

Hiring issues dog Memphis PD

Special to Sentinel-Voice

MEMPHIS — With the city in desperate need of police officers, government officials are questioning the Memphis Police Department's hiring procedures.

In fact, some City Council members say there appears to be a coordinated effort to disqualify Black applicants.

The latest controversy follows a months-long debate on relaxing the residency rule for police in order to expand the pool of potential officers. The college degree requirement already has been eliminated.

The department has had around 2,000 officers for several years, hundreds of officers below the department's staffing complement.

Memphis has a goal of hiring 500 officers in the next five to six years. The department budgeted for 125 new hires this year.

Police officials say the department has a thorough screening process designed to produce high-quality officers that enforce — and not



Trainees from the 100th police recruit session await dismissal following a class on computer background checks at the training academy. The department faces discrimination claims.

break — the law.

Meanwhile, a list of measures Police Director Larry Godwin submitted to the council months ago — which he said would help the department recruit — has largely been ignored. While council members say they want more officers on the streets, the issue of race has

been front and center.

City Councilwoman Wanda Halbert said she heard applicants were being rejected for trivial matters, and she is alarmed by the high number of Black applicants who have been disqualified.

Councilwoman Janis Fullilove said Tuesday there

is a perception that the recruiting and screening process is designed to eliminate Black candidates.

Between 2006 and 2008, 2,644 Black men and women applied to be police officers but only 332 were hired. Over the same period, 1,024 White men and women ap-

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Sharpton cool despite heat on NAN

By Herb Boyd

Special to Sentinel-Voice

NEW YORK (NNPA) — For several days now, the *New York Post* has been on a relentless campaign to dig up dirt on Rev. Al Sharpton. A shovel load was unearthed last weekend when the paper charged that many of the reverend's National Action Network (NAN) chapters have failed to register in states that require non-profits to file public records.

These allegations followed closely on the heels of those by *Post* writers who claimed that several large corporations donated thousands of dollars to Sharpton and NAN after being told they would be threatened by accusations of racist practices.

Sharpton shrugged off the charges about his chapters not being registered, seemingly more concerned about getting his lines right June 30 during a taping of his host remarks for "Murder in Black and White," a new series from TV One directed by Keith Beauchamp that will examine cold cases from the civil rights era. "For our part," Sharpton said at the end of each of the segments that are slated to air sometime this fall and emphasizing the show's intent, "we will continue to apply heat to

these cold cases until justice is served."

Meanwhile, the embattled minister appears unperturbed by the heat from the *Post*, which may be something he's grown accustomed to given the tension between him and the paper over the years.

Then there was the wave of new subpoenas that began back in December when several of his former and current employees were asked to surrender their financial records, particularly those in connection with NAN.

It was nothing but another "fishing expedition," Sharpton said, suggesting that it was evident the first round of subpoenas had revealed no wrongdoing. "I think that this is a clear, transparent political investigation, because if they started an investigation in December, why would they be subpoenaing people after December unless they are on a fishing expedition?" he told the press.

Sharpton was even more emphatic and expansive when dealing with the charge that a "shakedown" had been applied to major corporations to get them to fork over large sums of donations.

"As I have stated repeatedly, we will never be silenced or intimidated by political zealots in law enforce-

ment or journalism who clearly operate on agendas rather than facts, and we welcome the IRS, *New York Post* or any other entity to look into our relationships with corporations because they will find corporations generally give to National Action Network events where they purchase tables and promote their corporations' particular brand or products, and some highlight what they are doing in the areas of civil rights and economic fairness," Sharpton said in a statement. "NAN does not give complimentary entry to participants since we have event costs and corporations benefit from attending our events and outlining to our delegates from around the country what they do in the area of civil rights."

In none of the *Post* stories is there any indication from the corporations that they had been shaken down or threatened with demonstrations if they didn't go along with Sharpton or NAN's demands.

"In fact," Sharpton asserted, "Brenda Scott of Macy's joined our board at the suggestion of her superiors to help us continue to monitor our corporate agreements in the areas of personnel, diversity of board members and contracts to minority and women entrepre-

neurs."

"There has been no shake-down," Sharpton boomed recently at his weekly NAN rally, "but there has been a shake up."

An extensive statement from NAN noted further that "the *Post*, in its typical fashion, omitted facts that contradicted the article's shake-down premise. Most notably, Ms. [Isabel] Vincent [the reporter] did not include one example of when Reverend Sharpton and NAN spoke out critically against companies after they had contributed to NAN, such as corporations from the music industry whose offices were marched on for their promoting indecent music lyrics or criticizing Pepsi for its use of a rapper in an ad campaign whose lyrics were offensive, or Comcast, who had a reporter who made an offensive statement. In addition, notwithstanding the fact that NBC has long sponsored NAN events and has been honored in the past, Reverend Sharpton led the charge against them to fire Don Imus."

And Imus may be in for another round of protests after his remarks about Adam "Pacman" Jones, the controversial defensive back of the Dallas Cowboys. Hearing that Jones had been arrested

Mayor Dorn in bind over loan

By Olu Alemoru

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INGLEWOOD, Calif. (NNPA) — Reaction to the indictment of Mayor Roosevelt Dorn on criminal charges relating to a home loan he received from the city is still reverberating around the city.

Dorn, 73, had been scheduled to be arraigned Thursday at the downtown Los Angeles courthouse following charges filed 27 June by the L.A. County District Attorney's office, but that arraignment has been delayed.

A former judge, Dorn is charged with one felony count each of conflict of interest, unauthorized loan and misappropriation of public funds without authority of law. He is also charged with one misdemeanor count of conflict of interest. The criminal complaint alleges that Dorn participated in an Inglewood loan program in 2004 in violation of Section 1090 of the California Government Code that forbids public employees from having an interest in any contract, and in violation of Section 424 of the California Penal Code, which addresses "crimes against public revenue."

The D.A.'s office confirmed in December that it was investigating Dorn and City Treasurer Wanda Brown for borrowing hundreds of thousands of dollars through the low-interest loan program that was established in 1992 for city administrators.

"My knee-jerk reaction [to the charges] was shock," said 4th District City Councilman Ralph Franklin. "It's a major blow to the image and character of the man and his family. His long legacy does not need a blemish of this magnitude. Ultimately, I hope there will be a smooth transition for him, his family and the city. He would be dearly missed on the dais."

Willie Agee, a longtime friend and supporter who Dorn appointed to the Parks Commission, hinted at a vendetta. "Someone's behind this, it didn't just happen," Agee said. "I think the charges sound like a technicality. He's just too good of a man, so they want to pull him down. He's done so much for the city. I support the mayor 100 percent and I hope it works out for him."

Political commentator and activist Earl Ofari Hutchinson and fellow members of the Los Angeles Urban Policy Roundtable discussed the indictment during the organization's regular Saturday meeting. Hutchinson cautioned against any rush to judgment.

"This is an indictment, not a conviction," he said. "My great concern is how the indictment of a venerable, public official like Mayor Dorn will impact the community. People like him and look up to him. I've known him for many years on a personal level and he has never let us down."

Hutchinson cited cases in Compton, Lynwood and Carson and said this should serve as a warning to African-American and Hispanic politicians that they are being watched closely. "My message to them is don't do anything to put your head on the [chopping] block. To use that phrase, you have to be purer than Caesar's wife."

However, Dorn's plight got no sympathy from 30-year Inglewood resident Steve Bogan, reacting to the news while shopping in a supermarket on La Brea and Centinela avenues.

"[Politicians are] bigger than the crooks in jail," he said. "It doesn't surprise me. It just seems like it's par for the course."

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several times, Imus asked, "What color is he?" Then when told he was Black, "There you go. Now we know."

Sharpton reacted promptly, stating: "It has been reported to me that statements were made by Mr. Imus this morning and National Action Network has monitored his show since his return. I find the inference of his remark disturbing because it plays

into stereotypes. Any use of stereotypes is always counterproductive. We will determine in the next day or so whether or not his remark warrants direct action on our part as we did in April of last year," Sharpton said. Whether on the defensive or the offensive, or hosting a radio or television show, Sharpton cannot escape the heat.

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