

Sharpton: 'Our vote is not for sale'

By George E. Curry and Hazel Trice Edney

BOSTON (NNPA)—Less than 24 hours after Illinois Democratic senatorial nominee Barack Obama made a widely-applauded pitch for interracial cooperation and tolerance, former presidential candidate Al Sharpton mounted that same stage Wednesday night to launch a scathing attack on George W. Bush.

"Mr. President, in all due respect, Mr. President, read my lips: Our vote is not for sale."

The sharp contrast between the two speeches underscored the diversity among Blacks, with the Obama, a Harvard-trained lawyer and state senator, drawing on his biracial heritage, and Sharpton emphasizing his deep roots in the ghetto.

Though both made different pitches aimed at two different segments of the Democratic Party, both were united in their opposition to a second Bush term in the White House.

"To me, it is a glaring contradiction that we would fight, and rightfully so, to get the right to vote for the people in the capital of Iraq in Baghdad, but still don't give the federal right to vote for the people in the capital of the United States," he said, referring to the prohibition on having District of Columbia residents elect full-voting members of the House and Senate.

A week earlier, Bush addressed the National Urban League for the second consecutive year, asking Blacks to support the Republican Party.

"Mr. President, I heard you say Friday that you had questions for voters, particularly African-American voters. And you asked the question: Did the Democratic Party take us for granted? I have raised questions. But let me answer your question," Sharpton said, departing from his prepared text. "You said the Republican Party was the party of Lincoln and Frederick Douglass. It is true that Mr. Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation, after which there was a commitment to give 40 acres and a mule.

"That's where the argument, to this day, of reparations starts. We never got the 40 acres. We went all the way to Herbert Hoover, and we never got the 40 acres. We didn't get the mule. So we decided we'd ride this donkey as far as it would take us."

That line drew the most



Ever fiery, the Rev. Al Sharpton, who failed to win the Democratic presidential nomination, speaks to delegates at the Democratic National Convention on Wednesday in Boston.

sustained applause of the convention. And once the laughter subsided, Sharpton added: "Mr. President, you said we would have more leverage if both parties got our votes, but we didn't come this far by political games. It was those that earned our vote that got our vote. We got the Civil Rights Act under a Democrat. We got the Voting Rights Act under a Democrat. We got the right to organize under Democrats."

For the past 30 years, African-Americans have given at least 80 percent of their vote—90 percent in 2000—to the Democratic nominee for president.

The more the GOP has veered to the right, the less successful it has been in appealing to Black voters. Bush was elected with 8 percent of the African-American vote in 2000, the lowest percentage since the 1964 campaign of Arizona Sen. Barry Goldwater.

Sharpton, champion of the one-liners, made an indirect reference to U.S. Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas, an ardent foe of affirmative action, having attended Yale Law School on an affirmative action program. Both Bush and Thomas opposed a University of Michigan Law School affirmative action program that was upheld by the Supreme Court.

"I suggest to you tonight that if George Bush had selected the court in '54, Clarence Thomas would have never gotten to law school," Sharpton said.

The next president is expected to appoint at least two Supreme Court justices. Bush has repeatedly stated that he would appoint justices similar to Thomas and Anton Scalia, the two most conservative justices on the nation's top court.

"The court has voted 5 to 4 on critical issues of women's rights and civil rights," Sharpton notes. "It is frightening to think that the

gains of civil and women rights and those movements in the last century could be reversed if this administration is in the White House in these next four years."

Arguing for immigration policies that treat all newcomers fairly, Sharpton said, "We cannot welcome those to come and then try to act as though any culture will not be respected or treated inferior. We cannot look at the Latino community and preach one language. No one gave them an English test before they sent them to Iraq to fight for America."

Like Obama, Sharpton drew on his personal background to connect with the cheering delegates.

"Family values is not just those with two-car garages and a retirement plan," Sharpton explained. "Retirement plans are good. But family values also are those who had to make nothing stretch into something happening,

who had to make ends meet.

"I was raised by a single mother who made a way for me. She used to scrub floors as a domestic worker, put a cleaning rag in her pocket-book and ride the subways in Brooklyn so I would have food on the table. But she taught me as I walked her to the subway that life is not about where you start, but where you're going. That's family values."

Sharpton said his long-shot campaign for president served a noble purpose.

"As I ran for president, I hoped that one child would come out of the ghetto like I did, could look at me, walk across the stage with governors and senators and know they didn't have to be a drug dealer, they didn't have to be a hoodlum, they didn't have to be a gangster, they could stand up from a broken home, on welfare, and they could run for president of the United States."

Transitional facility designed to enhance reentry for ex-cons

By Lés Pierres Streater
Sentinel-Voice

The goals of Casa Grande are to enhance community safety by successfully re-integrating non-violent parolees into transitional housing and help them become productive, responsible, law-abiding citizens. Casa Grande will be a comprehensive community-based residential facility that will assist non-violent parolees with their transition back into the community after being released from prison.

The project will also assist non-violent parolees get job training, life-skills development, job placement, chemical dependency treatment, counseling and supervision, said Assemblyman Morse Arberry Jr., chair of the Ways and Means Committee.

The Nevada Department of Corrections unveiled plans to open the transitional housing project for parolees in Las Vegas at a news conference last month at the West Las Vegas Cultural Arts Center.

According to Jackie Crawford, director of the Nevada Department of Corrections, "We release over 4,000 inmates per year and 65 percent of these individuals are returning back to Southern Nevada with only \$21 and no plans for re-establishing themselves.

"There is a high recidivism rate of parolees and this project seeks to reduce that rate by targeting low-risk individuals and managing their transition back to the community," Crawford said.

Arberry supported the efforts in the legislature to fund the \$21 million project that will house up to 400 parolees. It will be built on 7 acres on Russell Road near Wynn Road, an area zoned industrial near residential housing.

"The cost to house inmates in prison each year is \$18,000," Arberry said, where the cost to house the parolees in the program is around \$6,000.

"We hope that this program will considerably reduce that expense by not having repeat offenders returning to prison at taxpayers expense and offering them an opportunity to rehabilitate themselves," Arberry said.

The project will allow non-violent inmates to spend the last four to six months of their sentences at the center and reduce the cost of housing them at a medium-security

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Law Firm of Timothy C. Williams

ATTORNEY AT LAW



TIMOTHY C. WILLIAMS

Timothy Williams is a member of the Nevada & Illinois State Bar, practicing primarily in personal injury cases.

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844 E. Sahara Avenue
Las Vegas, Nevada

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