

# Are race-neutral Black politicians outmoded?

By Hazel Trice Edney  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

WASHINGTON (NNPA) - Parren J. Mitchell, one of the 13 founding members of the Congressional Black Caucus, was remembered this week for his passion for Black inclusion and justice, a quality that some civil rights leaders say must be salvaged as African-Americans lose economic and civil rights ground.

"He taught me and so many others who were a part of that generation right behind him that it was important to speak truth to power and not to be afraid to do that and at the end of the day if we're only left with our principles, that's all we would really need," said former NAACP President and CEO Kweisi Mfume, who was a young thug in the streets of Baltimore when Mitchell broke him into politics. Mfume succeeded him in Congress after he stepped

down in 1987.

"Parren always said that if you went into office, worried about re-election, you might get re-elected, but you would never do what you were supposed to do for the office," said Mfume.

"He did not believe in compromising principles. He would compromise on issues and tidbits and amendments, but when it came to basic principles, he thought it was important, particularly, for Black men to stand strong. Parren was just angered by injustice. That's the only way I can put it."

Mitchell, whose memory was honored at a Mass of Resurrection at the Saint James Episcopal Church in Baltimore on Tuesday, died May 28 of pneumonia. He was 85.

The World War II veteran, decorated with a purple heart, was vehemently opposed to the Vietnam war as a matter of principle. But, he is best



Parren Mitchell helped found the Congressional Black Caucus, which has become an influential political force.

known as the quintessential race man.

"Parren J. Mitchell was a fighter and a warrior. He extended the struggle for civil rights and equal justice into

the area of economic opportunity and spearheaded federal legislation mandating set asides for minority contractors," said U.S. Rep. John Lewis, D-Ga., in a statement.

"Through these acts, he influenced a whole generation of businessmen and women who benefited from his vision of economic equality."

Other founding members of the CBC were the late Shirley Chisholm, William L. Clay Sr., George W. Collins, John Conyers, Ronald Dellums, Charles Diggs, Augustus F. Hawkins, Ralph Metcalfe, Robert Nix, Charles Rangel, Louis Stokes and Walter Fauntroy.

Mitchell is particularly remembered for his stance on affirmative action.

He attached an amendment to President Jimmy Carter's \$4 billion Public Works Bill. It was this amendment that compelled state, county and municipal governments to set aside 10 percent of the money for minority contractors and subcontractors when seeking federal contracts. A subsequent amendment of his to the 1982 Surface Transportation Assistance Act also required 10 percent set aside for Black and other minority contractors.

National Action Network President Al Sharpton observes that, for a while, Black politicians had begun to shift away from the strong Black platforms. They ran on "beyond race" or even race-neutral platforms, such as former Gov. L. Douglas Wilder, elected in Virginia in 1989, becoming the nation's first elected Black governor, but subsequently failing in his race for the Democratic nomination to the presidency and the U.S. Senate.

The city of Baltimore, members of Congress and other civil rights leaders

across the nation prepared to honor Mitchell as the nation awaits a Supreme Court ruling that could severely damage racial desegregation principles in *Brown v. Board of Education*. Also, even after a Supreme Court ruling in favor of affirmative action, the state of Michigan has lost affirmative action in higher education due to a referendum and economic disparities between Blacks and Whites have hardly budged for decades. For example, the unemployment rate for Blacks is constantly double that of Whites for all age groups.

"The experiment of not following the tradition of the Parren Mitchells has failed. A lot of Blacks are now saying, 'Wait a minute. We haven't gotten anything with these moderate beyond race kinds of Black politicians and are going back for those that are standing up and being strong in terms of 'We represent our constituency.'"

As examples, Sharpton points to the strength of nonsense Detroit Black Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick who was recently re-elected when facing a moderate Black challenger Freman Hendrix. Also, former Rep. Harold Ford lost a race for the U.S. Senate, running as a moderate last year and then Lt. Gov. Michael Steele lost his race for the Senate.

Sharpton predicts that more Mitchell-type politicians are rising up and will no longer compromise race issues in order to win election votes.

"These guys have come up with a new moderate thing. And we've lost more than we've won."

## Your Horoscope Says... June 7-13

### ARIES

Focus intently on the personal this week. Others may seem scattered or impersonal, but that's not for you. Keep your thoughts and feelings to yourself until others are more receptive to your steady vibrations.

Soul Affirmation: Money and happiness are closely related this week.

Lucky Numbers: 20, 30, 50

### TAURUS

A personal decision is made, and you are happy for the person who made it. This person may be younger than you, but you've got a karmic bond between you. Enjoy the excitement of shared moments. Use your imagination to create a better world for both of you.

Soul Affirmation: The pictures in my head give the greatest joy this week.

Lucky Numbers: 9, 44, 52

### GEMINI

A relationship may be heating up this week. Make sure you know what you want, then go ahead. Minor challenges on the home front are easily dealt with if you keep your sense of humor. Secrets are important. Keep them.

Soul Affirmation: My goodwill is my best weapon.

Lucky Numbers: 3, 30, 31

### CANCER

You may feel an extra burst of energy this week. This is a good time for you wrap up any miscellaneous details on a project that you've been working on. Your vibrations are very conducive towards generosity and general well-being that you'll want to extend to friends and family.

Soul Affirmation: Communication is a master key that fits many doors.

Lucky Numbers: 5, 7, 10

### LEO

Start setting goals. Do a periodic cleaning of your home and get rid of the junk that has been cluttering your life! Start saving your money for a big vacation that you and that special someone have been planning. Do something extravagant.

Soul Affirmation: Clinging to the old will inhibit my growth this week.

Lucky Numbers: 2, 39, 45

### VIRGO

Flexibility is needed to deal with a work issue. You're sure you're right but compromise will be necessary to overcome someone's objections. Don't think they are being spiteful. They simply see things differently than you do. Your insights this week are special and specialized. Don't expect agreement.

Soul Affirmation: Slow and easy is the best way for me to travel this week.

Lucky Numbers: 7, 8, 10

### LIBRA

If you need a good week to put away the memorabilia of a past love, this week's that week. Tuck away his or her photograph. If it's over and now it's time to move on, don't stall your love life dwelling on what was. Get ready for what can be.

Soul Affirmation: I slow down and take the feelings of others in consideration.

Lucky Numbers: 1, 26, 33

### SCORPIO

Your harmony with your business or domestic partner should improve as you take steps to strengthen communication. Slow down and give everyone a chance to get on the same page. Plan well before you act. Enjoy hanging loose.

Soul Affirmation: I trust my gut instincts concerning all matters.

Lucky Numbers: 2, 39, 40

### SAGITTARIUS

A little child will lead them is certainly something you should keep in mind this week. Wisdom from a little person, a son, daughter, younger brother or sister can be very helpful to you. Lighten up on yourself. Self criticism is not a good idea this week.

Soul Affirmation: I loosen up and enjoy my life without worry.

Lucky Numbers: 24, 25, 26

### CAPRICORN

Trials and tribulations are damaging this week only if you let them be. You are a master at living above day-to-day concerns. Enjoy looking at the big picture. Watch bright skies gathering above a distant horizon. Bring the future into the present and enjoy.

Soul Affirmation: I enjoy the fruits of past labor.

Lucky Numbers: 17, 19, 21

### AQUARIUS

This week is a good week for remembering that without the help of your colleagues it would be impossible for you to expedite the tasks that need to be done. Cultivate relationships with those who can help you get important stuff done. Thank them graciously and celebrate with them.

Soul Affirmation: I am everybody's sweetheart.

Lucky Numbers: 12, 41, 55

### PISCES

You can be very efficient this week if you set your will to the task. New ideas will occur to you as you are working steadily, so keep pencil and paper nearby to jot down your latest brilliance!

Soul Affirmation: I will ask joy to marry me.

Lucky Numbers: 1, 8, 14

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— THURSDAY —

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