



THE TRUTH IN BLACK AND WHITE

# The Aberdeen Advocate

I get my national news on the Fox News Channel. I cheerfully admit to being a dyed-in-the-wool conservative and I do not shy away from putting a big red letter “R” in the political affiliation field of any questionnaire. I’m a Republican. That means I seek to uphold the rights of unborn babies. That means I think people ought to be able to run their own lives and not have government taking from the rich and giving to the lazy. (I call that socialism, and as a child of the Cold War, I find that the most frightening sort of governmental exercise.) I think that my private property rights are sacred, and I don’t like the idea of anybody abridging my right to have as many guns as I want. I don’t think men should marry other men and I rather like the idea that, in this nation, “In God we trust.”

One of Fox News’ brightest stars is Bill O’Reilly, whose book “*Culture Warrior*” I’ve just finished reading. In it, O’Reilly talks about the steady

onslaught of “relativism” which is taking over our nation. People today, he says, are being continually bombarded with “messages” from the political left making traditional values look foolish and arcane. The secular-progressive movement would have us believe the concepts of “right” and “wrong” aren’t nearly as simple as our parents told us. In the ‘touchy-feely’ world of the left, it’s perfectly alright for Suzie to have two moms. They encourage the use of condoms by teenagers instead of teaching abstinence.

These folks prefer “Happy Holidays” to “Merry Christmas.” They love to tell us that the Constitution of the United States calls for strict separation between church and state – which, by the way, is an outright lie. The Constitution does tell us that the government cannot establish any single religion as the “accepted” way of worship, but it in no way prohibits us from clinging to Judeo-Christian ethics and principles upon which this

nation was founded. Actually, it encourages adherence to such principles. The folks O’Reilly calls “secular progressives” are busy trying to brainwash those of us who do see a difference between right and wrong into embracing tolerance and diversity. Phooey!

In case you didn’t already know, secular progressiveism is alive, well and living right here in Aberdeen, Mississippi. I’ve begun to think the brainwash is working.

As I type this, it is Sunday morning, November 4, 2007. The general election is just two days away. In the past week, I’ve had something like 25 individual mailings from political candidates who displayed neither a “D” nor an “R” beside their names. There were no pictures of donkeys or elephants to identify their positions on issues – only the word “conservative.” I recognize this tactic as one of survival. Alas, my Republic

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## Lies, damned lies and statistics

By Contributing Editor Don Rowe

According to Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, lying is “typically used to refer to deceptions in oral or written communication,” and last week’s *Aberdeen Advocate* article concerning the lack of veracity on the part of Aberdeen school superintendent Lavon Fluker-Reed highlighted two specific instances in which she tried, unsuccessfully, to mislead the public.

Unfortunately (but fortunately for the sake of this story),

Reed’s propensity for playing fast and loose with the truth has not been limited to just two isolated incidents during her dozen-plus years at the helm of the local school system.

In fact, it didn’t take long for Reed to show her true colors, and the incident in question kick-started my intense opposition to her reign here in Aberdeen. Several years after assuming her present position

following the resignation of long-time superintendent John Curlee, Reed squandered the backing of what had been up until that time a generally supportive white community after an incident at Aberdeen High School where one of Reed’s teachers arranged for a guest speaker during Black History Month.

If memory serves me correctly, this so-called “speaker,” supposedly some

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# Word games 101

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lican friends are seeking to get themselves elected in spite of the dismal performance of our Republican Senator Trent Lott and our even more disappointing Republican President George W. Bush. They are distancing themselves from the R-party and while I can't blame them for their somewhat Machiavellian approach, the error of omission sticks in my craw just a bit. No less troubling is the fact that we have two Sheriff's candidates, one of whom actually admits to being Republican and the other, who runs under the Democrat flag, is as far as I can ascertain a closet conservative. Call me overly traditional if you will, but I dislike spin and it disappoints me to see it in the local political process. In an effort to make myself feel better about this deception, I've invented a new political party and have assigned these candidates accordingly. Henceforth they shall be known as Republicrats. (Or, Republicrats, whichever you prefer.)

Of course, word games are always running rampant at City Hall. Last week, the discovery of activities I have been cautioned to call "creative banking" down at the local Electric Department has been the buzz of the berg.

When the city auditor Dale Pierce discovered the evidence of wrong-doing and subsequently presented it to the board of aldermen at their October 16<sup>th</sup> meeting, the fur began to fly. Strangely, the matter seems to have a racial component. The three black aldermen determined that the poor (also black) woman who got caught with her fingers in the cash drawer was simply misunderstood. (Misunderstood? If this was a misunderstanding, why did her family borrow the money to pay it back?) When the majority of the board voted to allow the woman to keep her job, the two white aldermen were sufficiently outraged to seek the help of the State Auditor's office. Furious citizens have also been ringing Phil Bryant's chimes.

I predict that charges will be brought and a full-fledged investigative audit will follow in short order. (As a sad aside, I have always believed the name you choose for your child will manifest itself in life. My younger brother Spike lives up to his name every day. Sadly, our

employee Antwinette seems to be following in the footsteps of her namesake Marie Antoinette. In this little revolution, I fear many heads will roll.)

Our "vice mayor" appeared on television earlier this week. (What an unfortunate title! Does it mean he is in charge of graft and corruption too?) He attempted to sweep the dirty little secrets under the rug at City Hall by creatively re-naming the illegal activities. I missed his performance on WCBI, but I can assure him as I assure you, there is no "misunderstanding" here. I'm told that Cloyd Garth announced that when the State Auditor's office "forces" the City Auditor to turn over the evidence, (as if he were being compelled at gunpoint to extract a perfectly healthy bicuspid with a pipe wrench) it would become clear that this entire event has been maliciously overblown. Yeah, right.

Listen up, neighbors! Dale Pierce is a consummate professional. He would never have presented ambiguous evidence to the board. His reputation and his status in the community depend upon his credibility. It goes without saying if he presented inconclusive evidence to the board, he could find himself in the path of an oncoming train in the nature of a big, ugly slander suit. He is duty-bound to bring the evidence to the board and he has done so. What the board does with the evidence is not within Pierce's job description. The good news is, by dropping a dime on the three other aldermen, Buffington and Odom have tightened the noose. Justice will be served thanks to these two men.

On my website there is much discussion about forgiveness and human frailty. I understand that people make mistakes. I've certainly made mine! As Mark Twain said, "Good judgment comes from experience. Experience is the product of bad judgment." I believe if she is forced to face the consequences of her errors, Miss Spratt may learn a valuable lesson which will keep her on the straight and narrow for the rest of her life.

In my experience, however, being "let off the hook" has a way of perpetuating behavior. (When I gave birth to my

sons back in the 1970s, pain medication during childbirth was frowned upon. Imagine my surprise when our daughter Brittany breezed through the birth of her first baby a few years ago! Thanks to powerful pain medication, the business of birthing has been made into a most pleasant experience—a picnic in the park. Perhaps these innovations explain our population explosion?)

That three of our elected officials have demonstrated their willingness to mislead the public by sugar-coating and otherwise attempting to disguise criminal activity makes me sick to my stomach. These deeds impact directly upon taxpayers and Public Utility customers. It is not just unacceptable. To my mind, this "endorsement" of Spratt's activities makes the three aldermen accomplices to the original misdeed. There is no way to dodge the bullet here, men. You have waffled your way into a nasty situation.

Words are very powerful things, but saying something does not make it so. Abraham Lincoln once posed the following puzzle. "How many legs does a dog have if you call his tail a leg? Answer: Four. Calling a tail a leg doesn't make it a leg." And theft is theft even when you choose to call it tapioca pudding.

### Your Municipal Employees

**Cecil Belle, Mayor**

**369-4165**

**Ward 1 Alderman Alonzo Sykes**

**369-7705**

**Ward 2 Alderman Cloyd Garth**

**369-5734**

**Ward 5's OTHER Alderman Willie Cook**

**369-9156**

**Ward 4 Alderman Brunson Odom**

**369-2246**

**Ward 5 Alderman Jim Buffington**

**369-4985**



**Becka's Burger Shack**

**North Hwy. 45**

**369-4275**

**Monday thru Wednesday 5 am — 2 pm**

**Thursday and Friday 5 am — 9 pm**

# Lies, damned lies and statistics

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long-forgotten NAACP official from Jackson, riled the white students and teachers with a program in which he brazenly tried to reinvent history with outright lies, slurs and other statements detrimental to the white race. Now, I'll be the first to admit that, thanks to slavery and segregation, we (meaning the white race) carry enough baggage in our sordid past to last for several centuries, so we didn't need some idiot come up here to spread his own personal, but highly fabricated, version of history.

What followed is not entirely clear, but I was told at the time that this speech prompted some students and teachers to vacate the assembly in protest which, in turn, spread to Shivers Junior High several days later where it was reported that a student or students responded to the AHS incident by writing "KKK" on a locker or lockers.

The end result of all this nonsense was an assembly at the Shivers Junior High cafeteria in which Reed's feeble explanation of the AHS speech was, at best, disingenuous. Instead of admitting the speaker's obvious bias and the fact that any number of speakers could have given a Black History Month program which would not have insulted a sizeable portion of the audience, Reed downplayed the incident and claimed in a lengthy discourse that her take on the speech was not exactly the same as that of the white teachers and students.

Then she made her second mistake of the evening when she asked if two of the high school teachers in the audience wished to comment on the incident. One of the teachers declined to speak, but the other one did take the opportunity to, in effect, debunk Reed's feeble interpretation of what had happened the previous week at the high school.

Reed's pandering to the teacher in question and subsequent handling of this situation (imagine the fallout had a white teacher invited a white supremacist to speak, which could easily have escalated along racial lines), knocked me off her bandwagon and it kick-started my long-standing vocal criticism of her reign as Aberdeen's school superintendent.

Unfortunately, this wasn't the last time Reed tried to pull the wool over the public's eyes, for it wasn't too much later she chose a different venue in another failed attempt to both make herself look good and deliberately mislead the public. This time, for whatever reason, Reed made an appearance before the mayor and board of aldermen. What the main topic of conversation was intended to be has long since been forgotten, but what is remembered is that at some point during her presentation, Reed looked the mayor and board straight in the eye and, in her best Hillary Clinton imitation, unequivocally announced to those assembled in the board room the "fact" that Aberdeen's recently released test scores had been "above the state average."

As reported in the *Aberdeen Examiner* at the time, Reed's blatant lie was immediately challenged by one of the aldermen (Kelly Tucker) who had just read a *Northeast Mississippi Daily Journal* article which stated Aberdeen's test scores were, more times than not, clearly below the state average. Reed's off-the-cuff reply was something to the effect that the source for her information came from the State Department of Education, so Kelly's source was in error (which proved to be another falsehood).

Two other incidents in which Reed failed to tell the truth involved former school board member Mike Manning, who abruptly resigned his position several years ago. Manning, who was a frequent critic of Reed and her administration, was employed by an insurance company owned by National Bank of Commerce (now Cadence), and Reed raised the question as to whether his employment constituted an ethics violation.

A complaint somehow made its way to the Mississippi Ethics Commission, which issued a ruling on April 9, 2001 which stated: "After careful consideration of the facts presented, the members of this Commission, in accordance with Section 25-4-21 (e)(ii), 1972 Mississippi Code 1972 Annotated, voted unanimously to dismiss the complaint."

Incredibly enough, Reed continued to press Manning to resign from the school board and, despite having a copy of the Ethics Commission ruling in her possession, took every opportunity to announce to the local press that Manning's presence on the board was a clear "ethics violation."

In yet another moment of untruthfulness, a

year prior to the so-called ethics incident, Manning inquired as to the cost of the newly installed ROTC program at the high school at a school board meeting and was assured by Reed there would be no cost to the district. Several months later at a July board meeting in which Manning voted not to raise the school tax, it was revealed that the start-up cost for implementing the ROTC program was reportedly in the \$40,000 range.

Reed is also fond of sending letters home and to the paper in which she decries the "negative" publicity surrounding her administration and, instead of addressing the problems which led to the criticism, extols her so-called successes – many of which she had absolutely nothing to do with. (Dutifully, the Examiner publishes this list of "accomplishments" unchallenged, just as it did when Reed announced that Teresa Price was doing a fine job when in reality Reed had recommended her re-hiring contingent upon her completion of a year-and-a-half plan of improvement.)

Reed has also, on more than one occasion, sent letters home addressing a specific occurrence which contained a list of responses to the incident in question. One of these letters centered around a bomb threat at the high school in March of 2001 and, in her letter to the school district's parents, it appeared (on the surface) that she had taken a sane and sensible approach to the threat and had instituted a number of security precautions in order to protect the children of the school district. But in reality, of the 12 precautionary measures supposedly put in place in direct response to the bomb threat, only three were newly implemented (the rest had already been in place for no less than one year).

Aside from her habit of telling "lies and damned lies," Reed has also mastered the art of using "statistics" or the "persuasive power of numbers" (lies, damned lies and statistics quote commonly attributed to British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli) to bolster her administration. For proof, notice how she accentuates the positive test score results and ignores the negative aspects on her annual *Aberdeen School District Report Card* which can be found on the Internet.

The best part of this sad scenario is that as far as telling "the truth and nothing but the truth, so help me God," Reed is leaving a legacy which, hopefully won't be topped any time soon.



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The Aberdeen Advocate is committed to the goal of improving the quality of life in Aberdeen and Monroe County by identifying and exposing waste and mismanagement in Government. To these ends we humbly offer our observations and opinions.

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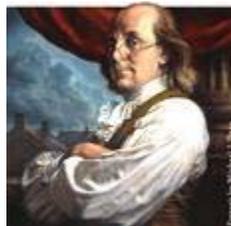
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*"He that is good at making excuses is seldom good for anything else."*

*...Benjamin Franklin*



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