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THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

WSJ.com

JOHN FUND ON THE TRAIL | JULY 7, 2010

A Very Obama Scandal

The Black Panthers voter intimidation scandal plagues the Justice Department.

By JOHN FUND

J. Christian Adams, a former career Justice Department official who resigned over the Obama administration's failure to pursue a voter intimidation case against the New Black Panther Party, will finally get a chance to tell his story in public today when he testifies before the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights.

Mr. Adams will make some explosive charges. He says the administration used a racial double standard in deciding last year to drop the prosecution of the New Black Panther Party after members were videotaped in front of a Philadelphia polling place on Election Day 2008 dressed in military-style uniforms, brandishing a billy club and using racial slurs against voters. Mr. Adams says the career prosecutors who pursued the case did their job but were stymied by Obama political appointees, for whom he has harsh words: "To abandon law-abiding citizens and abet wrongdoers constitutes corruption," he told Fox News last week.

President Obama's Justice Department continues to stonewall inquiries about why it dropped the voter intimidation case, which Bartle Bull, a former civil rights lawyer and former publisher of the left-wing Village Voice, calls "the most blatant form of voter intimidation I've ever seen." Mr. Bull and others witnessed one Black Panther pointing his billy club at voters and making racial threats. Mr. Bull says he heard one yell: "You are about to be ruled by the black man, cracker!"

Nonetheless, the Justice Department moved to dismiss most of the charges a month after winning a default judgment against the Black Panthers when the party failed to appear in federal court. The move came after Justice secured an agreement from one Black Panther member not to carry a "deadly weapon" near a polling place until 2012. In a written statement, the Justice Department now says it acted in good faith, adding: "It is regrettable when a former department attorney distorts the facts and makes baseless allegations to promote his or her agenda."

But the Washington Times has reported that six career lawyers at Justice, including Christopher Coates, former chief of the Justice Department's voting section, also favored pursuing the case. One of the career attorneys, Appellate Chief Diana Flynn, had urged in an internal memo that a judgment be pressed against the defendants to "prevent the paramilitary style intimidation of voters" in the future.

All of the career attorneys were overruled by Associate Attorney General Thomas Perrelli, an Obama appointee.

Rep. Frank Wolf, a Virginia Republican, says his efforts to require Justice to make the career attorneys available for questions have been rebuffed. Mr. Adams is able to testify today only because he voluntarily resigned his career position. It will be interesting to see if his public testimony finally stirs the broadcast networks to cover this outrage.

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