

Democrats botched firing of black employees

By Hazel Trice Edney
NNPA Washington
Correspondent

WASHINGTON (NNPA)—If the Democratic National Committee can't handle the next presidential campaign any better than it executed last week's botched attempt to lay off a group of African-American staffers, it may as well concede the White House to George W. Bush in 2004, some key African-Americans leaders say.

Donna Brazile, chairwoman of the DNC Voting Rights Institute and Al Gore's presidential campaign manager in 2000, expressed public disappointment with party officials after receiving word that 10 DNC staff members would be dismissed—all of them African-Americans.

"It's outrageous," she says. "They have been targeted for dismissal without anyone discussing this with members of the DNC Black Caucus or the Congressional



"They have been targeted for dismissal without anyone discussing this with members of the DNC Black Caucus or the Congressional Black Caucus. This would have a disastrous affect on the morale of Black Democrats across the country."

— Donna Brazile

Black Caucus. This would have a disastrous affect on the morale of Black Democrats across the country."

And if that happens, it could spell trouble for Democrats, says Brazile, a political science professor at Georgetown University "If they are unable to get this right, then they will be unable to get the Democratic strategy right to defeat George Bush in 2004," Brazile declares.

Many are blaming Demo-

cratic National Committee Chairman Terry McAuliffe for the miscue.

"He's liable to do something that's racially insensitive again, which is going to complicate the ability of the Democratic Party to motivate Black people," says Ron Walters, political science professor at the University of Maryland. "Terry McAuliffe doesn't appear to have any Black people in his inner circle that when he makes a decision he can pass it by

them and say, 'How is this going to look?'"

DNC spokesman Jim Mulhall says the number released by the DNC to Brazile and others—including Minyon Moore, former DNC chief operating officer—has not been confirmed. However, he did not deny the accuracy of those numbers.

Mulhall did say that the DNC is looking at possible budget cuts.

"It's been an ongoing process and basically it is so we can maximize and make the DNC the most efficient organization possible for the tough job we'll have to do to beat George Bush," he says.

After receiving public criticism from Brazile, DNC head McAuliffe apparently called off the firings—or at least delayed some of them. He refused to return repeated phone calls to the NNPA requesting comment.

Mulhall says the DNC has hired eight new staffers, five



Minyon Moore, who served as White House political director in the Clinton administration from 1997 to 2000, says that during her tenure as chief operating officer at the DNC from early 2001 until August 2002, people of color made up at least half of the staff.

of whom are Black, including a Black press secretary. He says there will still be layoffs over the coming weeks, but there will be fewer than 10 and not all of them will be Black.

But Brazile remains cautious.

"The fact remains that the list that was read off to me contained African-Americans only," she says. "I am grateful that the party decided not to lay off their distinguished hard-working Afri-

can-Americans, some who have been in civil rights since the 1960s. Terry McAuliffe has assured me that no such list will ever reach his desk. I want to give him the benefit of the doubt that he had not signed off on this."

Walters, the political scientist, says the blow up exposes DNC contempt for Black voters.

"Blacks don't appear to have decision-making power. There is this matter of not (See Staffers, Page 12)

L.A.'s slavery ordinance solely about 'due respect'

By Gene C. Johnson Jr.
Special to Sentinel-Voice

LOS ANGELES (NNPA)—An ordinance passed recently by the City Council requiring every company doing business with the city to report whether it ever profited from slavery, may prove difficult to enforce.

But for Beverly Clemons, as well as Il Clark and Barbara Ratliff—the architects of the ordinance who first approached Councilman Nate Holden about the matter last November—it has always been a matter of simple dignity. Clemons, a 58-year-old federal employee, said she took off from work to see whether the City Council

would pass the ordinance. She heard about the matter on a local radio station.

"It's been a long time coming," she said. "I don't want a check. I just want some fairness."

For Ratliff and Clark, as well as other members of the Reparation United Front, a coalition of community groups, the passage of the ordinance serves as a reminder of Black history many outside of the African-American community would just as soon forget.

"This disclosure will help African-Americans reconstruct and reclaim a history that was nearly lost because of 400 years of slavery and

another 100 years of segregation," said Ratliff, who is also an attorney. "It's very interesting that people tell us to move on.

"That [could] put [African Americans] in denial. It's very important that we know our history. When we help Black people know their history, we help ourselves to heal."

An aide to Mayor Jim Hahn said Hahn would sign the ordinance into law.

About the only voice of dissension came from notorious council gadfly Larry "Melrose" Green. "It's unnecessary," he said. "Maybe it's time to move on. Slavery [ended] 145 years ago. Plenty

of people have changed.

"[The ordinance] has no positive gratification to do anything, to improve anything. There's enough hatred and racism in this country," he said. "This would ferment racism. I'm not a racist."

Nevertheless, Los Angeles joins Chicago as the only two cities in the country to require such disclosure. Chicago passed its ordinance last fall. No businesses in that city have reported any history of slave profits, said Jessica Maxey-Faulkner, a spokeswoman for Chicago's procurement department.

In Los Angeles, those companies would not be barred from working for the

city, but Holden said he would ask them to consider donating money for scholarships or other programs for African-Americans.

The motion was introduced by Holden and seconded by Councilwoman Jan Perry, who said she recalls as a teenager having an uncle well over 100 years old, who kept his papers declaring that he was freed from slavery.

"We're not here to ask

companies to go out of business," said Holden before the motion was passed. "We're not here to be punitive. We're here to say, 'Let us know who you are.'"

Nevertheless, the ordinance makes no provision for investigating companies and the city would have little recourse if a business chose not to be forthright about its history. The ordinance does re-

(See Slavery, Page 13)

Blacks' DNA to be used in disease study

WASHINGTON (AP) - Howard University hopes to create the nation's largest bank of DNA from black Americans with the aim of studying genes involved in diseases that disproportionately strike blacks.

The DNA bank isn't funded yet, but the university announced Tuesday that it would work with a well-known database company, First Genetic Trust Inc., to develop the project.

The goal is to gather samples from 25,000 people over five years, mostly patients at hospitals associated with the historically black university in the nation's capi-

tal. The planned program is one of several projects under way around the country to study genetic differences among certain populations.

Research shows the DNA sequence of any two people is 99.9 percent alike, regardless of race. But subtle variations in genetic structure, called polymorphisms, can greatly affect an individual's risk of disease.

The National Institutes of Health already has begun a \$100 million effort to identify disease-causing polymorphisms, called the International HapMap Project. It is analyzing genetic patterns in blood samples taken from

people in Nigeria, Japan and China and from people of northern and western European ancestry in the United States.

While that and many other gene-tracing projects under way will include DNA from multiple populations, Howard's planned DNA bank would focus just on black Americans—and largely those who have asthma, high blood pressure, diabetes, prostate cancer, breast cancer or obesity, conditions Howard already is researching.

Howard has experience with such genetic studies, working with the NIH on smaller projects hunting ge-

netic clues for why black Americans are at greater risk for some of those diseases. Howard also is spearheading an international study hunting for genetic clues to diabetes in Nigeria, Ghana and the United States.

Lots of research on diseases that strike minorities disproportionately has focused on income and other social differences, noted Georgia Dunston, director of Howard's National Human Genome Center. New genetics tools will allow researchers now to see how genetic vulnerabilities interact with social conditions to spur disease, she explained.

SHEPHERD HILLS
TOWNHOMES

ONE MONTH FREE RENT*

Gated Townhomes!!

1140 sq. ft./3 bdrms., 2.5 baths. \$766 per mo.
932 sq. ft./2 bdrms., 2.5 baths. \$665 per mo.
For qualified applicants

1950 NORTH SIMMONS STREET
(Simmons & Lake Mead)

All Units Have:

Refrigerator	Gate Entry
Range	Pool
Dishwasher	Basketball Court
Cable Ready	Tot Lot
New Carpet	Computer Center
Community Cable Channel	

"A MUTUAL HOUSING COMMUNITY"

MOVE-IN SPECIAL HOT LINE

648-6350
An Income Based Property *O.A.C.