

Kerry regretful over civil rights

By George E. Curry
Special to Sentinel-Voice

WASHINGTON (NNPA) – Senator John Kerry says that although he was supportive of civil rights during his college years, he regrets that he didn't take part in the March on Washington, the Selma to Montgomery March and other major protest events of the 1960s.

The presumptive Democratic nominee made that observation in a recent meeting at his campaign headquarters in Washington with five Black journalists.

When asked about his civil rights involvement while a student at Yale University, Kerry replied, "I took part in demonstrations in New Haven and we helped to fund and raise money for the Freedom Rides, the buses and [to] recruit people to go. And I went from a very difficult personal choice about going or not going. I was on one of the athletic teams at the time. I did not go."

Asked if he has any regrets about the choice he made, the junior Massachusetts senator said, "It would have been a great experience. I didn't; I made other choices at the time. Again, I was supportive and proud that I was conscious of it and aware of it and cared enough to be supportive of it. But I just made a different choice at that point in time."

When asked if he would make a different choice today, Kerry became pensive.

"I would have found a way to get there, I think, for part of it," he said, slowly. When another reporter attempted to ask Kerry a question, he continued in a reflective mood. "I think I missed something. Did I miss something in that regard? Yeah, I think I did. I am glad I was aware of it and helped in some way, a small way from the side, but sure, today, holding that in the regard that I do, it would have been something that I would have been proud to have been part of."

Kerry was eager to draw a contrast between his vision for America and the Bush record.

"I think George Bush has a truth deficit of enormous proportion," he said. "Almost every promise he's made to the country, he's broken. He promised that he would create 5.1 million jobs. He's lost 1.8 million. He promised that his tax cut was affordable within the budget because we had a surplus of \$5.6 trillion. We now have a deficit of \$520 billion in one year, the largest deficit in the history of the country..."

"He promised to be a uniter, he's been a divider. He promised he would bring people together, he attacks affirmative action on Martin Luther King's birthday. And not having learned that year, he appoints Judge [Charles] Pickering on Martin Luther King's next birthday. The level of breach of trust, in my judgment, is larger than anything I've ever seen."

The Bush campaign has attacked Kerry for unfairly introducing religion into the campaign.

In a speech last month at New Northside Baptist Church in St. Louis, Kerry indirectly criticized Bush. Speaking at the African-American church, Kerry referenced James 2:14: "What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds."

Kerry said at the time, "The scriptures say, what does it profit, my bother, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? When we look at what is happening in America today, where are the works of compassion?"

Steve Schmidt, a Bush spokesman, called Kerry's comments "beyond the bounds of acceptable discourse and a sad exploitation of scripture for political attack."

Kerry told the Black journalists that he does not bring up religion on the campaign trail.

"It's appropriate in church to talk about how you enter the kingdom of God," he explained. "That is, after all, why we go to church. And if you have true faith and you profess that faith, you have to live that faith. Living your faith is not reserved in the hour or two hours or whatever it is that you're in church. It's carried on in your life."

Kerry said he was surprised by the attack on him over his remarks in St. Louis, given Bush's reliance on reli-

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Ashcroft asked to revisit Till case

By George E. Curry
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WASHINGTON (NNPA)

– Representative Bobby L. Rush has rejected Attorney General John Danforth's assertion that the Justice Department has no authority to open a federal investigation into the murder of Emmett Till, the 14-year-old African-American who was beaten, shot to death and thrown into a river in 1955 for allegedly whistling at a White woman in Money, Mississippi.

Rush's appeal to Ashcroft was joined last week by Congressman Charles Rangel and Senator Charles Schumer.

"Emmett Till's murder seared into the minds of all Americans the hate and violence of racism in the South," Rangel said. "But because of the efforts of the Black press especially, the crime, not solved in the courts, raised



"The federal government has the resources, it has the authority and should have the will to re-open this case. Emmett Till cannot and will not rest in peace."

— Rep. Bobby L. Rush

the consciousness of Americans and triggered the Civil Rights Movement."

In February, Rush, the Chicago Democrat, filed a bill in Congress asking that body to formally request that Ashcroft launch a federal investigation into Till's brutal murder. However, a spokesperson for the Justice Department told the Chicago Tribune that "the statute of limitations...barred the department from investigating

the case further."

In a letter to Ashcroft, Rush says, "After consulting with Legislative Counsel for the House of Representatives and with the Congressional Research Service, I respectfully disagree with this assessment, and I remain firm in my call upon the Justice Department to investigate the murder of Emmett Till."

Rush said, "18 U.S.C. 3282 states that 'an indictment for any offense punish-

able by death may be found at any time without limitation.' 18 U.S.C. 214 as established by the Civil Rights Act proclaims that the type of lynching and murder that took place with Emmett Till is punishable by death. As such, I fail to understand why the department finds the statute of limitations as a bar to investigate the murder."

In addition, another federal statute 42 U.S.C. 1988 (a) "give the federal courts jurisdiction to entertain, as an original matter, civil or criminal actions under state law in any case affecting the deprivation of civil rights."

The Illinois congressman noted the 1963 murder of civil rights leader Medgar Evers and the bombing of Sixteenth Street Baptist, even though the cases were more than 30 years old.

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Virginia cops halt DNA testing of Blacks

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. (AP) - Under pressure from Black leaders, police hunting for a serial rapist have temporarily stopped asking Black men for cheek-swab samples in a DNA dragnet that was branded racist.

Police Chief Timothy J. Longo told The Washington Post on Wednesday that the testing will continue once the department develops more "stringent, well-defined criteria" regarding which men will be asked to provide genetic samples.

Longo did not immediately return calls Thursday from The Associated Press.

In recent months,

Charlottesville police have asked 197 Black men to provide a DNA sample obtained by a cheek swab as part of the search for a rapist who has attacked six women since 1997.

In most of those requests, police said, officers were responding to tips about men who resembled a composite sketch of the rapist or who seemed to be acting strangely.

Ten of the 197 refused to submit to the swabs, officials said. Critics at a forum Monday confronted the police chief and blasted the practice as racial profiling.

"Because the suspect is Black, every Black man is a

suspect," said University of Virginia graduate student Steve Turner, who has twice refused to be tested.

The chief planned to meet with community leaders Friday to discuss proposed revisions to the testing.

"I think you can be respectful of the community's concerns and still use this technique in the law enforcement investigation, provided it is very focused," he said.

The American Civil Liberties Union of Virginia is preparing a flier that will be distributed in the Charlottesville area to inform Black men that they have no legal obligation to let police

take a DNA sample.

Rick Turner, dean of the office of African-American affairs at the University of Virginia, has been a leading critic of the DNA testing. He credited the chief for reconsidering.

Virginia has been a leading proponent of the use of DNA evidence - to clear and convict. It was the first state to execute someone based on DNA evidence.

But the use of DNA evidence cleared another man, Earl Washington, just days before he was to be executed for a rape and slaying committed more than 20 years ago.

World Bank: U.S. trade deal no help for Africa's poor

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from IPS/GIN

A high-profile US agreement aimed at increasing trade with sub-Saharan Africa has helped only a few nations and rarely the poor, a new study by the World Bank found. Since 2000, when the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) took effect, 96 percent of the economic benefit has helped just

seven of the 38 African member nations, said the study, which was quoted in the London Financial Times.

The study showed that AGOA has proven inconsistent largely because it does not cover all countries for trade in key production areas, such as in the cultivation of agricultural products, clothing and textiles.

AGOA was set up to offer

trade benefits to African countries that had met certain targets in adopting a liberalized economy, a democratic political system and a humane society.

Critics of AGOA said it

was constructed without consulting African nations and would only benefit American businesses. Its supporters argue that it will create more jobs in Africa and would boost economies.

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