

Race crucial in New Orleans elections

By Hazel Trice Edney
Special to Sentinel-Voice
WASHINGTON (NNPA)
- Race will be a major factor in New Orleans' May 20 run-

off election for mayor even though the two finalists — incumbent Ray Nagin and Lt. Gov. Mitch Landreiu — have proven that they can attract

support from members of the opposite race, political observers predict.
"No matter what the larger campaign group col-

lectively decides, race will be an indelible factor in the outcome," says political scientist, Lorenzo Morris, chairman of the Department of Political Science at Howard University.

"Though Landreiu is certainly not a Republican, he represents by image and by general characteristics of the New Orleans electorate, someone who is more to the right than Nagin... What will happen is where race is a factor, Blacks will tend to vote more likely than before for the Black candidate, even if his politics in recent years wasn't the most appealing to them."

Nagin is Black and Landreiu is White.

Saturday's voting apparently said as much about how Whites vote as it did about Black voting patterns.

Four years ago, Nagin was all but rejected by New Orleans' Black electorate, winning overwhelmingly with support from 90 percent White voters.

However, in a field of 22 candidates, Nagin won only 10 percent of predominantly White precincts and about 66

percent among those in Black neighborhoods. Landreiu carried 24 percent of the Black vote and 30 percent of the White vote.

Ron Forman, president of the Audubon Nature Institute, won 4 four percent of the Black vote.

About 36 percent of the city's 297,000 eligible voters went to the polls in the election.

Overall, Nagin got 38 percent of the vote while Landreiu got 29 percent. Given that Nagin is the incumbent, he may have an uphill battle winning significant support from those 62 percent of constituents who voted against him. New Orleans hasn't had a White mayor in 30 years.

The backdrop of racial issues is heavy. The images of poor Black people lined up outside the coliseum, begging for help for three days after the hurricane will not easily leave the minds of some Black voters.

While the pre-Katrina voting population in New Orleans used to be predominantly Black, pollster Silas Lee, a New Orleans native,

has estimated that approximately 70 percent of the voters currently living in New Orleans are White. Some other polls placed the Black electorate at 52 percent.

It was the lower Ninth Ward, the largest Black section of the city, that received the most damage from Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath. Some civil rights leaders, including Jesse Jackson Sr., dismissed the election as unfair, given the hardship it caused for some to return home.

Less than half of the city's 455,000 pre-Katrina residents have been able to return to permanent residency in the city. About 21,000 voted by absentee ballots.

But the threat of not having a Black mayor for the first time in three decades motivated some Black voters.

"We were at New Orleans East at one of the super precincts and it was a rhythm to it. People just kept coming — old people, people with children. And everybody had a determination in their walk. There was a movement
(See Election, Page 11)

Descendants of Black slaves file 111. reparations litigation

By Demetrius Patterson
Special to Sentinel-Voice
CHICAGO -An attorney filed an appeal Monday asking for the federal Appellate Court to overturn a dismissed lawsuit seeking reparations for the descendants of enslaved Africans in the U.S.

In January of 2004, U.S. District Court Judge Charles Ronald Norgle threw out the two-year-old lawsuit that joined together several lawsuits throughout the country asking for reparations for the descendants of enslaved Africans.

Attorney Lionel Jean-Baptiste told the Defender Wednesday the appeal was filed because he felt Norgle should have not been the judge to rule in the case, and that he erred in assessing of the legalities of the case.

"We believe that the multi-district panel hand-picked the judge to send this to," Jean-Baptiste said. "The panel in New York City picked one of the most conservative judges they could find to hear this case."

"And Judge Norgle did what he was supposed to do, which was to dismiss the case on a very simplistic basis. And this basis was that we had no standing as the sons and daughters of former slaves to claim any injury. Therefore he claimed that we could not bring forth a lawsuit against these standing corporations who have profited from slavery."

Jean-Baptiste said Norgle ruled that the statute of limitations had expired and that such a lawsuit should have been filed approximately three years after the Emancipation Proclamation went into law in 1863.

Norgle's 2004 ruling said, "Plaintiffs' attempt to bring these claims more than a century after the end of the Civil War and the formal abolition of slavery fails; this determination is consistent with the position taken by numerous courts which have considered

the issue over the last century. Ultimately, the legal obstacles prohibiting judicial resolution of such claims cannot be circumvented by the courts.

Moreover, from the onset of the Civil War until present, the historical record clearly shows that the President and Congress have the constitutional authority to determine the nature and scope of the relief sought in this case, not the courts."

Jean-Baptiste and his clients disagree with the judge's assessment. "We say the context immediately after the Emancipation was so antagonistic for the Africans who had been enslaved for centuries, that they could not have gotten even legal assistance, and they could have not gotten any court of law to try to advance their interests."

Jean-Baptiste further stated throughout much of the 20th Century, the tense racial climate for African-Americans — who were subjected to lynchings and discrimination under Jim Crow laws — was not conducive to achieving due process.

He added that African-American descendants of slaves should be allowed the same legal platform the U.S. has provided other ethnic groups. "The courts did entertain the Japanese claim (of being placed in interment camps during World War II), and the courts did entertain the claims of victims of the Holocaust," Jean-Baptiste said. "We think that the court system of the United States has to step up and provide some type of relief."

Dr. Conrad Worrill, chairman of the National Black United Front (NBUF) said companies that have lied about their involvement in the slave trade should be held accountable.

"We say repair the damage that was inflicted upon us," Worrill said. "Why are we still dealing with this issue today? What happened? The 40 acres and a mule that was
(See Reparations, Page 4)



GREAT TEACHER

President Bush waves with teacher Kimberly Oliver, on Wednesday after Oliver was named 2006 National Teacher of the Year during a hite House ceremony. Oliver is a kindergarten teacher in Silver Spring, Md.



There's nothing like it!

Great Entertainment
Delicious BBQ & Ethnic Foods
Special Guest Appearances
Vendor Booths
Bring the whole family!

Saturday, June 17, 2006
Sammy Davis Jr. Plaza
In Lorenzi Park
4 pm-9 pm

THE 6th ANNUAL LAS VEGAS JUNETEENTH FESTIVAL

Join area businesses and thousands of attendees for Juneteenth on Saturday, June 17th. This important community event will be promoted through local radio, The Sentinel Voice, the Las Vegas Review Journal and more! Single vendor booths are \$300 and there is a number of sponsorship opportunities offering great exposure through media and at the event.

For information contact Diane Hughes
(702) 255-6659 • Fax (702) 255-8464
www.alpfoundation.org