

Jackson: Obama dissection 'loving criticism'

By Hazel Trice Edney
Special to Sentinel-Voice

WASHINGTON (NNPA) – Rev. Jesse Jackson Sr., expressing sorrow for a vulgar remark that he made concerning presidential hopeful Barack Obama, says his only intent was to point out the need to balance campaign talk about self-responsibility and faith-based initiatives in the Black community with talk about the crisis that America's Black communities are now suffering.

"My heart is contrite. Barber shop, locker room trash talk should never be a part of public policy. For that I express painful regret," he said this week in an interview with the NNPA News Service. "That's not my intent, my motive, my message. And he knew it because he responded quickly by accepting my apology."

Not realizing that his microphone was already on as he waited for a Fox News interview, Jackson angrily told a fellow guest in a whisper that Obama is "talking down to Black people." And then he added, "I want to cut his nuts off."

The gaffe, which sent high voltage shock waves when later aired by Fox and other na-

tional news channels, drew scorching criticism from even Jackson's closest allies, including his son, U.S. Rep. Jesse Jackson Jr., a co-chair of the Obama campaign.

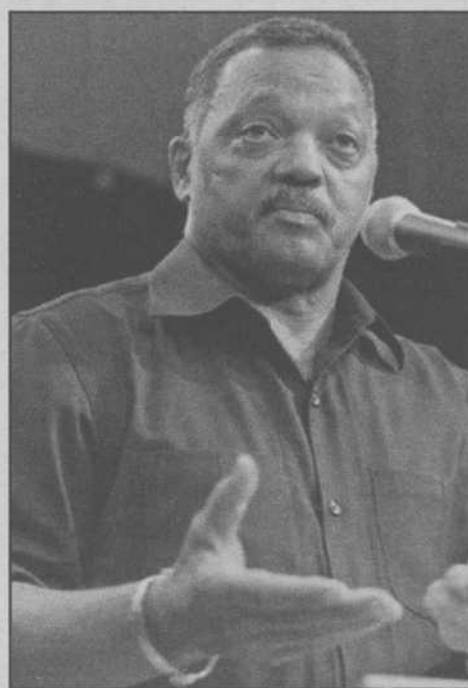
"I reject and repudiate his ugly rhetoric," said Rep. Jackson Jr.

Rev. Jackson told NNPA that the conversation with the guest was about recent personal responsibility speeches made by Obama at Black churches and about faith-based programs, which denotes community-based initiatives in which Black people help to meet their own needs.

"By 'talking down', I did not mean he was talking in a contempt way, but, talking with a message that did not correspond to the size and depth of our crisis. We're in crisis. We're in crisis," Jackson stressed.

Part of the criticism from Jackson – also a former presidential candidate – had been sparked by Obama's Father's Day message that strongly urged Black fathers who are absent from their homes to be more responsible to their children.

In an NNPA interview two weeks ago, Obama explained that he did not mean to stereotype Black males in that message and



Rev. Jesse Jackson speaks at a news conference in Chicago last week. He apologized for comments made about Barack Obama's speeches in Black churches. Jackson says Blacks are in crisis.

stressed that he has been talking about America's sins against the Black community.

"The fact that I made one speech about the very real problems of the fathers not looking after our kids doesn't negate everything that I've been talking about during the course of this campaign, about people lacking health care about the problems of the unjust criminal justice system. I've given multiple speeches on these issues and I will continue to," he said.

But Jackson, whose 1984 and 1988 presi-

dential campaigns focused almost solely on the need for the "rainbow" of America's cultures to hold government accountable for disparate treatment of the underserved and disadvantaged, says the senator's message is not balanced enough.

"Personal responsibility will not offset the impact of plants closing, jobs leaving, drugs and guns coming. We are simply overwhelmed by the structural collapse. We believe in faith-based if faith-based means day care and after-school programs," Jackson says.

Despite the crude remark, Jackson described his scrutiny of the Obama campaign as "loving criticism."

He says, "Our appeal is a loving criticism because I voted for Barack as a state senator, as a U.S. Senator, and as president I have endorsed him unsolicited and unequivocally," he said.

Following an Obama speech before the NAACP convention in Cincinnati on Monday, Jackson issued a statement praising the Senator.

"Senator Obama provided a comprehensive analysis of the problems and solutions needed to address today's agenda," the Jackson statement said. "It was a common ground analysis asserting that the civil rights agenda is an agenda shared by ALL Americans."

But, Obama was also clear that his message will continue to include personal responsibility by African-Americans and others.

In what appeared to be a direct response to Jackson's criticism, he told the enthusiastically applauding NAACP audience, "There's some who've been saying I've been

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McCain tells NAACP he'll expand school vouchers

Special to Sentinel-Voice

John McCain told the NAACP and some skeptical Black voters Wednesday that he will expand education opportunities, partly through vouchers for low-income children to attend private school.

The likely Republican presidential nominee addressed the annual convention of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the nation's oldest civil rights organization.

In greeting the group, McCain praised Democrat Barack Obama's historic campaign, but said the Illinois senator is wrong to oppose school vouchers for students in failing public schools. It is time, McCain said, to use vouchers and other tools like merit pay for teachers to break from conventional thinking on educational policy.

Obama, he said, has dismissed support for private school vouchers for low-income Americans.

"All of that went over well with the teachers union, but where does it leave families and their children who are stuck in failing schools?" the Arizona senator asked. "No entrenched bureaucracy or union should deny parents that choice and children that opportunity."

In fact, Obama has spoken in favor of performance-based merit pay for indi-

vidual public school teachers, even telling the National Education Association, the country's largest teachers union, the idea should be considered in a speech last year.

McCain received mostly polite applause in a room with some empty seats, two days after Obama received a thunderous reception from a standing-room only audience hoping to see him become the first Black president.

In his speech, McCain lauded Martin Luther King, Jr., as a leader who "loved and honored his country even when the feeling was unreturned, and counseled others to do the same."

In praising King to the NAACP, McCain used similar language to his mea culpa in April on the 40th anniversary of the civil rights leader's assassination, saying he had been wrong to vote against a federal holiday honoring King.

The NAACP gathering heard on Monday from Obama, who said he would push the government to provide more education and economic assistance, but he also drew big cheers when he urged Blacks to demand more of themselves.

"Whatever the outcome in November," McCain told the crowd Wednesday, "Senator Obama has achieved a great thing, for himself and for his country,

and I thank him for it. ... Don't tell him I said this, but he is an impressive fellow in many ways."

During a question-and-answer session, McCain also sought to assuage a frustrated Head Start teacher who complained that her salary from the federal program simply isn't enough.

The woman, wearing a union T-shirt, said she was making \$17,000 a year and cannot afford housing, gas, food, or health care for her children. "We cannot continue this way," she said.

McCain said the point of his education platform was to boost pay for "a great and outstanding teacher like you" and other educators who are passionate about their work.

"I want to reward good teachers," said McCain.

Members of the audience said afterward they were glad to have heard from McCain, even if it didn't change their minds.

"Winning votes, I'm not so sure, but friends, yes," Rev. Ronald Terry, pastor of New Friendship Baptist Church in Macon, Ga., said of McCain's appearance.

Marjory Shields, a Penn State extension nutritionist from Croydon, Pa., said McCain said nothing to make her waver from her support of Obama.

"I gave him the courtesy of listening to his platform. I thought that in order for me

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