

Sharpton wins backing from NY reps

By Herb Boyd

Special to Sentinel-Voice

NEW YORK (NNPA) - With a battalion of elected officials and well-wishers behind him and the sun in his face, the Rev. Al Sharpton recently accepted the endorsements of Congressmen Jose Serrano (D-Bronx) and Ed Towns (D-Brooklyn) in his bid to win the Democratic presidential primary.

Sharpton thanked the throng of supporters who ringed the steps at City Hall, and then lashed the city's and the state's leading politicians who were not there for him. "You can't lose what you never had," he said about getting their endorsements. "I'm not slipping, I'm growing."

Even so, there are rumors afloat that Sharpton has fallen further behind in the race, given the recent endorsements of Howard Dean by former Vice President Al Gore, and of Gen. Wesley Clark by Congressman Charles Rangel.

"Ordinarily, I don't call press conferences to announce my endorsements," Sharpton continued. "I never had any need for endorsements because, for me, they are like co-signers. ... Folks who need co-signers have bad credit."

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ers were there and either laughing or cheering his every remark.

"Those of us who opposed the war in Iraq—and I was the first of the nine Democratic candidates to take a stand against the war—can feel vindicated by the capture of Saddam Hussein," he asserted. "If he had weapons of mass destruction, he wouldn't be coming out of hole with mice. All he had was a pistol, and he didn't even fire that."

"Bush would have been better off using his resources to capture Osama Bin Laden, who was responsible for the World Trade Center tragedy," Sharpton said. "We still need to end the occupation of Iraq and bring the corporations and our troops home."

During his acknowledgment of his supporters, Sharpton was able to single out incidents in which he had been involved with several of them, including having gone to jail with Councilman Charles Barron and Congressman Towns; waging

protests against drugs with State Senator Kevin Parker; and demonstrating against the bombing of Vieques with several of the Latino politicians in attendance.

"How many other candidates can talk about their personal involvement with people who give them their endorsements?" Sharpton asked. "They hope to get over on drive-by campaigns."

Rubin Diaz, Jose Serrano Jr., Adam Clayton Powell IV, Sanford Rubenstein, Michael Hardy, Minister Kevin Muhammad, Larry Seabrooks, Geoffrey Davis and the Rev. Renee Francis Washington, widow of Rev. Preston Washington, who died this past summer, were among the notables in attendance.

As if to counter the presence of General Clark among the contenders, Seabrooks said that Sharpton was a general, too—"in the war against poverty and social injustice," he noted.

Washington commended

Sharpton for being a voice for the voiceless. "You have had the courage to speak when no one else would speak," she said.

Serrano said that Sharpton had made the Democratic Party better. "He has dared to be there against racial profiling long before the other candidates began talking about it," he said of the minister, who often refers to Serrano as "mi hermano, my brother." "He helped to make Vieques a national issue. Now, there's no more bombing on Vieques," Serrano continued.

It was for protesting the U.S. naval bombing of this Puerto Rican island that Sharpton served his longest jail term. None of the other candidates have taken such a bold position opposing U.S. foreign policy.

"What is most remarkable about Rev. Sharpton is his consistency on the issues," said Congressman Towns. "And I am here to salute him for always telling it like it is."

Sharpton said at the press conference: "Even if I don't win, I won't be alone." He said there will be seven other losers. "And if I lose, at least I would have had an opportunity to address some issues none of the other candidates will touch."

Herb Boyd writes for the Amsterdam News.

Ex-death row inmate runs for Illinois House

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. (AP) - Less than a year after being released from death row, Aaron Patterson is running for the Legislature with a pledge to change some of the laws he says wrongly put him behind bars.

Patterson filed Monday to run in the March primary. He'll face Rep. Patricia Bailey, a fellow Democrat in her first term serving Chicago's southwest side.

Patterson was one of four men pardoned in January as part of then-Gov. George

Ryan's historic clearing of death row in his final days in office. Patterson, who was convicted of killing an elderly Chicago couple in 1986, spent 17 years on death row, despite his claims police tortured him into confessing to the crime.

"I feel like the very laws that put me on death row, I want to go down there and change them," Patterson said in a telephone interview.

He received a \$161,500 settlement from the state for his faulty conviction and has

filed a \$30 million federal lawsuit against police officers and others involved in his case. Patterson, 39, is a former gang leader with a prior record for gang activities. Illinois law allows former criminals to run for state office once they've served their sentence.

Patterson's agenda includes abolishing the death penalty, cracking down on police misconduct and investigating the cases of other inmates who claim they were wrongfully convicted.

Bailey did not return a telephone message Monday afternoon.

Patterson worries that his candidacy may be challenged because state law requires candidates to live in the district for at least two years before running for office. The prison is in Pontiac.

Dan White of the State Board of Elections said he's unaware of any similar case coming before the board and any challenges would first be handled by local election authorities.

Libya

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under international pressure - agreed to sign the additional protocol last week.

Pakistan's government has strongly denied allegations it spread nuclear technology to countries such as Libya, Iran and North Korea but said it was investigating whether individual scientists acted without authorization.

"Some individuals may have been doing something on their own. We are investigating that," Pakistani Information Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed told The Associated Press in Islamabad.

ElBaradei expressed confidence that - with continued cooperation by Tripoli - his agency would be able to "resolve all issues relevant to Libya's effort to develop weapons of mass destruction" over the next few months.

Gadhafi's decision to come clean is the latest in a series of

moves to end his country's international isolation and shed its reputation as a rogue nation.

The United States imposed sanctions in 1986, accusing Libya of supporting terrorist groups. Ten years later, America passed the Iran and Libya Sanctions Act, which threatened to penalize the U.S. partners of European companies that did significant business in Libya and Iran. While U.S. sanctions remain in force, the U.N. Security Council voted to abolish its sanctions on Libya in September, after it agreed to pay compensation to families of the Lockerbie bombing.

Pan Am Flight 103 from London to New York exploded over the Scottish town of Lockerbie on Dec. 21, 1988, killing 259 people on the plane and 11 on the ground. A former Libyan intelligence agent was found guilty of the bombing in 2001 and sentenced to life in prison.

Bush urged not to gloat over capture

By J. Zamgba Browne
Special to Sentinel-Voice

NEW YORK (NNPA) - It appears that supporters of President Bush are gloating over the capture of Iraq's dictator Saddam Hussein and seem to believe that the recent development could definitely be a political plus in next year's election.

But don't tell this to the dean of New York's congressional delegation, Rep. Charles B. Rangel, who feels that the capture is no more of a plus than the actual invasion of Iraq itself by the U.S.

While he believes that the invasion was morally wrong, Rangel still feels Saddam's capture was also a political plus for the Bush administration. However, he said that if one really wants an accurate response, the following questions should be asked:

"Is the United States and the world more safer as the result of Hussein's capture? Will the insurgents and the terrorists be restrained because he has been captured? And was Saddam responsible for the 9/11 attacks? Is the United States in any danger because of the possibility that Saddam may have had weapons of mass destruction? And do we have or ever had any evidence that Saddam is connected with Al Qaeda?"

Rangel said that the answers to each of these questions "no." "Therefore, what we have here is an international villain who violated the mandates of the United Nations and that he mistreated his own people," he stated.

According to Rangel, the U.S. took it upon itself, without support of its regular European allies and the United Nations, to attack Iraq and kill its people, as well as cause suffering and the loss of Americans lives, just to "capture one bum."

Therefore, Rangel continued, the real question is, "Don't we have a bigger villain in North Korea who suppresses his own people, violates international law, and who we know has weapons of mass destruction?" Rangel went on to ask why the U.S. hasn't also liberated North Korea from its ruling tyrant.

The Harlem lawmaker also said the United States shouldn't have gone to war against Iraq in the first place. "I think the international community could have gotten rid of Saddam without the loss of lives," he stated. "We have paid a heavy price to capture Saddam Hussein, and I don't know where this is going to take President Bush in terms of another so-called victory."

Should the Iraqi dictator receive the death penalty?

"I am vigorously opposed to the death penalty," Rangel declared. "We don't have the right to take a life." Rangel also said he was vehemently opposed to the assassination by the U.S. of Saddam's two sons.

"I thought it was uncivilized to kill these two men and wash and shave their bodies before putting them on public display for the world to see how barbaric we are," Rangel declared.

Rep. Major R. Owens (D-Brooklyn) hailed Saddam's capture but said that the victory does not justify the war in Iraq.

J. Zamgba Browne writes for the Amsterdam News.

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