

Activist Gregory still fighting, cajoling, agitating

Catisha Marsh
Sentinel Voice

Dick Gregory jumped into political activism during the Civil Rights Movement.

He hasn't looked back since.

The Sentinel-Voice caught up with Gregory at the recent National Coalition of Black Meeting Planners Fall Conference after he delivered the keynote address on the final day. Among other things, Gregory talked about African-American health and revealed the latest government and intelligence agency machinations.

Gregory first gained notoriety as a socially conscious comedian. Some say his activism derailed a promising career. Gregory disagrees.

"I'm at the top of my profession," he said. "When I call the White House or Buckingham Palace, somebody will call me back.

It may not be the President or the Queen, but somebody'll call me. I don't think I could say that if I were just a comic."

Thirty years removed from the protests, sit-ins and marches, Gregory still agitates—protesting, fasting and getting arrested more than ever. He's especially concerned with the health of African people, particularly Africans in America.

"The number one threat to black folks is their health. We have compromised our health for success in a racist country," he said, citing statistics he read from health reports: that 88 percent of all dialysis patients are black and 83 percent of breast and prostate cancer cases are black.

"Did you know that black women lead this nation in heart attack deaths? Yet, 10,000 white men received heart transplants last year, compared to 6 black women.



DICK GREGORY

You tell me whose lives are valued more by this country," he said. "At the rate we're dying, we will lose by default."

Gregory also expressed concern about asthma, calling it the No. 1 killer of black boys.

"Asthma stems from dehydration, which medical science hasn't gotten around to discovering yet... If parents would think before giving their sons that soda, or

Gatorade or Kool-Aid and give them some water, we could avoid these senseless deaths." Gregory believes exercise is also important.

Gregory attributes the sad state of black health to a grand scheme to undermine human development.

He said former Commerce Secretary Ron Brown didn't die in a plane crash, but was murdered for threatening to "take down everyone with him" when facing charges of corruption. He showed pictures he claimed were photos of Brown and the downed plane. The body was intact and there was also no indication that the body or the plane had burned.

He flashed another photo of a perfectly circular wound in a membrane, saying the picture revealed a gunshot wound found in Ron Brown's head.

Gregory said President Clinton will probably not be

impeached before he finishes his term. "There has been an agreement to assassinate President Clinton, with his consent," he said.

The activist said his conspiracy theories are drawn from personal experience.

"Mark Lane and I did a book about the murder of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Because of that book and Mark Lane's ability to muster people together, the Senate and Congress were forced to have Kennedy-King assassination investigations.

"Because of the book, a lot of people started calling us with information," he continued. "Freddie Prince called me one day, and he came into some information on the Kennedy assassination. I tried to tell him my phone is tapped. I told him that I was coming to LA the next day, and I have a fantastic script he might be able to use. He didn't hear

me. He kept talking and wondering why I wasn't interested. He died that night. They called it suicide. You know enough about this country that if someone is trying to give you some information and they fall dead the next day, that's no accident.

"John Belushi also called Mark Lane and said 'I have some information to share with you about the Kennedy assassination.' So Mark called me. I couldn't rearrange my schedule. They were supposed to meet in Detroit. The night before they were supposed to meet, John Belushi was murdered, with that overshot of drugs by that woman from Canada. If you're sitting where I'm sitting, that's a CIA hit."

Among other allegations Gregory makes is that Stanford University orchestrated gangs. Gangs (See Gregory, Page 7)

Former black panther to run for Chicago's mayoral post

By Nicole Ziegler Dizon

CHICAGO (AP) — U.S. Rep. Bobby Rush, a former Black Panther leader and one of Chicago's most outspoken political activists, vowed last week to end a culture of "exclusion and cronyism" by defeating Mayor Richard M. Daley.

"I will manage an administration that values inclusion, empowerment and cooperation," Rush said in announcing his bid for mayor. "The Daley administration

values exclusion and cronyism, and it suffers from a lack of vision."

Rush, 52, gained fame in the 1960s as a leader of the radical Black Panther Party. He later got involved in Democratic politics, winning a congressional seat in 1992.

Rush accused Daley of putting all the city's resources into rebuilding the downtown while ignoring Chicago's deteriorating South and West Side areas — home to many black and Hispanic neighborhoods.

An adviser to Daley, who has served eight years and has yet to announce whether he will seek another term, said the Democratic mayor has encouraged development throughout Chicago.

"Mayor Daley ... has compiled a record of accomplishment in every area of the city that he should be proud of," adviser Avis LaVelle said.

Political observers in this heavily Democratic city said Rush hopes to follow

the path paved by the city's first black mayor, the late Harold Washington, whose 1983 victory stunned the mostly white political machine that kept Daley's father, Richard J. Daley, in office from 1955 to 1976.

But Washington ran at a time when many Democrats were dissatisfied with machine politics, said Don Rose, a Chicago political consultant. Daley has done well to neutralize Democratic factions who opposed him early in his career, he said.

Forum

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schools be rebuilt and assemblyman Morse Arberry promised not to cut school budgets.

Giunchigliani, who also teaches, said "I cannot teach you if you're not in attendance." She said to she has pushed through legislation defining what an excused absence is and has managed to squeeze \$500,000 out of the city's budget to set up a truant review board, modeled after California's review boards, that helps habitually absent students get counseling.

Although it has yet to be enforced, Giunchigliani also created a law that after five

infractions, truants get expelled, at least for a certain period.

She's currently working on defining drop-outs so drop-out rates accurately reflect students who leave school, changing the multi-track educational system to a single-track one, upgrading older schools, decreasing class sizes and offering specialized services to grandparents raising children.

Hanlon described the latest laws governing proficiency testing in Nevada. One of the problems is that the tests are becoming more and more difficult, but students are not being prepared for the more

rigorous exams.

Hanlon said 40 percent of students are failing on the first try. They have five chances to pass the test. He estimated that between 10 and 12 percent will ultimately fail and not be able to get their diplomas.

Nevada law also stipulates that exams cannot be reproduced for public viewing.

"It's ridiculous," Hanlon said. "You pay taxes for these tests to be created, administered and graded, yet, you can't see them and students can't learn from them."

Williams, who chairs the education committee for the

Nevada assembly, fumed about the deplorable conditions of older schools and said that he doesn't want to see them overhauled. He wants them to build completely new schools.

"New schools, new facilities, new technology—that's what makes parents and teachers and students want to be involved." Other options to new schools like charter schools and vouchers "shouldn't be done at the expense of our public schools," he said.

Arberry followed Williams, pledging to do all that's possible to make the funds available for new (See Forum, Page 7)


AIDS

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24 percent, up from 7 percent in 1992, Stapleton said.

"People still don't think they're at risk," said Chris Taylor of the Johnson County Department of Public Health. "They don't want to deal with it. People at risk are not being tested."

Taylor and others hope to stress prevention, not treatment, which is not always effective. "We especially want young people to know that it's up to them to make those choices; that they have the control," Taylor said. "We want to empower people to make healthy choices."



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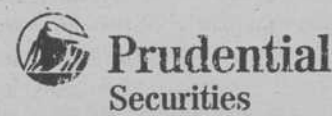
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