

**IN MY OPINION****Caroline Porter**

# Concerned citizens: start your engines

Isn't it wonderful that our president could use our hard-earned tax money to fly Air Force One over the NASCAR race on Sunday, just to have the testosterone-laden joy of saying "Gentlemen, start your engines!" As the church lady on Saturday Night Live would say, "Well, isn't that special."

Basically, the spectators are there because they don't want to miss a good pile-up, fires, mangled racing cars and maybe even a few bodies strewn around the track. I'm sorry, but it's kind of the gladiator syndrome. We humans just love blood and gore.

And I thought football was stupid.

During this primary season I've tried not to dwell on the sheer fright more Americans are feeling every day about President Bush and his administration. As a Democrat in the middle of our presidential primary contest, it's hard to do. In fact, my husband and I have followed our candidates and their activities very carefully. I have to say I'm proud of the whole bunch. People often ask me if I think Bush can win again. My answer is, "No, because he never won in the first place."

Then they ask who I think can beat him. My answer, "Any one of the nine candidates, including Al. Sharpton." In my book, Al Sharpton, despite his sharp rhetoric of the past, is the best speaker and makes the most sense of any of the candidates. If any good Democrat would bother to listen to him for any length of time, which I did for two hours one Sunday afternoon, he or she would know what I mean.

First, he represents the true ideals of the Democratic party, which he reminds us have been lost in our efforts to include independents and "lite" Republicans in our sphere of influence. We can water down

the product so much it has no strength at all and Sharpton says we have not only accomplished this but also disenfranchised our own party members in the process. The Democratic party is supposed to speak for the weakest among us, working for civil rights, equal opportunity, health care for everyone. There should be no one in this country who is homeless or hungry or without health care, yet our condition and record are deplorable.

Now we have an administration that is not only siphoning huge amounts of money from domestic problems, but also scaring us to death with such actions as enabling search and seizure of us, our records, and property without any legal basis. I've just learned that Attorney General John Ashcroft's Justice Department has subpoenaed the private medical records of women across the country who have had abortion care. Reportedly the Justice Department actually argued in court that the law shouldn't honor the confidentiality of the doctor-patient relationship. I've said for years in this column and verbally that if we ever lose our freedom and democracy in this country it will be the result of right-wingers who talk freedom out of one side of their mouths while quashing the freedoms of those with whom they don't agree. Don't ever forget that Adolph Hitler was elected and think of how comfortable John Ashcroft would have been in Nazi Germany.

Now if I suddenly disappear you will know that I could possibly be viewed as an enemy of the government and spirited away to jail without any contact with my family or an attorney and with no charges pressed. This is exactly the condition under which some American citizens are being held. And we



America. Concerned citizens, start your engines.

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are trying to establish Democracy in Iraq and the Middle East? Maybe we should try to save it here in America. If the number of voting citizens gets any lower, if people feel hopeless and helpless about their inadequate wages and loss of jobs, if we are not provided health care that is affordable and accessible, we are going to begin to resemble post-War Germany after WW one. And you know what happened then.

Maybe that's just what the right-wingers want. And worse yet, their demagoguery will be couched in religion and patriotism. Look up the word. A demagogue is "a leader who makes use of popular prejudices and false claims in order to gain power."

Welcome to the Bush administration in