

# Report: Black men crucial to American family

By Hazel Trice Edney  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

WASHINGTON (NNPA) - National Urban League President Marc Morial, in NUL's annual State of Black America address this week, describes the underachievement of Black males as being among America's greatest crises.

"This state of underachievement, with its devastating and far-reaching ramifications, is the most serious economic and civil rights challenge we face today," Morial says in his report, "The State of Black America 2007: Portrait of the Black Male," a 260-page document released this week. "It's a problem with a major rippling effect. Not only does it

impact individual Black men. It also hurts their families and communities. It's not just a problem for the African-American community. It's a problem for everyone in this nation."

The SOBA report, an annual measurement of Black progress, outlines egregious statistics:

Black men are more than twice as likely to be unemployed as White men and make only 74 percent as much a year.

Black men are more than six times as likely than White men to be incarcerated and their average jail sentences tend to be 10 months longer than those of White men.

At the end of 2001, 16.5 percent of the Black male

population had been to prison compared to 7.7 percent of Hispanic and 2.7 percent of White men.

Young Black males between the ages of 15 and 34 years are nine times more likely to be killed by firearms and nearly eight times as likely to suffer from AIDS.

Of single parent Black households in 2005, only 12 percent were led by men.

More than two-thirds of Black children live in one-parent households in 2005, the majority headed by women.

More than 42 percent of female-headed Black households with children were poor, compared to slightly more than 9 percent of married Black households.

"The absence of the Black man in the Black family will only lead to greater poverty for our community as a whole," states Morial. "It helps exacerbate the disparities already existing between minorities and Whites in the United States."

The SOBA report includes op-eds by author, speaker and educator Michael Eric Dyson, and national child advocate Marian Wright Edelman. It also includes essays by NAACP Legal Defense Fund General Counsel Theodore Shaw and noted researcher Silas Lee as well as a foreword by Illinois Democratic Sen. Barack Obama.

Black America is like two stories, states Obama, a lead-

ing Democratic candidate for president whom many view as a symbol of success. But, his forward tells two sides.

"One story celebrates the extraordinary fact that some of this country's top financial institutions have Black chief executives, that a Black woman is president of an Ivy League university, that the current and previous secretaries of state are Black Americans, that a Black coach led his team to victory in the Super Bowl, that the college graduation rate of Black women has never been higher, that homeownership by Blacks is as high as it has

ever been, and that Blacks have penetrated nearly every barrier in law, business, medicine, sports, education, politics and public service," the senator writes in the SOBA foreword.

"But, another story must also be told about the state of Black America," he states. "A quarter of all Black Americans live below the federal poverty level, a poverty rate about twice the national rate. More than a third of all Black children live in poverty and almost two-thirds grow up in a home without both parents. In

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## D.C. folks seek vote in Congress

By Shari Logan  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

WASHINGTON (NNPA) - In front of the U.S. Capitol, where Congress supported going to war against Iraq four years ago in order to bring that country democracy, thousands of people gathered and chanted, "Free DC!" this week at a rally to push voting rights for the District's congressional representative.

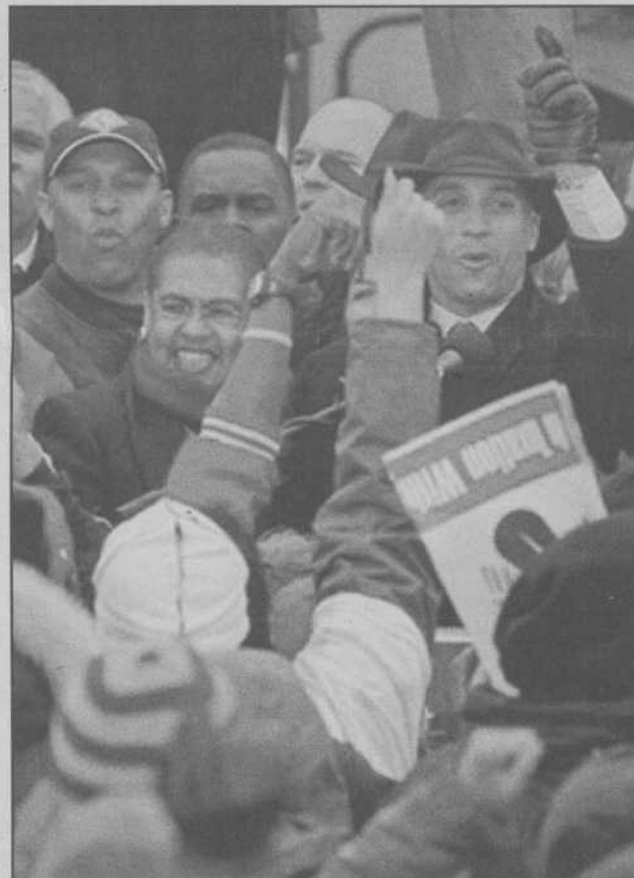
"It is time to end this pathetic ritual of sending our tax money away before a penny is spent on us," said Del. Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-D.C.) at the march, which was held on the District's Emancipation Day holiday.

Norton can only sit in full congressional sessions in attempt to influence her colleagues about the needs and concerns of over 550,000 D.C. residents. She can vote in committee, but not on the House floor.

The residents of Washington, D.C., the nation's capitol, have the second highest per capita federal income in the country. Yet, they have no say in whether the nation should go to war, in shaping national educational policies, nor other important issues like health care and Social Security.

The district is about 57 percent Black and 38 percent White. Norton has said she believes race is the basis for the Congress's historic denial of full representation in Congress.

As a D.C. voting rights bill makes it way through the House and was expected to pass this week, Norton is hoping the issue will become more prevalent nationally in



Eleanor Holmes Norton, the District of Columbia's non-voting congressional delegate, left, laughs as Washington Mayor Adrian Fenty gives a spirited speech to a crowd of more than 2,000 people during a rally supporting Washington D.C. voting rights in Washington on Monday.

order to push it through the Senate. The bill would give D.C. its first full seat in the House.

"It's about equality," said Heidi Henson, a student from Hawaii, who attends Evergreen College.

Michelle Vanderhoff, a medical newsletter editor, said that she hopes the people in Congress will notice the diversity of the crowd and realize that it is just not a liberal issue. "It's a civil rights issue," she said.

D.C. Mayor Adrien Fenty applauded the crowd of 3 to 5,000 people for braving the cold drizzle and up to 60 mile

per hour winds.

"Is anyone cold?" he shouted.

The diverse crowd, made up of teachers, parents, student groups, advocacy organizations, and labor unions

shouted back, "No!"

Fenty read a letter from a fourth grader living in the District.

The letter asked, "Why do you think Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson and other patriots signed the Declaration of Independence?" The fourth grader's answer was, "To stop taxation without representation."

Fenty told the crowd that it was a necessary to be a patriot, not a loyalist, and to struggle for full American citizenship.

Before the march, D.C. Vote Executive Director Ilir Zherka said, "We demand the vote for D.C., I believe we will make a difference. Congress knows we are coming, and the president knows it's time to bring democracy to our nation's capital!"

If the bill is passed, D.C. would have its first voting representation in Congress in its 217 year history.

But, first the residents must get across the Congress and then to the White House the importance of the message on the banner they marched with this week: "First Freed. Then Taxed. Still No Vote."

Shari Logan is a writer for the Capstone News Service.

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