

# The art of the not-so-subtle threat

Speaking of rhetoric that encourages political violence, the new head of the NAACP a couple of weeks ago uttered a few words of the sort that generates riots in Los Angeles.

Myrlie Evers-Williams, just elected to the national chair of the organization, unleashed a rhetorical



**Samuel Francis**

firestorm of the very kind of loose-lipped and none-too-subtle threats that President Clinton has busied himself denouncing ever since the Oklahoma City bombing. But don't bet your ammo supply the president will have much to say when the language comes from his political allies.

Addressing a Washington audience earlier this month, Mrs. Evers-Williams intoned that the atrocity in Oklahoma City ought to remind the country of what happens when people are left out of what she called "participatory democracy." What exactly she meant by that isn't clear, since she would be unique in suggesting that the bombers in Oklahoma, still largely unknown, were driven by sensitivities wounded by their exclusion from politics.

But she also rather plainly intimated that the Republicans encouraged the bombing by their cuts in social spending, and if that's what she meant, her speech is little different from the rest of the drumbeat against the right sounded by Mr. Clinton and much of the establishment press.

She then unbosomed a few other reflections that seemed to strike out

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in a new direction entirely. "Imagine the monstrous consequences if Newt [Gingrich] succeeds in making starvation public policy in a society where the poor are heavily armed," she said. Just what she was implying here isn't hard to imagine at all.

It's true Mrs. Evers-Williams loaded up her speech with cautions against violence, but the main brunt of her message was that if the NAACP's pet programs run into danger, the response from the "victims," "particularly African-Americans," would be less than pacific. "For this group, there is a fear that playing by the rules will not produce any impact and will not produce solutions to the day-to-day injustices that blight their lives."

It may shock Mrs. Evers-Williams and her fans to learn that "playing by the rules" is pretty much what has been going on in the United States. We have certain rules of political participation under which some people win and some lose. Last year, her side lost, which means the other side largely settles political issues concerning social spending and such.

But in the extremist universe the NAACP inhabits, "playing by the

rules" simply means that its side always wins, and if it doesn't win, then the rules have been broken and the natural, if not the proper, response is violence. "Force," she proclaimed, "is sometimes justified in the self-defense of justice. But I ask, again, what kind of force?"

What kind indeed? Every time Mrs. Evers-Williams mentioned

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force, violence or what she plainly characterized as the Republicans' provocations of blacks, she quickly qualified it by equivocal condemnations.

Mrs. Evers-Williams, of course, is not the first to use such subtle threats of violence to get her way. Leaders of the civil rights movement in the 1960s, including Martin Luther King, often spoke of the

violence that would naturally ensue if their demands weren't welcomed. When cities erupted in flames, they could then play coy, claiming they never advocated violence and what happened was just the result of "injustices" — which is to say, of not doing what they ordered.

More recently, similar language has helped incite racially inspired murders of whites by blacks — as in South Carolina in December, 1992, when a white woman named Melissa McLaughlin was kidnapped, gang-raped, tortured and murdered by a black gang in retaliation for "400 years of oppression." Or as in Wisconsin in 1989, when 14-year-old Gregory Riddick was left in a nearly fatal coma after an attack by a black gang that had just imbibed the brutal and mendacious film "Mississippi Burning" about the civil rights era. Or as with Jamaican immigrant Colin Ferguson, who shot six whites dead on a Long Island commuter train because of his obsessive racial hatred.

Or as in a number of other cases in which music, film or racially-driven political poison has whipped up black racial fury against whites. No doubt Mrs. Evers-Williams would greet these assaults with her demure deploring of violence, even as she moaned more jeremiads prophesying it and even as Mr. Clinton smirks in silence at the brutal banalities voiced by his allies.