

Presidential fight hits ground in S.C.

By Ron Walters
Special to Sentinel-Voice

The South Carolina Primary next year is interesting to me because it could well determine who the nominee of the Democratic Party will be. As the fourth in line, but the first to exhibit Black voting power, whoever comes out of the first three (Iowa, New Hampshire and Nevada) and wins the Black vote could have the kind of national momentum that could spell victory.

In 2004, Blacks amounted to 47 percent of the vote in the primary, and so it is decisive in that regard. The battle for South Carolina has now begun with Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama appearing there to campaign in early February.

In fact, there were reports that Obama "stepped on" Hillary's visit by positioning his close to hers, so as not to give her an uncontested ride in the polls. Nevertheless, it was the first time voters had the benefit of their attention, and they both showed well in a state that was won by Jesse Jackson's campaign in 1988.

Obviously sensitive to the possibilities, Barack Obama began to roll out his connection to the Civil Rights Movement, citing his appreciation for the legacy of Rosa Parks and Septima Clark in appearances that attracted 2,000 people in Orangeburg and 3,000 in Co-

lumbia. His reference to Septima Clark was not an idle one, since Clark, a confidant of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., is a major civil rights activist born in Charleston who taught in Columbia for nearly 20 years and is an icon in that state.

But he was also received well by some Whites who came to the integrated rallies and spoke well of his chances and the contradiction that it posed to Southern Whites. One White engineer, for example, said that it posed the problem of "doing the right thing culturally or doing the right thing civically."

This is a key to the fact that he was probably not one of the marginal cadre of traditional White liberals who voted for Jackson, but perhaps a moderate who could be moved to vote for a Black man for the first time in his life.

Meanwhile, Hillary had also made a splash among Blacks who had voted for her husband and who thought, like some, that Barack did not have enough experience, but that Hillary had been a Senator longer and had actually been in the White House for eight years. A key Black politician, State Senator Darrell Jackson, however, got him-



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self in trouble by suggesting that a Black man at the top of the national ticket would bring the whole thing down and that every Democrat would lose as a result.

It was later discovered that these remarks were not objective in that Jackson, who also pastors a 10,000-member church and has a consulting firm, was receiving \$10,000 per month from Clinton's campaign. Nevertheless, Jackson said what many of those attracted to Hillary Clinton will be thinking.

They will go with her not only because of the overhanging positive sentiments Blacks have toward her husband, but because they are a practical crowd that wants to win. Many want to be close to power for whatever reason and to do that, they must pick the surest horse.

How many of these will there be? I don't know. It all depends on whether the potency of Obama's attraction continues to grow or fizzles out.

Perhaps because she is better positioned to trade on the Clinton appeal, Hillary's pitch was surprisingly light. She used her appearances to highlight her views on the Iraq War, to shore up a position that seems to be less

popular than Barack's, and she talked about wanting to have the Confederate flag removed from the statehouse grounds.

The hard bread and butter issues played a minor part in her stomp speech not only to audiences that were also integrated, but to Black audiences as well.

That said, the Barack Obama appears to be gaining influence in South Carolina, having been endorsed by Dick Hartpootlian, the former state Democratic chair with significant contacts among White voters, and key ministers in that state.

It remains to be seen which candidate the powerful Rep. Jim Clyburn supports, since he has chosen not to endorse any one now, but to serve as a moderator of the attempts of all candidates to be presented to the Black community.

If Obama continues to excite Whites in that state, he could win the primary and by doing so, would create a coalition formula for Democratic victory in other Southern states in the general election. And although Democratic leaders gave away the South to the Republican party in 2000 and 2004, South Carolina could be a beachhead to the White House in 2008.

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Warming up as Black's month winds down

By James Clingman
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Carter G. Woodson began Negro History Week in 1926, designating it to take place during the second week of February to coincide with the birthdays of Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln. That second week in February, which eventually became the entire month of February, is now called Black History Month.

We cannot discredit in any way the efforts of Woodson's initiative — Black consciousness and resolve to strengthen our people through history and education. His effort to establish what is now an entire month of celebrations and remembrances of our people is laudable. But, I have a bone to pick with Black History Month.

In 1926, things were very different. Personal transportation was scarce among Black people, very few Blacks even wanted to fly, and many could not afford the price of an airline ticket anyway. Blacks pretty much stayed in the areas of the country where they lived, especially during Negro History Week in February. They celebrated in their homes, churches and schools, for the most part. Besides, as it is now in 2007, it was flat-out cold in February 1926, and you know how much many Black folks dislike cold weather.

Today, we celebrate Black History Month across the country, and we often travel to dif-

ferent cities to participate in celebrations, as well. In addition, Black people organize events during Black History Month and invite out-of-towners to speak and to participate in other ways. This is a real problem in eastern and northern cities and even in some of the near western cities, like Denver, Kansas City, and Oklahoma City. Why? Because it's cold, and most of the time it snows in February.

I recently read where Chicago had to cancel one of its events again this year because of the cold weather, and I am sure that happens in many other cities. Yes, this is personal with me because I love to drive to most places when I speak, and February driving is not my idea of a fun time.

"So what," you ask? Well, here is the plan: Let's change Black History Month from February to June. The obvious reason is the weather, but we could also fold in our Juneteenth Celebrations with Black History Month activities and not have to worry about the cold, snow and ice of February canceling our events or making it difficult for us to participate. Hey, we can pick up two more days in the process, too.

It may appear that I am joking around,



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but I am dead serious brothers and sisters. I understand the deference to Carter G. Woodson and his reason for assigning Black History Week in February; and I am grateful to him for doing so. Nevertheless, we do not have to continue to conduct our celebration of what he started in what probably is the coldest month of the year.

We need to be traveling and mingling with one another during the celebration of Black History. We need to be visiting relatives and celebrating the fact that we are still on this earth. We need to see one another, be able to eat outside, play outside, and remember our ancestors when the leaves are on the trees, when the sun is shining, as we watch our children playing. February is just not the month for that.

As my man, Gil Scott-Heron said in his "vibration" on the Ghetto Code: "There is something wrong with February."

I would venture to guess that our ancestors didn't like February too much either. There were no leaves on the trees for cover at night and very little visible black and brown soil for camouflage; instead, in some cases, they had only a backdrop of white snow and a trail of footprints, which were

not conducive for escaping. They endured bitter cold, day and night, with few clothes to warm their bodies and thin blankets to warm their children. No, I don't imagine our ancestors liked February very much at all.

This year during Black History Month, I was honored to be invited to speak at Pittsburgh's Carnegie Mellon University, Youngstown (Ohio) State University, and the Northeast Church of Christ in Oklahoma City — areas all known for unpredictable winter weather in February.

I am sure many of you had places to go during Black History Month, as well; I pray you were not stranded or delayed because of the miserable weather we had during the first three weeks of February. I don't know about you, but I certainly enjoy traveling more in June than in February. Yes, this may be a little selfish, but I think it's a reasonable task for us to undertake.

We don't have to ask anyone; the corporations and mass media will go along with whatever we say in this case; so don't worry about your annual donations. They will adjust their sales and their commercials to whatever month we decide we want to celebrate OUR Black History.

So before you get cold feet, just remember the real reason for our celebrating Black History, and remember who owns it. Black History is definitely a "Black Thang," y'all.

So, what do you think? Can we start a campaign right now, and change our month from February to June (or maybe you have a better month to suggest)? Email me, and let me know what you think via www.blackonomics.com.

This time next year, we can just sit at home, stay warm, and look forward to Black History Month in June, when the sun will refresh our bodies and remind us of the natural habitat of our ancestors.

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and anticipating the millions of beads that are thrown from the floats.

This went on for hours until mid-afternoon. To see these vibrant and joyous citizens welcoming the floats through the many neighborhoods of New Orleans — middle class, working class, public housing, commercial — it was all the same.

Beautiful people, such as fathers holding their children; grandmothers surrounded by

their grandchildren, etc. It was America at its finest.

At the end of the parade, I was absolutely exhausted. Happy, overwhelmed, but still exhausted. The next five hours after the parade were spent in deep sleep at the hotel. After that, I reflected on the experience.

These people, proud and deep in culture, cannot be defeated. It is their legacy and resilience that will make them endure.

Fat Tuesday was a day of love and cel-

bration. Not one negative word was uttered. It is documented that not one crime was reported. Floats named Zulu King, Zulu Queen, Shaka Zulu, Zulu Maids and Zulu everything else you can imagine were vessels of celebration and rejoicing.

God is not going to let New Orleans die. As God as my witness, I love this city!

Harry C. Alford is Co-founder, President/CEO of the National Black Chamber of Commerce.