RUDY'S WRONG AGAIN

By DAMASO REYES
Special to the AmNews

The controversy sparked by photographer Renee Cox's "Yo Mama's Last Supper," now on display at the Brooklyn Museum of Art, was evident at a forum held at the First Amendment Center in Manhattan.

The artist was on hand along with William Donahue of The Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights, an outspoken critic of the piece. The forum was a moderated give and take, but it was clear that views on both sides of the issue ran deep.

"Yo Mama's Last Supper" is but one of many photographs on view in the Brooklyn Museum's "Committed to the Image: Contemporary Black Photographers" show. Yet, it's five-panel depiction of Christ's Last Supper, with Cox standing naked in the central panel, has caused Mayor Rudolph Giuliani to threaten calling together a so-called decency panel, to pick and choose which taxpayer-funded art institutions deserve funding, based on what kind of art they exhibit.

"For me, the whole thing does not make a lot of sense," Cox said, referring to the controversy. Donahue suggested a way around the First Amendment issue is to pull all public funding of the arts.

For many years conserva-

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Is Giuliani decent enough for his Decency Commission?

By WILBERT A. TATUM
Publisher Emeritus & Chairman of the Board

A falling star that never really came to full descent on 125th Street recently: Bill Clinton, the star, is about to become a neighbor with people who have liked and trusted him, despite his human frailties.

On the other hand, a fragmenting star that never really began to rise, except in the minds of racist white folks and other white folks who really believed Giuliani's version of law and order and deprivation of money and opportunity for Black people was the best way to run this country and this city, is further disassembling and placing a shroud over City Hall, where Giuliani lives.

Giuliani, terribly uncomfortable at being anything other than the kind of thug he grew up with in the backwaters of Brooklyn, has seen this star called Clinton in East Harlem and West Harlem and beaming from a building directly at the dome of City Hall.

Mr. Giuliani, in the last week or 10 days, has made a fool of himself over and over and over again. He has, once more - obviously psychologically - found a fixation in a Black Masonic and Child art, elephant dung and the Last Supper, appropriate images for him to suggest the formation of an Art Commission to eliminate in the public's mind and heart. Otherwise, how is it that a beautiful Black woman, a princess in the African continent and a painting by a Nigerian painter could have so offended Giuliani's sensibilities as to have him try to steal funding, through flat, from one of our most venerable art institutions, the Brooklyn Museum?

And how is it that Giuliani, (Continued on Page 40)
Yo Mama

(Continued from Page 1) tives have pushed for the elimination of public funding of the arts. While many are complaining about the use of taxpayers’ dollars to support art they find offensive, no public money was used to create “Yo Mama’s Last Supper.” The only tax dollars used in relation to this case go to the Brooklyn Museum itself, which puts on dozens of shows each year and has one of the finest Egyptian collections in the world.

At the forum itself, most of the audience was in the camp of the artist, hissing and booing Donahue several times. As in the “Sensation” controversy back in 1999, public sentiment seems to be going against the mayor and Donahue who, despite their protestations about giving offensive work undue attention, seem more than happy to bring light to work that otherwise would have most likely gone unnoticed by the majority of New Yorkers. Because of them, “Yo Mama’s Last Supper” now has been splashed across the headlines and editorial pages of every major newspaper.

“I have utter contempt for the officials of the Brooklyn Museum of Art,” Donahue said, referring to the fact that no representative from the organization was on hand to defend or explain why the work was included in the show of Black photographers. While he said, “This exhibit is not offensive,” Donahue said that he objected to “Yo Mama’s Last Supper” because he felt that the work is “propaganda” being used by the artist to promulgate an anti-Catholic agenda.

“The show is not about me, it’s about the 94 photographers in the show,” Cox said, commenting on the controversy which erupted last week when the mayor publicly blasted the work, the artist and the Brooklyn Museum of Art using his bully pulpit. “I had no idea that this was going to happen,” she added.

Indeed, “Yo Mama’s Last Supper” had been displayed in several exhibitions, even one in Rome near the Vatican, without public outcry. Now the mayor, who tried to pull city funding from the Brooklyn Museum over the “Sensation” exhibit, has vowed to form a decency commission to review art which will be displayed by publicly funded institutions. First Amendment supporters see the mayor’s actions as censorship and have vowed to fight what they believe to be the latest manifestation of