

Black women take charge in city of Baltimore

By Sean Yoes

Special to Sentinel-Voice

BALTIMORE (NNPA) - Baltimore Mayor Sheila Dixon, City Council President Stephanie Rawlings-Blake and Comptroller Joan Pratt completed a historic political trifecta last week holding on to the top three seats in Baltimore City government.

Add Patricia Jessamy, Baltimore City State's Attorney and you have four Black women occupying the four most important offices in the city — perhaps an unprecedented scenario in American history.

"I think it's phenomenal, I think it's extraordinary," said Mayor Dixon during a phone interview as she traveled by automobile.

"When you look at the city council when I first came in, women were in the minority; African-Americans were in the minority," the mayor remembered.

One of the mayor's childhood friends, Debra Hall, who was volunteering for



Baltimore Mayor
Sheila Dixon

Dixon on Election Day, says she was probably destined to run the city.

"Sheila and I... were elementary, junior high school friends... in classes in junior high school she always said to us that one day she would be our boss," said Hall with a laugh.

"I don't really remember saying that," said Mayor Dixon. "But, I do remember always having a focus on achievement and helping other people."

Baltimore City Comptroller Joan Pratt's strong record of fiscal responsibility and

independence on the Board of Estimates dissuaded competitors for her office as she ran unopposed.

"I think the citizens believe I'm doing a great job being fiscally responsible," said Pratt.

"I think I do the best job for the citizens, for the taxpayers," added Pratt who, like Dixon, is excited about the city's history-making leadership.

"It's a great day in Baltimore City. It feels great. I think women bring a different perspective to leadership," said Pratt, who as comptroller, actually oversees the municipal post office, municipal telephone exchange, the department of audits and the department of real estate.

"What I would like to see happen in this new administration is the department of real estate and the depart-



City Council President
Stephaine Rawlings-Blake

ment of housing work together to eradicate some of these vacant houses," said Pratt who, about to begin her fourth term, isn't resting on what is widely acknowledged as a highly accomplished career.

"What I would like to do is perform more financial and performance audits to be sure that the city does not expend more funds than it should," she said.

Just a couple of days after her victory, Mayor Dixon is already signaling an urgency in city government that there will be more of an emphasis on accountability.

"We really have to look at city agencies. Either they have to step up their game or I'm going to have to clean house," said the mayor. "Some folks aren't going to like it, but we need accountability — no more hand-outs," said Dixon, who said she realizes that being the city's first woman mayor is an extra challenge for her as she governs a city bulging with challenges.

"You have to constantly prove yourself. But, you have to stay focused on the mission," she said. "It's [sexism] there, but you just try to be on top of your game."

Dixon said what she felt in her spirit and what she expressed verbally regarding



City Comptroller
Joan Pratt

her faith during her victory speech election night guide her as she leads the city.

"I don't look at it like other people. I have to look at it spiritually," she said. "I was thinking how awesome God is to allow me to take on this awesome responsibility to direct the city to, hopefully, make significant changes."

Sean Yoes writes for the Afro-American Newspapers.

Islam

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"As we see it, the decision to cancel our use of the people's property emanated from one or more of the following reactionary impulses," Saalakhon told *The Final Call*. "Religious bigotry; security fears resulting from religious profiling; and political expediency, not wanting to offend certain powerful interest groups."

The office of the sergeant-at-arms did not return calls for a comment from *The Final Call*.

"This certainly seemed to me to be the red-flagging of a Muslim group," Jameel Alim Johnson, chief-of-staff for Rep. Gregory Meeks, D-N.Y., said in an email to Saalakhon. "For the sergeant-at-arms to call out of the blue on the last day to make sure [Rep. Meeks] is going to be there and is sponsoring the function is unusual and unfair."

"I think what we have witnessed here today, has the strong smell of Islamophobia," Jibril Hough, chairperson of Islamic Political Party of America, told *The Final Call*.

"I think there are elements behind the scenes here in Washington and in New York that fear Islamic presence. They fear Islamic peaceful presence, and they fear Islamic political presence. Putting us on this stage today would be taking our community off the streets, into a new arena and getting us into the mind-set of getting politically organized.

"We're here today to use the ballot, not the bullet. We're here today to organize peacefully. And ask why is there such a fear of a few Muslims coming together, organizing peacefully? Why? We have to ask that question. Why do they fear us more?"

The topics various panelists were to deal with may have set off "red flags," with security-jittery officials in the office of the sergeant-at-arms, said Saalakhon.

Some of the issues on the table included: the insertion of informants and agent-provocateurs in the Muslim community; the selective and "malicious" enforcement of immigration laws; and the open-ended detentions of Muslims, in this country and overseas.

Sister Anisa Abdu-Fatah, founder and chairwoman of the National Association of Muslim American Women, said, "The people who are presently controlling our government are determined to make sure that Muslims are going to be isolated and marginalized, and they are willing to go to any degree to do that."

Askia Muhammad writes for the *Final Call*.

Your Horoscope Says... Sept. 20-26

ARIES

This week, let your gentle spirit shine through. Your rough and tumble side is not appropriate for the relationships that you'll encounter. Someone will need your understanding and sympathy. Give it with sensitivity.

Soul Affirmation: My life itself is my greatest creation.

Lucky Numbers: 30, 39, 44

TAURUS

You're faced with a formidable task but when you defeat it, you'll take big steps toward a goal. Weigh in, and give it your best. Your energy is high. The task looks larger before you start. Compromise with a partner. The immediate future promises love.

Soul Affirmation: I enjoy the spirits of people whose spirits are akin to mine this week.

Lucky Numbers: 33, 34, 52

GEMINI

Yield to the harmony that lies below the surface of any seeming disagreement. Serenity is more important than your sense of righteousness. Questioning the motives of others will make your mind too suspicious to benefit from the unclear way in which love will present itself this week.

Soul Affirmation: Freedom of mind is the greatest gift for me this week.

Lucky Numbers: 14, 53, 54

CANCER

Your intuition is showing, and you may surprise yourself as much as you surprise another by making a sudden intuitive leap and saying what you feel. You may feel as if you can read a certain someone's mind. Use your gift for good.

Soul Affirmation: I let my luck work for me.

Lucky Numbers: 10, 23, 46

LEO

Do not travel in the company of those who work against you. Move towards people with words of encouragement and an extended hand. Release the grudge that you have for someone who betrayed you. You will find liberation and lightheartedness in forgiving. Follow your heart when it comes to a love interest.

Soul Affirmation: Intelligent information does not have to come from intelligent sources.

Lucky Numbers: 5, 29, 41

VIRGO

Stay adaptable, and all will be fine. Flexibility is easy for you when you want it to be. The situation you'll face this week will require that you alter your way of thinking about someone with whom you're involved in business or friendship.

Soul Affirmation: Facing down challenges makes me feel good about myself.

Lucky Numbers: 6, 29, 48

LIBRA

You'll want to spend some time with a special friend this week just being together. If you've been neglecting a relationship because of work demands, this week is a wonderful week to set things to rights.

Soul Affirmation: I am willing to do more than my part to get the job done this week.

Lucky Numbers: 8, 22, 53

SCORPIO

Give birth to some new impulses about love. The ones you've been using have led you to a place you do not wish to be. Give yourself a break. Change. Be less critical. Accept love even from those you do not completely agree with.

Soul Affirmation: I keep in mind the practical side of life this week.

Lucky Numbers: 6, 33, 45

SAGITTARIUS

Lots of spirituality discussions are going on around you this week. This energy will probably last throughout the week, so expect to enjoy yourself. Or, pass on all social company and spend the week enjoying yourself.

Soul Affirmation: I am a giver of good words this week.

Lucky Numbers: 1, 17, 22

CAPRICORN

This could turn out to be the most argument-filled week you've had for a while. Your feelings could be deeply hurt if you try to force your sense of rightness off on anyone else. Chill. Remember that in the past when people were cantankerous you could find pleasure in nature, or animals.

Soul Affirmation: I put my charm to work for me this week.

Lucky Numbers: 8, 39, 54

AQUARIUS

Your good will and intentions towards others will reap you an inheritance of abundance and wealth. You will be blessed with many good wishes and enjoy them in the company of family and friends.

Soul Affirmation: I appear to others what I know myself to be.

Lucky Numbers: 30, 32, 33

PISCES

Your dignity and composure is a sure asset this week. Be Mr. or Ms. Cool Breeze. In touchy situations you have the ability to maintain a high level of emotional balance and a calm disposition. Use these qualities to the fullest this week. You have the know-how to re-direct negative feelings into a positive solution.

Soul Affirmation: Superficiality is often the best route to clarity.

Lucky Numbers: 20, 28, 31