

Race factor in many U.S. elections

By Ron Walters
Special to Sentinel-Voice

A few of the primary elections this month have settled some scores and provided opportunities in some other cases.

First, it was somewhat sad that former Congressman Kweisi Mfume did not win the Democratic primary in Maryland so that he could square off in the general election against Republican African-American candidate Michael Steele.

But, Ben Cardin, the victor, was able to raise far more money and was, as a result, far more visible and was, therefore, able to pay for a more aggressive ground attack. The contest is now between Ben Cardin, 19-term member of Congress, and Michael Steele.

The guessing now is whether Blacks in Maryland will support Cardin or Steele and, if so, to what degree.

Prince George's County, the largest affluent Black majority county in the country, increased its registration by 55,000 since 2002, the largest Democratic increase in the state.

But, it appears now that Mfume is out of the picture, some of them will vote for Republican Michael Steele, especially since hip-hop mogul Russell Simmons and Radio One empresario, Kathy Hughes, endorsed Steele. I wonder if that was what Simmons and Hughes were betting on.

Elsewhere, it looks like a brother, Minnesota State Rep. Keith Ellison, is in position to contest in the general election to become the first person from the Muslim community



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to be elected to the U.S. Congress. The 43-year-old Detroit native won the Democratic nomination in the Fifth District that U.S. Rep. Martin Sabo is leaving.

This nomination makes him the favorite against Republican challenger Alan Fine and the interesting thing about this match-up this November is that both have substantial support in the Jewish community.

Finally, Brooklyn, N.Y., was a mess. When Rep. Major Owens, the seven-term Congressman, announced his retirement, David Yassky, a White member of the City Council jumped in — and he was endorsed by the *New York Times*. That set up a fight for the seat long held by Blacks since the days of

the legendary Shirley Chisholm. Councilwoman Yvette D. Clarke, 41, narrowly beat both Yassky and Rep. Owens' son, Chris Owens, for the seat.

The contest rekindled the old question of whether a White candidate could represent Blacks better than Blacks. It's a question that, in general, should have been put to rest.

The issue of representation has two dimensions, both depending on whether the person is effective in securing the resources needed by his or her constituents.

It is also important that the constituents be represented by someone who shares their color, demonstrating democratic participation of all groups in American society.

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Mutombo hospital should be a slam dunk

By James Clingman
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Like Dikembe Mutombo used to do, I am wagging my finger at some of his fellow NBA players and coaches, specifically those who are not financially assisting him with building a hospital in Kinshasa, Congo. Yes, some are doing their own projects, and other players should help them, too, but those players who are simply striving to make more money, to become the "first billionaire athlete," and continue to squander their resources on trinkets made by everyone except Blacks should consider helping Dikembe.

I received an e-mail about the article in *USA Today* regarding Dikembe Mutombo's project in Congo. Although he has been on this quest for several years, and he has appeared on "Sixty Minutes" and other media venues, apparently this latest story has garnered more attention, which could be due to the strategy being employed to raise the money Mutombo needs to complete the hospital.

He is asking for 100,000 people to donate \$10 per month for a year in order to raise \$9 million. That's right, I said, "\$9 million." It seems to me that amount could be raised in a New York minute by NBA players. Of course, if man-on-the-street folks want to contribute that's all well and good. But, the fact that this brother has to organize his latest campaign to do such a wonderful thing says a lot about his fellow NBA players. It also says a lot about their Black consciousness — and the lack thereof.

I have read about NBA guys spending enormous sums of money on "things" but seldom read about them using enormous sums of their money for economic initiatives. What an opportunity this is to leave a permanent legacy in Africa, a legacy of collec-

tive work and responsibility, a legacy of brotherly love, a legacy of cooperation and support. Where is Craig Hodges when we need him?

Quite frankly, I think it's a shame, first, that the project is not completed after all these years and, second, that Mutombo has to pursue such a strategy, one which folks on my financial level choose to employ. We started the Blackonomics Million Dollar Club in an effort to get 200,000 people to contribute just \$5, five times per year, to help Black institutions and organizations. We have a significant number of BMDC members thus far, but we are nowhere near the 200,000. This is the kind of initiative that at its maximum strength, could, solve Dikembe's problem — in less than a year's time.

Hundreds of millions of dollars are earned by Black NBA players, much of which is spent at non-Black-owned businesses — clothing and jewelry stores, real estate agencies, automobile dealerships, sports agencies — and they do not have the consciousness to give \$9 million to one of their own? This situation also speaks to the larger problem of Black folks in general being unwilling to give our dollars to the things we say are valuable. We should be ashamed of not taking better care of one another.

Building a hospital in Congo, especially after Dikembe Mutombo has put \$15 million of his own money into the project, rather than being a high percentage slam dunk, it remains a low percentage three-pointer, despite the tremendous resources controlled by NBA players and coaches.

With the changing of the guard in the they want them to be correct.

And the correct thing for Democrats to do is to nominate a southerner for president.

In the 10 presidential elections since the John F. Kennedy-Lyndon B. Johnson era ended in 1968, Democrats have won only three times, counting Clinton's 1996 re-election victory. With a record like that, even poor students of history should have learned by now.

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JAMES CLINGMAN

NBA, the bling-bling hip-hop culture, so too comes the individualistic thinking, the self-absorbed attitudes of this new generation of players. The result of individualism over collectivism is not only manifested in the lack of players "stepping up" to help Mutombo, it is also displayed on the court, and it is a prescription for failure.

How did the greatest team ever assembled — the 1992 Olympic Dream Team — destroy all of its opponents? It did it with teamwork, which stresses collectivism rather individualism. Michael Jordan could have dominated scoring, he did not. Charles Barkley could have dominated rebounding, he did not. John Stockton did not lead in steals, and Magic Johnson did not lead in assists. Why have we not seen that same kind of domination since 1992? Could it be that today's players are too concerned about their individual stats and refuse to help their teammates do well?

The same principle applies in the day-to-day world of economic empowerment. If we fail to work collectively, sure, we will see a few individuals do well, but our team will

lose.

Much of what we see in our super-rich athletes and entertainers, especially the young ones, is a result of the older generation abdicating its responsibility to educate them on important issues such as collective economic empowerment and Black consciousness.

They were left on their own, to fend for themselves, to "get theirs," and they have done quite well at it, using their God-given physical talents. But an unintended consequence of such an attitude is the pervasiveness of individuality over connectedness and interdependence.

While I am confident Dikembe will get the funds he needs, and he should, I am dismayed at Black folks' lack of consciousness and commitment to help one another and to support one another with our dollars. Black NBA players should help this brother, as he should help them in their causes. These guys have too much money, too many affluent agents, and too many corporate sponsors to be asking for monetary assistance from brothers and sisters who cannot even afford the price of admission to an NBA game.

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Obama

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we're going to take back our nation."

Warner accused President Bush of using the anniversary of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks to inject the issue of terrorism into the 2006 race. Warner said the strategy is proof that the GOP is nervous and trying to scare voters.

"I think Americans feel President Bush missed an opportunity on the fifth anniversary of 9/11 to bring our country together, to call us to some level of common cause and shared sacrifice," Warner told The Associated Press.

Obama said he and other Democrats want to take the nation in a different direction, but he vowed not to "demonize" Republicans. He said a carefully cast message could lure moderate Republicans who are uncomfortable with the White House's hard-line conservative stance.

"The American people are ready for change," he said. "The American people recognize the path [of] the last five years

has not made us more competitive, has not opened more opportunities and has not made us safer."

Obama called the attention he has received "flattering," recalling how he was treated like a hero when he traveled to Kenya this summer to visit his father's home village. He also noted that rumors of his presidential ambitions began the day after he was elected to the Senate in 2004, when someone asked him about his plans for 2008. "I said you'll have to wait a little while," he said.

In his speech to more than 2,000 activists gathered in a county park, Obama also warned that many voters are losing hope that the government is on their side.

"Even those of us in public life get a certain cynicism," he said. "We've got a lot of self-important leaders who are long on rhetoric and short on ideas."

"People still believe that in America the promise is limitless, but they aren't sure their leaders do."

Curry

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mischaracterizing their opponents, painting those who raise questions about the U.S. presence in Iraq as traitors and linking the invasion of Iraq to the fight on terrorism.

At the same time, Democrats have been their own worst enemy. They have been timid in challenging Bush on the war in Iraq and haven't exemplified courage on simple things; they got caught up trying to label a Christmas tree a "holiday tree." Voters don't want their leaders to be politically correct;