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"THE TRUTH SHALL SET YOU FREE"

## CBS split: Clinton or Obama

*By Hazel Trice Edney  
Special to Sentinel-Voice*  
WASHINGTON (NNPA) - As America prepares for a string of primaries and caucuses to determine who will be its next Democratic and Republican nominees for president, the majority of the 42-member Congressional Black Caucus who have chosen to endorse in the race is split 15-15 between CBC member Illinois Sen. Barack Obama and New York Sen. Hillary Clinton. In interviews this week, CBC members pointed mainly to the candidates' stances on specific issues as the reasons for their endorsements.

actually produce change in areas that make a difference — home ownership, education, healthcare, crime policy," said U.S. Rep. Bobby Scott, D-Va., explaining his endorsement of Obama.

Scott, who chairs the House Crime Subcommittee, says, "For years we've concentrated on and focused more on codifying... sound bites rather than seriously addressing crime."

He adds that he is impressed with Obama's record on healthcare and the war in Iraq.

"He led the charge to get more people health insurance in the Illinois legislature... He

"He is the most likely to

*"Sen. Clinton... has an enormously convincing story of someone who has empathy. And out of empathy, one can act upon the pain of others and the joy of others."*

— Sheila Jackson  
U.S. Rep. D-Texas



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— Bobby Scott  
U.S. Rep. D-Va.

also had the strength of character and courage to stand up against the Iraqi war."

U.S. Rep. Sheila Jackson-Lee, D-Texas, who has announced her endorsement of Clinton, says she believes Clinton's long record of service to children shows where her heart really is.

She says she is especially impressed that Clinton, as a young lawyer, served as a staff attorney for Marian Wright Edelman's Children's Defense Fund during her post-graduate studies and that she served as a consultant to the Carnegie Council on Children.

"This is a very important

election, and I do think that as people begin to know Sen. Clinton and they know her personally and they know her story, she has an enormously convincing story of someone who has empathy. And out of empathy, one can act upon the pain of others and the joy of others," said Jackson-Lee.

While Scott says his endorsement of Obama has nothing to do with the fact that he is Black, Jackson-Lee made no bones about what she sees as an opportunity to raise the ceiling for women in America.

"I do think that as women, whether it is minority women

(See CBC, Page 3)

## Group absolves Smith of racism

LOS ANGELES - A Jewish group announced that it accepts Will Smith's explanation that he never praised Adolf Hitler in remarks the star says were misinterpreted.

"We welcome and accept Will Smith's statement that Hitler was a 'vicious killer' and that he did not mean for his remarks about the Nazi leader to be mistaken as praise," Abraham H. Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League, said in a statement.

Smith "took immediate steps to clarify his words" and condemn Hitler, Foxman said.

Foxman said words "can be twisted by those with hate and bigotry in their hearts."

"This is why all celebrities bear a special responsibility to weigh their words carefully, and an obligation to speak out against racism and bigotry whenever even a whiff of it appears, as Will Smith has done in this instance," he said.

The *Daily Record*, a Scottish newspaper, recently quoted Smith as saying: "Even Hitler didn't wake up going, 'let me do the most evil thing I can do today.' I think he woke up in the morning and using a twisted, backwards logic, he set out to do what he thought was 'good.'"

The quote was preceded by the writer's observation: "Remarkably, Will believes everyone is basically good."

Many Web gossip sites posted articles alleging that Smith believed Hitler was a good person.

In a statement Monday, Smith called that "an awful and disgusting lie" and said he was furious about his remarks being misinterpreted.

"Adolf Hitler was a vile, heinous vicious killer responsible for one of the greatest acts of evil committed on this planet," the statement said.

## Crack-vs.-powder cocaine disparity under radar

BOSTON (AP) - During some of the bloodiest years of the drug wars of the 1980s, crack was seen as far more dangerous than powdered cocaine, and that perception was written into the sentencing laws. But now that notion is under attack like never before.

Criminologists, doctors and other experts say the differences between the two forms of the drug were largely exaggerated and do not justify the way the law comes down 100 times harder on crack.

A push to shrink the disparity in punishments got a boost last month when reduced federal sentencing guidelines went into effect for crack offenses. Then, earlier this month, the U.S. Sentencing Commission, which sets guidelines for federal

cases, voted to make the reductions retroactive, allowing some 19,500 inmates, mostly Black, to seek reductions in their crack sentences.

Many think the changes are long overdue.

Crack, because it is smoked and gets into the bloodstream faster than snorted cocaine, produces a more intense high and is generally considered more addictive than powdered cocaine.

But experts say that difference does not warrant the 100-to-1 disparity that was written into a 1986 law that set a mandatory minimum prison term of five years for trafficking in 5 grams of crack, or less than the amount in two packets of sugar. It would take 100 times as much cocaine to get the same sentence.

"There's no scientific justification to support the current laws," said Dr. Nora Volkow, director of the Na-

tional Institute on Drug Abuse.

Many defense lawyers and civil rights advocates say

the lopsided perception of crack versus cocaine is rooted in racism. Four out of every five crack defendants

are Black, while most powdered-cocaine defendants are White.

While powdered cocaine became the drug of choice for middle- and upper-income Americans in the 1970s, crack emerged in the early 1980s as a much cheaper version of the same drug.

In the mid-1980s, powdered cocaine was typically sold by the half-gram or gram for \$50 to \$100, while crack was sold as small rocks that cost as little as \$5 to \$10. Crack became popular in poor, largely minority urban areas, and it developed an image as a drug used mostly by violent, inner-city youths.

"You had politicians manipulating fear, and instead of being seen as a more direct mode of ingestion of a very old drug, it became a de-

(See Disparity, Page 2)



Federal authorities are exploring equalizing crack-vs.-powder cocaine prison sentences.