of their environment, history, legacy and lives.

In the United States, communities of color are also drastically affected. A recent report notes the disproportionate correlation between African Americans in the

recognize its tendency to ignore issues of race, class and gender when setting agendas for social action.

Today the mainstream environmental community is involved in serious discussions about how to frame eco-justice issues along with those dealing with environmental justice or environmental racism.

The global environmental justice movement compels us to rethink our understanding of environmental problems and the proposals to solve them.

If we look at global warming as an issue of human rights and environmental justice we will be able to see the connection. Rising temperatures are already affecting the lives of million of humans, particularly in people of color, low-income, and Indigenous communities.

The health of many has been already compromised by our economic growth.

As we talk, research and seek solutions to our climate and energy problems we must seek to ensure the right of all people to live, work, play, and pray in safe, healthy, and clean environments.

We must envision a transition to a future that protects the most vulnerable from the impacts of climate change.

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**We must seek to ensure the right of all people to live, work, play, and pray in safe, healthy, and clean environments.**

U.S. and climate change. The report argues that African Americans are less responsible for climate change, but suffer more from the health impacts.

The existence of a pattern of disproportionate environmental risk based on race was first demonstrated in the U.S. in 1987. The evidence challenged the U.S. environmental movement to

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