

Convention

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from the challenges we're facing now with tough economic times... to the civil rights legacy in Congressman Clyburn as one of the folks who ultimately sat at lunch counters and worked to afford African-Americans the freedoms that they have today. So, I think you have a broad range of African-American speakers who will be on the podium over the course of the convention who can speak to the broad African-American experience in this country."

In the conference call, DNC spokesman Damon Jones avoided a direct answer when asked by a reporter whether Jackson would be speaking during the convention, which opens with a gavel at 4 p.m. daily. "We're still kind of rolling out the program for that at this time. So we don't have any additional participants to announce at this time... Not at this time," Jones said.

Jackson has spoken at the last six Democratic conventions, including after his 1984 and 1988 presidential campaigns. Sharpton was attending the funeral of soul singer Isaac Hayes on Monday and could not be reached for comment by NNPA deadline.

A Democratic primary candidate in 2004, Sharpton brought down the house with his last convention speech. He is apparently among civil rights leaders who are slated to speak at the convention's prayer breakfast on Aug. 28, the official DNC event in commemoration of the 45th anniversary of the March on Washington and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech. Martin Luther King III, civil rights icon the Rev. Joseph Lowery and others are also slated to speak at that morning event before Obama accepts the Democratic nomination in his speech that night.

Jackson recently apologized for vulgar, off-the-cuff remarks that he made about Obama during a private conversation with a guest on Fox News. Jackson was unaware that his microphone was on.

On Monday, Jackson played down any disappointment that he might be experiencing at not being invited to speak at the convention. He also avoided making any connections between his well-publicized gaffe and the decision against him speaking. He said Obama is well aware that he has been a "consistent supporter."

"I think that this is his stage and I want to do whatever I can to assist his winning this fall," Jackson said. "My focus is voter registration, get out to vote and then defending him when the attacks come after Labor Day."

In response to questions, Jackson noted that Sens. Obama and Hillary Clinton — in their historic primary races — were the beneficiaries of civil rights struggles by him and others.

"They were the conduits through which a more mature [electorate] and more mature America were speaking. So, the NAACP, the Urban League, the civil rights struggle, the martyrs must be celebrated," he said. "In the victory circle that night will be Barack, a product of our struggle and the Democratic Party has been a beneficiary of our struggle. But, the civil rights and human rights marches and martyrs really pushed America to the point of making this day possible."

During Monday's conference call,

NNPA columnist Dr. Ron Walters was paraphrased by a reporter as having written that Black Democrats would not have a representative at the convention who would clearly articulate Black concerns.

Gov. Patrick responded, "I just don't accept the premise that no one who is speaking can articulate the concerns and anxieties of African-Americans... It's certainly on my mind and it's on the minds of a couple of others that I know of who are slated to speak."

Also on the call, Atlanta Mayor Shirley Franklin agreed with Patrick.

"This is a campaign and a convention wherein the issues that affect African-Americans with respect to the economy are not significantly different than the issues that are affecting the broader population," Franklin said. "In my part of the world, which is the Southern part of the United States, Jim Clyburn qualifies, Eleanor Holmes Norton qualifies, Deval Patrick qualifies, just to name a few."

But, Walters, director of the African-American Leadership Center and Professor of Government and Politics at the University of Maryland, writes that someone at the convention should speak specifically from a Black perspective.

"I believe that either Rev. Jackson, Rev. Al Sharpton or someone like that should speak at the convention. Both are former candidates for the Democratic nomination for president, both have given one of the best speeches at previous conventions and both are recognized leaders today. I fear that the tendency may be to give this task over to one of what is wrongly called the 'post-civil rights,' 'post-Black' — post-everything Black, institutionally controlled leaders who will stand up and give a compromised view of where the Black community stands at this point in history."

Walters continues, "Black voting America, who will constitute 20 percent of the Democratic Party total and thereby make a serious difference, should have a clear and unequivocal voice speaking from the podium that characterizes the condition of the Black community and projects its policy demands into the political system. Blacks are used to making demands on nominees, but it may be difficult to do it this time, because they are so afraid it may cost Obama victory."

Rev. Joseph Lowery, who co-founded the Southern Christian Leadership Conference with Dr. King, said in a separate phone interview that, to him, it doesn't matter who speaks as long as Obama is committed to the goals that were sought in the 1963 March on Washington.

"The march was about jobs and freedom and justice," Lowery said. "And I believe Barack Obama is committed to that." Lowery continues, "I don't want to say just because we have a Black person being nominated that that obligates them to put civil rights leaders on prime time. I don't think that's a requisite for me. What they have to do is commit themselves to the issues of racial fairness and equity. They do that and I don't care who they put on the program to speak."

Jackson says he's just ready to work: "I will serve in whatever proximity he wants. We're all going to need each other this fall. So, we've got to really close ranks and work real hard. This race is far from over."

Democrats hit Colorado ready for Obama speech

By Zenitha Prince
Special to Sentinel-Voice
(NNPA) - In what is arguably the most anticipated event of the summer, more than 50,000 Democrats will converge on Denver's Pepsi Center Aug. 25-28 for the Democratic National Convention.

While this gathering will be glutted with the who's who of politics, business and even Hollywood, the undisputed star of the show will be Sen. Barack Obama, the Democrat's presumptive nominee for president.

"This is an inspiring, engaging celebration of Barack Obama and his vision for America," said Damon Jones, spokesman for the Democratic National Convention Committee.

And for a majority of the convention's 4,439 delegates, it will be the chance to show their ultimate support for the senator — casting their votes to elect him the Democratic Party's official presidential nominee. "I wanted to be intimately involved in this campaign," said Jeff Hart, an at-large delegate from Denver and Obama supporter. "Obama's the only candidate that can

bring our country together — Democrats and Republicans, liberals and conservatives, Blacks and Whites, rich and poor, urban and rural — to heal the country and heal the world."

But first, the candidate and the Democratic Party will have to heal the breach opened up during the primaries. Supporters of Sen. Hillary Clinton, D-N.Y., have called for her name to be on the ballot, and some supporters have even said they will protest if proper recognition isn't given to the New York senator during the convention.

"There's a special effort behind Clinton supporters to bring us all together to defeat McCain and that's going to be an ongoing process because you have some individuals who supported Clinton and don't want to come over," said at-large delegate James Tucker of Colorado Springs.

Obama and Clinton have been negotiating ways to give voice to her millions of supporters while furthering the convention's ultimate goal, but it would demand the cooperation of her devotees.

"I hope that 100 percent

of her delegates will honor the joint decision of Clinton and Obama," Hart said. "I believe that Sen. Clinton and Obama understand that the most important thing to come out of this convention is 100 percent unity behind Sen. Obama."

That theme of unity has been incorporated into all aspects of the convention.

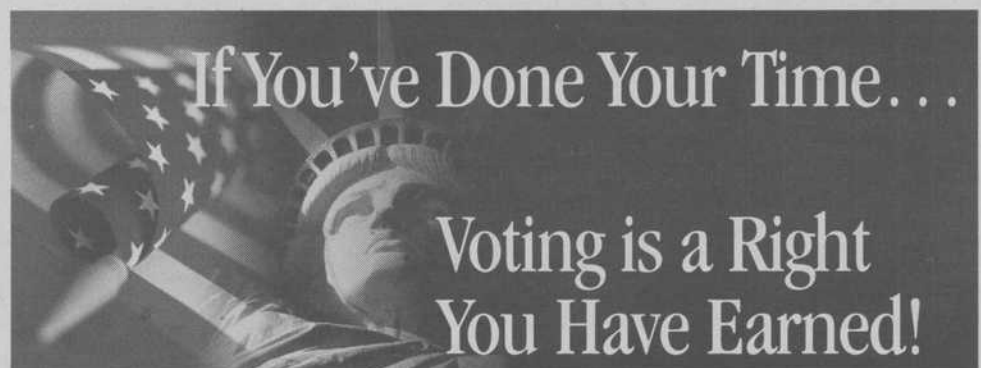
For example, on Aug. 24, the convention will kick off with the first-ever interfaith service, which, Jones said, "reflects our desire to bring a number of people under our big tent in the spirit of unity."

The nightly themes also reflect Obama's mantras of unity and change.

"Millions of Americans are facing tough challenges every day [and] they know we can't afford four more years of the same old divisive politics that are light on policy specifics and ways to help people and heavy on cynicism and negativity," said Convention Co-Chair and Kansas Gov. Kathleen Sebelius about the themes in a statement.

"From Monday through Thursday, our convention program will highlight the

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