

Maxine Waters Case: A Political Train Wreck

The headlines proclaim that Rep. Maxine Waters, the outspoken Democrat from California, has been cleared of charges that she violated House ethics by advocating on behalf of a Black bank in which her husband held a substantial investment. The real story, however, is that Waters case serves as Exhibit A for how a Black elected official who has done nothing wrong can have her name smeared for several years largely because of partisan politics.

OneUnited, a member of the National Bankers Association, was in danger of closing its doors and was seeking \$50 million in federal bailout money to stay afloat. Waters' husband, Sidney Williams, a former board member of OneUnited, owned bank stock valued at \$350,000 that he would have lost if the bank had tanked.

House conflict-of-interest rules prohibit members of Congress from using their official position on behalf of an entity in which they have a personal interest. In Waters' case, as a senior member



THE CURRY REPORT

George E. Curry

of the House Financial Services Committee and a strong advocate for Black banks, it was not uncommon for her to arrange meetings between federal officials and the National Bankers Association.

Waters made no secret of her husband's involvement in OneUnited. She made it part of her public financial disclosure reports. In addition, according to the Ethics Committee finding, "it appears that Representative Waters recognized and made efforts to avoid a conflict of interest with respect to OneUnited. She informed the then-Chairman of the House Financial Services Committee that she was 'not going to be involved in' OneUnited's

request for assistance from the Treasury Department, and then relayed this decision to her COS [Chief of Staff]."

House Republicans were aware of the pertinent facts but decided to pursue the case against Waters anyway. The final report noted that there was "an extended, and at time contentious investigation of the allegations."

The committee hired William "Billy" Martin, a respected African-American attorney, to

ly insensitive and completely inappropriate."

Although Martin did not name the specific party in question, it is easy to deduce that staffers were communicating with Republicans, who hold a majority on the committee, and not Democrats. In addition, Republican committee members were also communicating with House leadership about the investigation, which was supposed to be non-partisan.

The investigation became so

that exonerated Waters.

It did not reach the same conclusion about Mikael Moore, a congresswoman's chief of staff and grandson.

Congress prohibits its members from hiring of close relatives, a definition that does not include grandchildren. Because of the Waters case, however, the committee members think that time has come to broaden the definition of close relatives to include grandchildren.

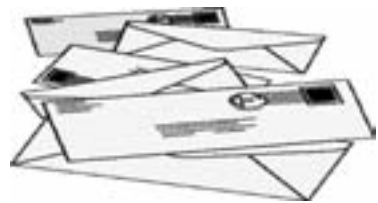
Waters contended all along – and the evidence was there to support her assertion – that she had done nothing improper. But House Republicans were intent on dragging her name through the mud. This is one of the few times that they have been fully exposed. How many other Black lawmakers have been subjected to the same treatment, but that information never became public?

George E. Curry is editor-in-chief of the National Newspaper Publishers Association News Service (NNPA).

How a Black elected official who has done nothing wrong can have her name smeared for several years largely because of partisan politics

serve as outside counsel. His investigation found that some staff members communicated only with members of one party without communicating with the rest of the committee and that one staffer had made comments that were "racial-

tainted that, in what they described as a move to assure that Waters was being treated fairly, the entire 10-member panel and staff investigating Waters were replaced. And it was this new committee, working with Martin,



Ethos at IFCC

Dear Editor:

Thank you for publishing the article, "ETHOS at IFCC Open House: Time to Get Re-Involved." Your coverage highlighted Ethos' continuing dedication to offer responsive community programming at the historic Interstate Firehouse Cultural Center (IFCC).

IFCC has long been a valuable arts center in our neighborhood. As you know, IFCC was founded in 1982 by Portland's first African-American elected official, Charles Jordan. The building is owned by Portland Parks & Recreation and was previously managed by an autonomous nonprofit, IFCC, Inc. Despite receiving an annual subsidy from the City of Portland, IFCC, Inc. unfortunately

ceased operations in May of 2010.

In August 2010, Portland's City Council unanimously voted for Ethos to operate IFCC. Since that time, Ethos has partnered with numerous artists and community groups including: Hand to Mouth Theater, ASPIRE Project, Regional Arts and Culture Council, Passin Art, BroadArts, and Thera Memory, to only name a very small handful. There has long been a process in place for community involvement and former staff even hosted community panels to gather feedback on programming. Under the leadership of Ethos' founder, Charles Lewis, the IFCC has accomplished a great deal in the last two years without any financial contribution whatsoever from the City of Portland. These accomplishments were despite a difficult economy that resulted in the closure of many nonprofits. These successes can be directly con-

tributed to Charles Lewis and the Ethos staff who worked at IFCC during that time.

As you mentioned in the article, I assumed the title of Executive Director in January of 2012. Due to staff turnover, the IFCC Program Manager position was vacant and wasn't filled until March of 2012. Unfortunately, we did not have a dedicated staff person to focus on programming IFCC until early spring of 2012. However, we are excited to announce a number of new part-

nerships and hope to reach out to the community to continue the rich legacy of the Interstate Firehouse Cultural Center.

We always welcome drop-in visitors at the Interstate Firehouse Cultural Center to share feedback and to learn about upcoming classes and performances. Thank you

again for running the article and helping us reach even more people with our hopes for the future of IFCC.

*Sincerely,
Jedidiah Chavez
Executive Director*

Re: 'Don't Play Politics'

Dear Editor:

In your Sept. 26 article, you stated that "Not one single firing has been upheld."

That is wrong. Back in 1987, I was fired for some off duty conduct. I did not hurt anyone, nor did I rape babies. But I was fired and the union took my case to arbitration. Everyone in the room for four (4) days thought we, the union, had won, including the Chief and Deputy Chief. But we lost. And what that cost me was a pension for eighteen (18) years of service, twenty year vesting at that time, eighteen (18) years of not paying social security, private pension plan. My reputation for life and not being able to ever work in law enforcement again and I was forty-five (45) years old. Now try getting a job at 45 with that anchor on your back. So, the Union has not won them all. But close, I am their only loss. I was also a

single parent with two children living at home and a mother in a nursing home. Talk about stress.

The arbitration system is state law and Adams is wasting the cities cash trying to win this one. He needs to go to the legislature and get the system fixed. Something he can do in his spare time next year. But I bet he does not address the problem after he leaves office.

I have no opinion on the Frashour case, it was a tragedy, but I don't know the guy, so unk if he has any common sense or not....Some cops do and some don't. With a thousand officers, you are bound to get a few different personalities and thoughts....

Anyway, the union has not won them all.

Bob Clary

Letters to the Editor

MY FATHER'S HOUSE MINISTRIES

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