

Chicago Election Focuses On Former Gang Member

CHICAGO (Reuters) - With Mayor Richard Daley expected to handily capture his third term in city elections Tuesday, attention has focused on a combative former street gang member whose heroes include gang leaders and the mayor's father.

Wallace "Gator" Bradley, 43, is in a non-partisan run-off with current alderman Dorothy Tillman, 47, to represent one of the city's most poverty-stricken and violence-prone wards.

"I want this election to do for

this ward and the African-American race what Daley's election did for the (predominantly Irish-American) 11thward," Bradley told Reuters.

Charges of gang intimidation colored the three-way primary battle five weeks ago in third ward on the city's South Side, but Bradley said his mission now is to encourage gang members "to vote, not shoot."

Local politicians have enlisted street gangs in elections stretching back a century, local political experts said, usually in

an effort to suppress voter turnout. Bradley said he is hoping to boost turnout in an otherwise sleepy election in which Daley, who will turn 53 on April 4 election day, is expected to trounce independent black candidate Roland Burris, a former state elected official.

"I'm telling them to put their guns down, stop selling drugs, go to school, get out and vote," Bradley said, citing his role organizing last year's gang "peace summits" held in various cities.

"I'm the one out there closing crackhouses," Bradley said. "I'm trying to give our children self-esteem. I'm trying to get them not to make the same mistakes I made. I'm letting them know they have to become issue-oriented in order to get away

from anti-social behavior."

Bradley said with a straight face that his political role model is the current mayor's father, Richard J. Daley. Daley emerged from a South Side Irish "gang" called the Hamburg Club to rule the city for 21 years as Chicago's political "Boss," as memorialized in a book by that title written by columnist Mike Royko.

But unlike the Daleys, Bradley served a prison term in the early 1970s — for an armed robbery he said he was forced by a judge to plead guilty to — and still counts as his mentor the imprisoned leader of the city's largest street gang, the Gangster Disciples.

Bradley said his history as a gang "enforcer" is no different than that of the Daleys, the Kennedys, or any other political

clan. He has also adopted some of the more strident racial rhetoric now in circulation, including accusations that the government is behind the drug trade, the AIDS epidemic among blacks and a conspiracy to imprison black males.

Allegations of gang intimidation have focused largely on Bradley, a few other candidates with checkered pasts, and a gang-affiliated political organization called 21st Century VOTE. Bradley said his campaign staff is made up largely of volunteers.

His opponent, veteran alderman Dorothy Tillman, said Bradley is "playing on the fears of residents," and insists her re-

election will "send a message" throughout the nation that the black community must settle internal scores before taking on white-dominated government.

She also said Bradley has not renounced his affiliation with the Gangster Disciples. Bradley said he was quoted out of context on primary election night when he said, "I am a Gangster Disciple."

"That's no boys and girls club," Tillman said. "Because of them we have metal detectors in our schools and senior citizens can't walk out on the street."

"Wallace Bradley talks constantly about cleaning up. Well he's created the mess, he should clean it up," she said.

Denny's Restaurant Closes After Racial Incident

DENVER - A Denny's Restaurant in Denver, part of the chain which settled a mammoth bias suit last year, closed temporarily last Thursday after a protest rally over alleged discrimination.

More than 200 people held a demonstration outside the restaurant to protest the alleged bad treatment of four young black women.

"We will be closed until Saturday morning," a man at the restaurant said.

Flagstar, the parent firm of the Denny's chain, agreed last year to pay in excess of \$54 million settling lawsuits filed by thousands of black customers who alleged they had been discriminated against in the family-style restaurants by either not being served or waiting longer than white customers for service.

According to news reports, four young black women who were at the restaurant Sunday morning in Denver waited for a table while white patrons were seated ahead of them.

After the young women were seated people from one of the white groups seated before them made racial slurs and a fight ensued. Police arrested the black women and a white couple.

"This whole thing was started simply because Denny's was not treating black people fairly. Had they seated these young people properly when they came in none of this would have happened," said the Rev. Acen Phillips of the Mt. Gilead Baptist Church.

Restaurant personnel were advised by corporate headquarters in Spartanburg, S.C., to close the doors after the groups assembled outside in order to avoid a confrontation, an employee at the restaurant said.

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