

POINT OF VIEW

OUR VIEW

M-B, step aside

Former Democratic Illinois Sen. Carol Moseley-Braun, who made history as the first African-American woman elected to the Senate, hopes to make history again and win the nation's highest political office: president.

"My supporters are encouraging me to advance to public office again... Which office depends on where I can be the most service to the people, I think, I mean it could be as easy for the Senate or the mayorship or the presidency, frankly," Moseley-Braun told the National Newspaper Publishers Association.

News of Moseley-Braun's intention, reported on BET.com, should cause concern within black America. Why? Unlike the popular teamwork-related saying, "two heads are better than one," two black presidential candidates—if Moseley-Braun bids for the White House, she would compete against the Rev. Al Sharpton—are almost worse than none.

Disregard for a moment the initial thrill over having Moseley-Braun, an extremely capable lawmaker by all accounts, challenge for the presidency—yes, it would say a lot about how far this country has come with regard to race and gender relations, but her bid could arguably weaken the power of African-Americans and women in 2004.

As Washington Times' reporter Steven Miller notes in a Feb. 19 article, "The presidential candidacy of former Illinois Sen. Carol Moseley-Braun creates a new urgency for supporters of the Rev. Al Sharpton, a candidate who had banked on having the nation's sizable and almost monolithically Democratic black electorate to himself."

Miller quotes Hermene Hartman, publisher of N'Digo, a black newspaper in Chicago, who thinks some Democrats recruited the former senator in order to siphon votes from the controversial Sharpton. "I would bet that Carol is being paid for this. She is part of a Democratic strategy to dilute the vote for Al Sharpton. I think that the Democratic Party is nervous on Sharpton because he is unpredictable and he has a hot hand."

In an PoliticsNH.com article, Rep. Jesse Jackson Jr., D-Ill., also questions Moseley-Braun's probable candidacy: "I have heard rumors — not unlike what the [Democratic Leadership Council] did when they tried to use former Virginia Governor Doug Wilder to undercut my father's potential campaign in 1992 — that she is possibly being led into this race by Democratic forces who would not like to see Al Sharpton in the race or do very well, and they see her as being able to undercut his campaign. I hope that this is not the dynamic at work with respect to her potential campaign."

Conspiracy theories aside, nothing should detract from Moseley-Braun's qualifications. Like Sharpton, she's had her share of ethical issues—misconduct problems thwarted her election bid; she rebounded to be named ambassador of New Zealand and Samoa by former president Bill Clinton. But for the sake of giving black America its best chance to A) win the presidency and B) reestablish strength lost in the GOP's congressional ascension, Moseley-Braun should seriously consider sitting on the sidelines and helping Sharpton.

Sure, Sharpton isn't the be-all candidate like, say, Colin Powell. He has a lengthy history with controversy—from the Tawana Brawley case to a 1980s taped conversation where he allegedly discussed a drug deal with an undercover agent. But he is likely the most politically astute black politician in America, regularly participating in debates on CNN, CNBC, MSNBC, BET, Meet the Press, Face the Nation and other shows.

More than anything, Sharpton speaks to black America's concerns and the concerns of the poor and disenfranchised. He's taken principled stands, too, willingly enduring incarceration to protest U.S. military bombing on the island of Vieques. Controversial as he may be, Sharpton is our best chance to shake up the current body politic. Moseley-Braun can make history some other time.



"You know, Barb, his belligerence toward Iraq and North Korea doesn't surprise me. Remember how he loved playing with matches as a kid?"

New study: Vegas has race issues

By Louie Overstreet
Special to Sentinel-Voice

In an open letter to the community, Urban Chamber of Commerce President Hannah Brown released a voluminous study prepared by the Chamber's Blue Ribbon Committee on Race (Committee). The study represents a two-year undertaking by the Urban Chamber that assessed the impact race has on the following topical areas in the Las Vegas Valley: Education, Contracting/Employment, Social Services, and the Criminal Justice System.

Ms. Brown states in the letter: "While work of the Committee is complete, the effort to bring into being the recommendations contained in the report is just beginning. A number of the recommendations can come about through administrative fiat; others may require a change in law to effect implementation."

Hannah goes on to note, "In whatever manner needed change is brought about, we are confident that implementing the recommendations over time will bring about a measurable improvement in race relations in a community that grows more diverse with each passing day. The Urban Chamber stands ready to meet and discuss the contents of the report with any and all who desire to help make the Las Vegas Valley the greatest place in America



LOUIE OVERSTREET

to work and live."

Due to space limitations of this column, I will only list several of the recommendations contained in each section of the report.

Education

1. It is strongly recommended that the Clark County School District (District) establish an incentive process to encourage qualified, seasoned and effective teachers to continue their assignment for several years at schools where the students are most challenged. It is recognized that funding and collective bargaining may be elements tending to inhibit implementation of such incentive plans. If not, then the community should be prepared for the alternatives, i.e., functional illiteracy, higher crime rates, expanding social service requirements and steadily falling academic achievement and economic growth. All of these undesirable attributes translate into demonstrably higher costs to the public.

2. Based on the fact the District is becoming larger and more diverse each year,

the methods utilized to recruit teachers and administrators need to be reviewed and revised.

3. The District should monitor the success of language acquisition for English learners. A resolution adopted by the Nevada Legislature should be used as a guide for developing language acquisition programs.

4. As a matter of priority, the District must develop a participation program for the equitable involvement of minority and female vendors, licensed professionals and contractors in the District's multi-billion dollar operations, maintenance and capital development programs.

Contracting/Employment Contracting

1. Clark County's Business Development Advisory Council (BDAC) should continue to serve as the coordinating body for data gathering, as well as the drafting body for policy initiatives for consideration and action by

elected officials.

2. All public contracting agencies should mandate that minority and female subcontracting opportunity provisions be included in public contracts estimated to exceed \$1,000,000 in value. The recent Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals ruling in the Denver case should be used as a model for narrowly tailoring a remedy as evidenced by a pattern of historic discrimination.

3. The Nevada Department of Transportation's disadvantaged utilization program should be relocated from Carson City to Las Vegas.

Employment

1. Public agencies, in association with community-based organizations should develop a public awareness campaign about the need to achieve fair employment. The campaign should be supported by data detailing the current levels of employment (See Overstreet, Page 14)

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