

OPINION

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Awash in Racially-Motivated Confrontations

Standing out among the others

"Mr. Paladino is an elected official charged with the responsibility to represent children and families in a district comprised of over 70 percent black, brown, Asian, immigrant and other minority students and families; And, Mr. Paladino took an oath to ensure that students are afforded an environment which is free from fear and respects diversity within the school district and the community and is subject to all district policies; These unambiguously racist, morally repugnant, flagrantly disrespectful, inflammatory and inexcusable



comments by Mr. Paladino have garnered both local, national, and international attention that reflects negatively on the Buffalo Board of Education, the City of Buffalo and its leadership and its citizens, the State of New York, and every decent human being in America and abroad who has been shocked and offended by his words." -- Resolution by the Buffalo School Board demanding Carl Paladino's resignation

BY MARC H. MORIAL

The national wave of racist, vicious invective unleashed by the 2016 Presidential campaign is well-documented. Hundreds of hate crimes have been reported to watchdog groups like the Southern Poverty Law Center. Social media is awash in cell-phone videos of racially-motivated confrontations invoking the name of the President-elect.

But the recent hateful tirade

of failed New York gubernatorial candidate Carl Paladino stands out among the others. Warning: his words are difficult to read.

When the Buffalo weekly newspaper Artvoice asked locals their hopes for 2017, many gave positive, community-minded answers: "A return to shopping in communities and brick-and-mortar stores," "the Bills get in the playoffs," or "more kindness." Carl Paladino hopes President "Obama catches mad cow disease after being caught having relations with a Hereford. He dies before his trial and is buried in a cow pasture next to Valerie Jarret, who died weeks prior, after being convicted of sedition and treason, when a Jihady cell mate mistook her for being a nice person and decapitated her."

What do Buffalonians want to see go away in 2017? "Hate." "Discrimination." "Preconceived

stereotypes." Carl Paladino wants to see Michelle Obama "return to being a male and let loose in the outback of Zimbabwe where she lives comfortably in a cave with Maxie, the gorilla."

In response to the horrified national outcry over his reprehensible remarks, Paladino first rebuffed inquiring journalists with an obscenity, then penned a defiant non-apology, defending his words as "deprecating humor."

Paladino is certainly no stranger to this brand of so-called "humor." During his failed 2010 gubernatorial run, a local news site exposed racist and pornographic emails Paladino had shared with associates. While he lost the election in a landslide, garnering only a third of the vote, he managed to be elected to the Buffalo School Board in 2013.

The Buffalo School Board is to be commended for its swift re-

jection of Paladino's hateful statements, and its recognition that a man who holds such views cannot be entrusted with the education of children. If Paladino does not heed the demands of the Board and resign, we expect NYS Education Commissioner MaryEllen Elia to pursue his removal.

The president and chief executive of our Urban League affiliate in Buffalo, Brenda W. McDuffie, has been outspoken on this issue, and we urge the entire Urban League community to unite in opposition to Paladino's hatefulness by signing the petition urging his removal.

In fairness, when ArtVoice asked Investigative Post editor Jim Heaney what he's like to see go away in 2017, Heaney responded, "Carl Paladino." We couldn't agree more.

Marc H. Morial is president and chief executive officer of the National Urban League.

Precisely the Wrong Man to Lead Justice Department

Opposing the Sessions nomination

BY CORNELL WILLIAMS BROOKS

America yet stands at the beginning of presidential administration but also in the middle of a Twitter age civil rights movement based on old divisions. Sen. Jefferson Beauregard Sessions is among the worst possible nominees to serve as Attorney General amidst some of the worst times for civil rights in recent memory.

Following a divisive presidential campaign, hate crimes rising, police videos sickening the stomach while quickening the conscience, protesters marching in the streets and politicians mouthing the myth of voter fraud while denying the reality of voter suppression, Sen. Sessions is precisely the wrong man to lead the Justice Department. The NAACP, as the nation's oldest and largest civil rights organization, opposes the nomination of Sen. Sessions to become U.S. Attorney General for the following reasons: a record on voting rights that is unreliable at best and hostile at worst; a failing record on other civil rights; a record of racially offensive remarks and behavior; and dismal record on criminal justice reform issues.

Sen. Sessions supported the re-authorization of the 1965 Voting

Rights Act in 2006, but called the bill "a piece of intrusive legislation" just months earlier. Sessions has consistently voted in favor of strict voter ID laws that place extra burdens on the poor and residents of color, and drive voter suppression



seeking to dismantle them. When Shelby County v. Holder gutted the protections of the VRA, Sen. Sessions cheered. For decades, he has pursued the rare and mystical unicorn of voter fraud, while turning a blind eye to the ever-growing issue of voter suppression.

While Sen. Sessions' historical record on civil rights remains one of dismay, it is his unrepentant stance against the vote that remains our issue. The threat of

Civil Rights Movement, then-Attorney General Nicholas Katzenbach's commitment to democracy allowed him to help write the Voting Rights Act. Today, our nation stands on the verge of selecting an AG who has never shown the slightest commitment to enforcing the protections Katzenbach and others wrote into law.

How can our communities who have born the both historical and current brunt of the attacks on the

legislation four times from 2000 to 2009.

Notwithstanding, he has also repeatedly voted against the Violence Against Women Act that expanded protection for victims of domestic violence and repeatedly stood on the wrong side of immigration and LGBT issues.

During his failed 1986 federal judgeship hearing, four DOJ attorneys and colleagues of Sen. Sessions testified that he made several racist statements. J. Gerald Hebert testified that Sessions had referred to the NAACP and the American Civil Liberties Union as "un-American" and "Communist inspired" because they "forced civil rights down the throats of people."

Additional accusations of racist behavior were attributed to Sen. Sessions by Thomas Figures, an African American Assistant U.S. Attorney, who testified that Sessions said he thought the Ku Klux Klan was "OK until I found out they smoked pot." Sessions later said that the comment was not serious, but did apologize for it. Mr. Figures also testified that on one occasion, Sen. Sessions railed against civil rights cases, threw a file on the table and called him the derogatory racist term "boy," and later advised him to watch what he said to white people.

In a time of expanding protests against the scourge of police

Rather than enforcing voting rights protections, Sen. Sessions has instead made a career of seeking to dismantle them. When Shelby County v. Holder gutted the protections of the VRA, Sen. Sessions cheered. For decades, he has pursued the rare and mystical unicorn of voter fraud, while turning a blind eye to the ever-growing issue of voter suppression.

across the country. When the Supreme Court struck down federal protections in 2012 that prevented thousands of discriminatory state laws from taking effect since 1965, Sessions declared it was "a good thing for the South." As a prosecutor in 1985, Sessions maliciously prosecuted a former aide to Martin Luther King for helping senior citizens file absentee ballots in Alabama.

Rather than enforcing voting rights protections, Sen. Sessions has instead made a career of

voter suppression is not a historical but current challenge. At least 10 times in the past 10 months, the NAACP defended voting rights against coordinated campaigns by legislators targeting African-American voters in Texas, North Carolina, Wisconsin, and many other states.

While the NAACP could gain the assistance of the Justice Department in fighting back against voter suppression, a Sessions-led DOJ would likely lead to the exact opposite. During the height of the

right to vote, sit idly by while an enemy to the vote is now given the responsibility of enforcing this right? The simple answer is that we can't.

Since 1997, Sen. Sessions has received an F every year on the NAACP's federal legislative civil rights report cards. He's voted against our policy positions nearly 90 percent of the time. Sen. Sessions has repeatedly supported lawsuits and attempts to overturn desegregation while shamelessly voting against federal Hate Crime

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