

McAuliffe: Democrats can't beat Bush without Blacks

By Hazel Trice Edney
Special to Sentinel-Voice
NEW ORLEANS (NNPA)- Democratic National Committee Chairman, speaking to the annual convention of the National Newspapers Publishers Association (NNPA) here, acknowledged that John Kerry cannot be elected president without the Black vote and dismissed frequent criticism that his party takes African-Americans for granted.

"I know we cannot win without the African-American vote. I don't ever take any vote for granted anywhere in this country," Terry McAuliffe, chairman of the DNC, told the publishers here. "I look forward to working with all of you and your publications to make sure

we're getting the message out because I know there's not a more effective avenue through which to get our message to the African-American community than through your publications."

Democrats will hold their national convention July 26 through 29 in Boston, where it is expected that more than 4,000 delegates will cast their vote for Kerry and a yet unnamed vice presidential candidate.

A string of polls have shown John Kerry with significant leads over President Bush, who appears beleaguered by the poor economy and a scandal-laden war in Iraq. Among the most recent polls in early June, a USA Today/CNN/Gallup poll of likely voters said 50 percent

would vote for Kerry, 44 percent for Bush and 6 percent were undecided with a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percent.

However, in recent days some other polls have shown Bush benefiting from the positive media coverage of Ronald Reagan's death.

Early in the Bush campaign, many analysts predicted Bush would have a significant advantage because of his heavy war chest. But that does not seem to be the case.

"We've raised more than \$100 million over the past three months," the DNC head says. "What's truly extraordinary about that is that 76 percent of the money came from direct mail through the Internet. Never has this hap-

pened in the history of our party, George Bush has raised \$222 million. John Kerry has raised \$160 million."

But publishers questioned how much will be spent in the Black Press to get out the Black vote.

Democratic party officials have said the party has \$50 million cash in hand to spend on the election — outside of Kerry's money. McAuliffe did not speak in specific dollar amounts for Black voter turnout or the Black Press, but promised to put his money where his mouth is.

"You will see an unparalleled investment in your newspapers," he stated.

McAuliffe says the Democrats want all the Black votes it can get, but will specifically target the Black vote in

18 battle ground states that could go either way and have histories of voting for either party. Those states are New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Florida, Ohio, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, Arkansas, Louisiana, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada, Oregon and Washington.

Republican Party Chairman Ed Gillespie, recently on tour with boxing promoter Don King, says his party is also reaching for the Black vote.

Democrats won 92 percent of the Black vote in the 2000 presidential race. There is also the possibility that a Black senatorial candidate from Chicago, State Sen. Barack Obama, can win a

U.S. Senate seat from Illinois. The Senate has had no African-American since Sen. Carol Moseley Braun, also of Chicago, lost her seat in 1999.

McAuliffe predicts the party will do well this fall, but he isn't taking any chances.

"I promise you this party will meet its commitment to the African-American community. It will meet its commitment to NNPA," he says. "This is what you do when 92 percent of the African-American community supports your nominee."

McAuliffe said, "We're ahead today and it's going to take an awful lot of work. But, I tell you with all of us working together, we're going to win."

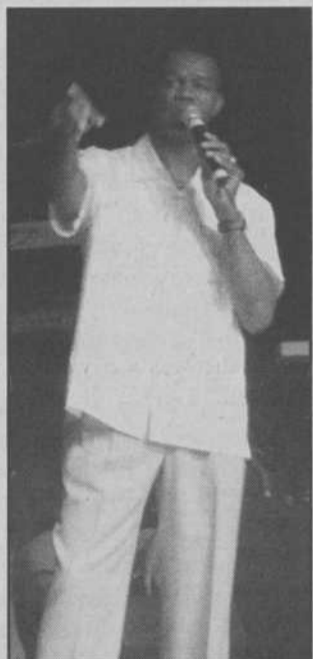
Unity Day

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prizes that were to be given out to the audience. Prizes ranged from bicycles, various home appliances, televisions, CD players, prepaid cell phones, toys, and a chance at winning three cars.

Prior to the beginning of the event, two sections of the arena were apportioned off, where friends, family members and the congregation of Cunningham's church were assembled. As the distribution of the prizes commenced, it appeared the majority of the prizes were being given to the people sitting among the apportioned sections.

Many of the names drawn for the distribution of prizes were said to be unreadable and placed back into the bin. It appeared others known to Cunningham were awarded the prizes. Others were apparently allowed to come up



Former NFL quarterback Randall Cunningham talks during Unity Day activities.

to the stage and claim a prize without either showing a ticket or verifying that the ticket indeed was the one chosen.

At the end, the event was completely out of control and left many sitting in the audience saying that they would never attend this event again.

Unity Day began two years ago when Cunningham hosted the first event in his hometown, Santa Barbara, Calif. The second year he moved Unity Day to Las Vegas. Last year, the event drew about 1,500 people. This year, the attendance doubled.

Cunningham's wife, Felicity, is a partner in ministry.

"You know I feel like God is calling for the church community to come together and be united as one," Mrs. Cunningham said. "This is an opportunity for the body of Christ to come together and worship and praise him under one roof. It doesn't happen a lot within the body of Christ and that is something that he laid upon our hearts to make that opportu-

nity available and give back to the community.

"People don't always have a chance to get to church and this is one way to let them know that God loves them and this represents an opportunity for them to share their feelings and feel free to express their love for the Lord," she said.

The musical group Set Free performed.

This group from Los Angeles, travels the country on motorcycles spreading the goodness of the Lord. Steps of Praise, a group of young dancers from San Diego, made their second appearance at Unity Day.

Children attending the

event were able to take advantage of three jungle gyms, face painting and racing motorized cars on indoor track.

Parents had an opportunity to enjoy a day out and share in the moment with others who came out to give praise to the Lord and partake in all of the festivities of the event.

Honor

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convicted served more than six years. All are now dead.

Along with the Mississippi attorney general, coalition members have urged federal investigators to help find those who aided the killers. Federal authorities are still reviewing the matter.

Steve Wilkerson was 12 during Freedom Summer. He recalled that his father was determined to shield him from the hatred brewing as Klan violence escalated.

"He said: 'You can ride your bike and go to Little League, otherwise you'll spend your time playing in the garden,'" said Wilkerson, who is White.

When the activists vanished, "I remember Whites said they might be hiding for a publicity stunt," Wilkerson said. "They desperately wanted to believe. But when weeks passed, it was clear something terrible had happened."

McDonald said federal agents searched


Black homes daily because some insisted the activists were hiding. One agent gave McDonald a dime and phone numbers of the few FBI agents he trusted. "He told me to call one of them in an emergency and we didn't have a phone," McDonald said.

The activists' bodies were found in an earthen dam a few miles from the church.

"Adults talked among relatives about what a horrible ordeal this was for the boys' families," Wilkerson said. "But it seemed they were afraid to express those feelings to outsiders. That would be seen as taking sides and that could be fatal."

Wilkerson, now the owner of an upscale men's clothing store, joined the coalition without hesitation.

"If someone decides they aren't going to shop in my store because they don't want to honor those young men, they probably would have found some other reason," he said. "I think I can count on good people of all races."



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