

Rights leaders hopeful about '08

By Hazel Trice Edney

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WASHINGTON (NNPA)

Leaving what could be described as the most intense year for civil rights activism since before the death of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. nearly 40 years ago, civil rights leaders vowed this week to move into 2008 with the vigor to go beyond the freedoms gained in the 1960s to the equality that is yet to be achieved.

"On Dr. King's birthday 40 years ago, he spoke on the triple evils of racism, capitalism and militarism," Rev. Jesse Jackson Sr. told the NNPA News Service this week. "And today it's still racism, capitalism without checks and balances and militarism that's eating up our budget and still undermining our ability to grow. Those triple evils remain real."

He continued, "We've got freedom in public accommodations and the right to vote. The issue now is to go beyond freedom to the fight for equality, equal access and equal protection — equal access to healthcare, equal access to education, equal access to capital, equal access to industry and technology."

Jackson, who last month

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in New York led a protest against subprime lending that has resulted in a mortgage crisis, says his RAINBOW/Push Coalition will start 2008 with a Wall Street Summit Jan. 5-9 demanding the end to record home foreclosures, which have disparately affected African-Americans.

"Around the country, we're seeing right out, straight out racial steering. The instances of subprime loans are 40 percent Latinos and 60 percent Black," Jackson said. "The issue of restructuring and not repossession, it clearly affects us in every city and every state."

The year 2008 being the 40th anniversary of the assassination of Dr. King by James Earl Ray in Memphis is expected to illuminate the necessity for African-Americans to take inventory of their

gains as a race in order to determine next steps.

"This has been the year of the rejuvenation of civil rights activism," said Rev. Al Sharpton. His National Action Network led protests that caused the firing of radio talk host Don Imus last April, drew tens of thousands of protestors to Jena, La., on behalf of the Jena Six on Sept. 20; and thousands more to D. C. for a march around the U. S. Department of Justice November 16.

"We saw more people marching — whether it was Sean Bell in New York or Jena [Louisiana] or Washington, D.C. — than we've seen in many years," Sharpton said in an interview. "But, we've got to turn that mobilization into organization and then legislation. And that's the priority for 2008."

Sharpton says NAN will hold a special conference this year during the anniversary of the King assassination.

"This is the first year that we're moving the National Action Network convention out of New York in April and we're going to do it in Memphis from April 1-4 and end on the actual anniversary of Dr. King's Assassination with a huge march in Memphis to remember what happened 40 years ago," Sharpton said. "It will sort of assess where we have not come in the last 40 years. That will be the convention theme."

Where we have "not come" was made clear over the past year as the Southern Poverty Law Center reported a 40 percent rise in race hate groups since 2000 and one racial incident after another sparked protests around the nation.

In January 2007, the story was still blaring about comedian Michael Richard's repeatedly calling a Black man the n-word from the stage in a crowded Los Angeles comedy club in November. Within a few months, talk show host Don Imus' on-air "nappy-headed hoes" insult to the Rutgers University

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Mixer focuses on caucus build-up

Special to Sentinel-Voice

The Las Vegas-Clark County Urban League Young Professionals will host a Get Out to Caucus "Party for A Purpose" Saturday, Jan. 12, from 8 p.m. to midnight, at Hennessey's Tavern, located at 425 Fremont Street.

The free event will feature an upscale party atmosphere in downtown's Fremont Street Experience, west of Las Vegas Boulevard. The event is the first of its kind for the nonprofit Young Professionals organization.

"We think everyone should be a part of the process for positive change, but in order to be a successful participant, you have to understand how things work. This party is going to be a great way for people 21 and older to come out for a good time and find out how they can support caucus efforts in Southern Nevada," said Tanya Flanagan, founding president of the local YP chapter.

The party culminates the Politics 101 series of political awareness and education workshops the community service organization has hosted around the valley since August. Other workshops addressed political ethics and the media, lobbying, campaign finance and campaign strategy.

Alex Dixon of Silver Pacific Advisors and organization member is part of the committee that coordinated the political workshop series.

"This is an amazing time in our country. We have a diverse group of candidates representing many different backgrounds. ...Our 'Party for a Purpose' is a way of bringing attention to the issues facing America in an atmosphere with flair that is also fun," Dixon said.

The night of music and dancing is going to be a pre-party type of affair, Flanagan said. "We encourage people to get out and get their night started early at the party."

Flanagan, who works for Clark County Government, said that YP targets individuals age 21 to 45 for the purpose of engaging them in community service projects and self-enrichment opportunities. The group's mission is to assist African-American and other underserved Clark County residents to achieve social and economic equality through advocacy, bridge building, program services and research.

The group does this by advancing the National Urban League's Five Point Empowerment Agenda issues: Youth and Education, Economic Empowerment, Civic Engagement, Health and Quality of Life and Civil Rights and Racial Justice. The National Urban League's YP organization, founded in 1999, is membership-based and has over 3,500 members in 65 chapters over 32 states.

NULYPLV, the new local chapter, was founded in March and held its first public event in September. The organization has since conducted mentoring programs for youth in positive transition from homelessness and other challenges. YP held its first African American Student Leadership Conference at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. This year, the group plans to host a financial growth series among other programs.

"This year is a defining year with the presidential election on the horizon," Flanagan said. "We are a nonpartisan organization. And, as an involved citizen, I think this [event] is a great mix of fun and knowledge."

The Democratic National Party and the Obama campaign are supporting this, Flanagan added.

Parking is available in the main garage with validation for up to two hours. For more information, call (702) 561-8757 or send an email to NULYPLV@yahoo.com.

N.J. officials ponder slavery apology

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New Jersey could become the first Northern state to apologize for slavery under a measure due for a legislative committee hearing this week.

"This is not too much to ask of the state of New Jersey," said Assemblyman William Payne, sponsor of the proposal. "All that is being requested of New Jersey is to say three simple words: 'We are sorry.'"

Legislators in Alabama, Maryland, North Carolina and Virginia have issued formal apologies for slavery.

"If former Confederate states can take action like this, why can't a Northeast state like New Jersey?" asked Payne, a Democrat.

According to the proposal, New Jersey had one of the largest slave populations in the Northern colonies and was the last state in the Northeast to abolish slavery formally, not doing so until 1846.

The state didn't ratify the constitutional amendment prohibiting slavery until January 1866, weeks after it became law, having rejected ratification in 1865.

Payne's measure will be set to be heard this week in a hearing by the Assembly Appropriations Committee. It hasn't received Senate consideration. The legislative session expires Tuesday.

Some Republican lawmakers wonder if it would be relevant.

"Who living today is guilty of slaveholding and thus capable of apologizing for the offense?" asked Assemblyman Richard Merkt. "And who living today is a former slave and, thus, capable of accepting the apology? So how is a real apol-

ogy even remotely possible, much less meaningful, given the long absence of both oppressor and victim?"

Payne said an apology would comfort Black residents, who make up 14.5 percent of New Jersey's 8.7 million residents.

It's proposed as a resolution, used to express the Legislature's opinion without requiring action by the governor.

No state has offered reparations to slave descendants, and New Jersey's measure says the resolution cannot be used in litigation.

Glover

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unions on the eve of a threatened strike. At the time, Glover was the veteran of poverty politics; Edwards was still a rookie in training. So Glover, who prides himself on his ability to sniff out poseurs and users, warily scrutinized the carefully coifed politician from North Carolina.

"In Boston," the Fortune article noted "he watched Edwards listen to the plight

of a single mother, an Italian immigrant who had managed on a hotel maid's pay to raise four children and send each one to college. In Chicago, Edwards took a lesson in the back-breaking work of lifting 113-pound mattresses and changing luxury duvets weighed down by piles of pillows and shams. In LA, the former senator arrived overscheduled and tired, but impressed labor leaders when he readily agreed to

squeeze in an extra meeting with a group of kitchen workers on their break."

During a post-event interview, Glover says he is "a humble man, a man who was frank and honest and a man who understood he's part of a long legacy of working people." Asked about the spotty history of local unions supporting African-American issues, Glover says unions have historically done more good than bad, and

union members must push their leaders to represent all people. Glover also acknowledged that his endorsement of Edwards—first announced at the Conference of Black Mayors in Baton Rouge, La.—caught people by surprise.

"Most people would look at me and say, whoa, here's someone who people respect in the African-American community. But it wasn't a difficult decision for me."

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