

LAS VEGAS Sentinel Voice

VOLUME 28, ISSUE 47

GRIOT COMMUNICATIONS GROUP, INC.

March 20, 2008

"THE TRUTH SHALL SET YOU FREE"

Obama speech aimed at momentum

WASHINGTON (AP) — "Race doesn't matter," the crowd chanted after Sen. Barack Obama's sweeping victory in the South Carolina Democratic primary, made possible by heavy Black support and a solid showing among White voters.

But in the seven weeks since, race has mattered more and more in his presidential struggle against Sen. Hillary Clinton, threatening to dent his lead. This week, Obama addressed it head-on in a speech that bluntly described a history of injustice to Blacks, acknowledged the resentments of Whites, and ended with the hope that his campaign can help heal racial divisions.

Like any full-blown discussion of the sensitive topic, Obama's speech carries risks. Some Whites may feel he did not do enough to distance himself from a fiery Chicago preacher who has depicted the United States as a racist society. The speech also could unleash wider discussions of race in the campaign rather than reduce its role as

a "distraction" from more important issues, a term Obama used several times.

But a recent series of unsettling events convinced the Illinois senator that a full-bore address was needed, and now.

They include a trend of White Democrats voting more heavily for Clinton while Blacks vote overwhelmingly for him; the resignation of a major Clinton supporter who made racially contentious remarks; and, above all, intense media focus on the most inflammatory statements of Obama's longtime minister, Rev. Jeremiah Wright.

Just six days ago, Obama suggested that overt discussions of race were a frustration and unwelcome diversion in his campaign. "We keep on thinking we've dispelled this," he said, speaking of the notion that he relies too heavily on Blacks support.

On Tuesday in Philadelphia, however, he said discussions of race have "taken a particularly divisive turn"

recently, and it was time for a bold and frank airing.

"The comments that have been made and the issues that have surfaced over the last few weeks," he said, "reflect the complexities of race in this country that we've never really worked through."

Obama, the son of a White mother and Black father, then addressed both racial communities in turn. He urged Blacks to embrace "the burdens of our past without becoming victims of our past."

"It means taking full responsibility for our own lives," he said, "by demanding more from our fathers, and spending more time with our children."

He called on Whites to stop denying the prevalence and continuing harm of racism. He said Whites should acknowledge "that what ails the African-American community does not just exist in the minds of Black people." The legacy of discrimination, he said, "and current incidents of discrimination, while less overt than in the past, are real and must be

addressed," in part by building better schools and other facilities in Black neighborhoods.

At the same time, Obama said Whites are partly justified in fearing that good jobs or college slots, which they qualify for, might go to Blacks under programs giving minorities "an advantage."

"To wish away the resentments of White Americans, to label them as misguided or even racist, without recognizing they are grounded in legitimate concerns, this too widens the racial divide," he said.

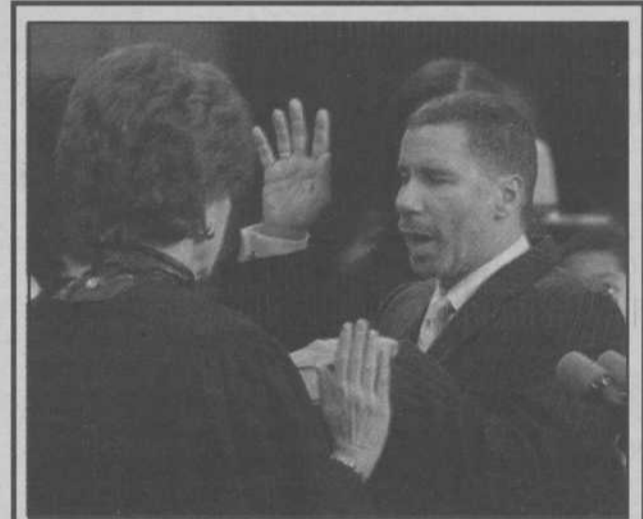
Rarely has a Black politician directed such remarks to a national audience. They come as one of Obama's key assets — his image as a biracial candidate who can bridge cultural differences and largely transcend race — threatens to become a liability. Comments from Clinton supporters and others have fueled discussions of race lately, and some White voters in Ohio and elsewhere seem to be turning against

Obama partly because of his race, according to exit polls.

In the speech, Obama seemed eager to regain control of the debate and his image. He addressed all races

and communities in calm but lightly admonishing tones, and tried to steer the conversation back to his chief themes of hope, unity and

(See Race, Page 2)



UPHOLD THE LAW

Honorable Judith S. Kaye (L), chief judge of the state of New York, swears in David Paterson as the 55th Governor of the State of New York during a ceremony at the state capitol building in Albany, New York on Monday. Paterson, 53, rose from the lieutenant governor's office after Eliot Spitzer resigned last week amid allegations that he hired a call girl from a high-priced escort service. It was a dramatic fall for Spitzer, who was elected with an overwhelming share of the vote and who had vowed to root out corruption at the Capitol.

Conyers to Black journalists: Struggle not over

By Hazel Trice Edney
Special to Sentinel-Voice

WASHINGTON (NNPA) — U.S. Rep. John Conyers Sr., the first Black chairman of the powerful House Judiciary Committee, gave pointed words of warning as he received the Lifetime Achievers Award from the National Newspaper Publishers Association last week.

"Our struggle isn't over with now by any means," Conyers declared. He should know. Chairman of one of the most powerful committees in the House of Representatives, he leads oversight of the Department of Justice; including the FBI and the federal courts, Justice has jurisdiction over copyright, constitutional, consumer protection, criminal justice and civil rights issues.

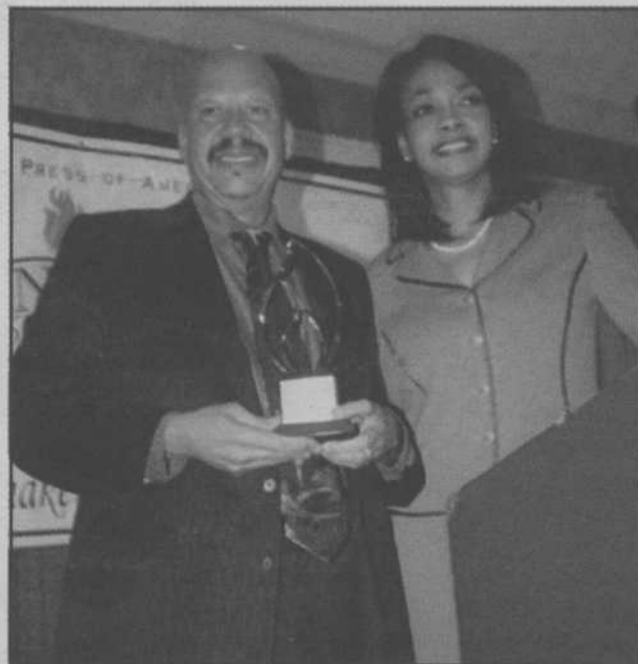
This is why the 34-year

member of Congress was honored by the association of more than 200 Black-owned newspapers during Black Press Week, the 181st birthday of the founding of the first Black newspaper.

"If Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. were alive and with us tonight, he would embrace John Conyers and thank him for his exceptional leadership in Congress in introducing and pushing legislation to make Dr. King's birthday a national holiday," said Black Press Week Chairman Ofield Dukes, a member of the NNPA Foundation's board of directors.

Making the award to Conyers, Dukes described him as a man with "political savvy and legislative steal."

Conyers, elected to the House in 1964, was the first Black member and is now its



Reach Media President Tom Joyner receives National Newspaper Publishers Association's NorthStar Community Service Award from Lezli Baskerville, president of the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education. Joyner was honored for his diligence in raising money for Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

first Black chairman. He is also known as the dean of the Congressional Black Caucus having been among its founders in 1970.

"It's the most exciting work that I could possibly be in," Conyers said. "Especially as we now move into the beginning of a new era of American governance," he said, applauding U.S. Sen. Barack Obama who could become the nation's first Black president.

Conyers also honored the Black Press in his remarks.

"I am here to celebrate the legacy, the contributions and the continuous struggle that the African-American press is confronted with," Conyers said. He added that he would ask that NNPA be honored in the Congressional Record for its historic contributions.

The evening of celebra-

tion over the NewsMaker of the Year, Sen. Barack Obama, who was not able to attend due to a string of votes on Capitol Hill, was hosted by NNPA Foundation Chair Dorothy Leavell and NNPA Chair John Smith Sr.

"We are joining the Black church in longevity and many other institutions. And we are pleased that we have been able to serve our community," said Leavell.

NNPA's third top award was given to radio talk mogul Tom Joyner for his philanthropic efforts toward Historically Black Colleges and Universities' members.

"Using his medium to get the word out about America's [HBCUs] has done more than any of us can imagine," said Lezli Baskerville, president of NAFEO, the National

(See NNPA, Page 2)