

Democrats still search for elusive party unity

By Ron Walters
Special to Sentinel-Voice

There is the tradition in the Democratic party that once the blood has been spilled on the floor of the primary elections, the party attempts to come together at the Convention in a grand display of "party unity." This time however, there are a couple of things that stand in the way.

First, there is the strong perception that Hillary and Bill Clinton stand in the way and to appease them, Barack Obama has given them speaking roles at the Convention, an act for which he has come under fire in some quarters. Despite the fact that the Clintons "showed out" in the primary elections and caused Obama much pain with their race-loaded salvos against his campaign, they are still a force within the Democratic party and while he is campaigning, Obama needs them to not make waves.

Notice I did not say that he needed them to win, because he is doing very well in the polls against John McCain and, all things considered, he might be able to win without their active support. But if they muddy the waters, by crying that Hillary's constituents are not respected and if Bill keeps posturing, that conflict will most surely detract from

Obama's credibility among some voters, perhaps just enough to cause him the election.

So, what the heck, give Hillary and Bill speaking roles at the Convention. However, I would not have given them both prime-time slots. I would have put Bill on Monday morning out of prime and Hillary on Tuesday in prime; that would have left Thursday for Obama's VP choice and Friday evening for his speech.

Then, it's okay by me to put Hillary's name in nomination. It puts Obama in the powerful position of allowing her historic primary effort for women to acquire some dignity.

But it is also not unusual in that the names of other candidates such as Congresswoman, Shirley Chisolm in 1972 and Rev. Jesse Jackson in 1984 and 1988, were put in nomination even though it was known they would not win. In any case, the fear that Hillary would "accidentally" be nominated is far-fetched by those who know how conventions operate. The nominee-to-be controls every



RON WALTERS

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.

Nevertheless, 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

thing that is said from the convention podium, and his advisers, many of whom are superdelegates, control most of the state delegations which, in turn, are controlled by the Obama campaign. So, only so many votes could "accidentally" be cast for Hillary.

The second issue is who else speaks and I have suggested that Black voting

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.

Of course, the major media would love it. They desperately desire the Corey Bookerization of Black leadership because it validates their power and ultimately their perspective. I say this not to denigrate the Mayor of Newark, but to emphasize the many views of journalists who approve of this style as representative of a new, race-neutral, non-confrontational, technocratic, style of Black leadership.

For Blacks to lose this opportunity to speak truth to America from this vantage point could put a seriously flawed facade on "party unity." But regardless, almost everyone will leave Denver happy that history for women and for Barack Obama has been made.

Ron Walters is the Distinguished Leadership Scholar, Director of the African-American Leadership Center and Professor of Government and Politics at the University of Maryland College Park.

Time for Volkswagen to address racism claims

By Harry C. Alford
Special to Sentinel-Voice

There are a lot of unfair and discriminatory practices in this world. Sometimes you have to concentrate and focus in on a particular situation and decide to defeat it.

The great orator Frederick Douglas once wrote "power concedes nothing without a demand." Those words still hold true today. So when my office starts getting complaints about a particular firm I must make a decision — "Should I invest time and resources into this matter?" The big indicator is can we win and if we do does it make a noticeable difference for our constituents.

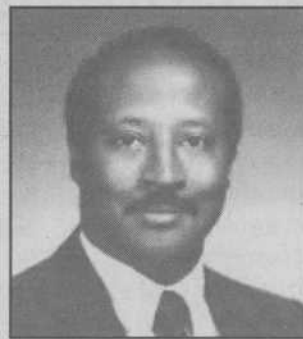
The situation with Volkswagen seems to yield a positive answer to that question. The auto industry is huge replete with billions of dollars in opportunities.

This industry is full of public relations and empty of results when it comes to diversity in its procurement. An example needs to be

made. An example that will tell the entire industry it is time to change your discriminatory practices.

Volkswagen has offered us a great opportunity to expose the environment of this industry and tear down some doors. Hence, we will fight! The following letter to the President and CEO of Volkswagen tells it all: Stefan Jacoby, CEO Volkswagen Group of America 2200 Ferdinand Porsche Dr. Herndon, VA 20171 Re: Discriminatory Practices in Procurement Dear Mr. Jacoby:

This office has been receiving a constant wave of complaints from Black business owners who claim that your corporation, in its expansion to Chattanooga, Tenn., is go-



HARRY C. ALFORD

ing out of its way to not do business with them. There appears to be a violation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act.

Violation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 is not just something ugly but it is illegal. This organization which happens to be the largest Black business association in the world (5 chapters in Tennessee) champions Title VI and will police it whenever there is a need. From the information I am receiving there appears to be a great need.

First of all, you have been given sizeable concessions from the governmental agencies of Tennessee. These concessions are funded through tax streams which every Black in Tennessee participates. If this segment of the population participates in building such concessions through their money then they should and must participate in the procurement phase (return on investment).

If not, we call that in this country "taxation without representation." Any corporation that chooses to discriminate upon receiving such concessions should be sanctioned and the concessions must be recalled. We are prepared to take any entity to court who thinks they can get away with such vile action. We have successfully changed the discriminatory activities of such corporations as Goodyear, Qwest (formerly US West), United Airlines, Chrysler and many more.

Your recent activities concerning the new facility in the areas of Architecture, Engineering and Construction Management were indeed discriminatory. Black firms were not even allowed to apply let alone compete. You sole sourced these opportunities. Sole sourcing is the most egregious manner of discrimination. It also drives up the costs due to lack of competition and that has a direct impact on your shareholders. Also, it breeds corrup-

tion as there is a lack of transparency.

Perhaps you have been advised by some of the elected officials to act in a discriminatory way. If so, this advice should not be followed as it will haunt your shareholders and damage your reputation. Corporate Responsibility is the burden of the CEO and Board Members. Thus, I appeal to your good conscience and demand that you direct your staff to improve your outreach and appeal to all ethnic business owners especially those based in the state of Tennessee. As your new facility is being built everyone should have the opportunity to compete for business. Presently, "avoidance" is the best description of your procurement division in regards to Black business owners. Sir, this will not be tolerated.

If we do not see improvement within the next thirty days, we will prepare for another serious battle against a CEO, Board of Directors and stockholders who feel it is their basic right to discriminate against and cheat the very people who fund their concessions. God does not like ugly, nor do we.

I am asking Sherrie Gilchrist, an NBCC Board Member and President of the Tennessee Multicultural Chamber of Commerce, to be our "eyes and ears" concerning this matter. Her contact information is: 535 Chestnut, Ste. 202, Chattanooga, TN 37402 tel. 423-265-0021, fax 423-265-0023.

May the next communication from me to you be more cordial and congratulatory. The outcome is up to you.

Sincerely,
Harry C. Alford
President/CEO

Feel free to join the NBCC in this fight. Write your own letter to the Volkswagen CEO and whatever you do DON'T BUY A VOLKSWAGEN UNTIL THINGS CHANGE.

Harry C. Alford is the co-founder, President/CEO, of the National Black Chamber of Commerce, Inc.

Curry

(Continued from Page 8)

NPR's "Tell Me More," and Ben Jealous.

MARTIN: One other interesting thing about you is that you are also biracial as is Barack Obama, as is the lieutenant governor of Maryland, as is the mayor of Washington.

JEALOUS: Can I, can I make a small correction there?

MARTIN: Of course.

JEALOUS: I'm Black, you know the only thing that we have, you know, the only definition that's out there on the books if you will, are state laws, and my family is from Virginia. When I was born... the law said... if you were at least 1/32nd of African descent, you were Black, end of story. White was an exclusive definition; Black was inclusive definition...

The real issue, says Luke Harris, a professor at Vassar College, is not what people call Jealous — whose father is White and mother is Black — but how those in that

group relate to the Black community.

"Biracial folk have always played significant leadership roles in the Black community. We need only think of Frederick Douglass," Harris said. "Whether their increased participation in these roles signals something good or bad depends on the ways in which they relate to the Black community. Do they see themselves as full-fledged members of our community? Do they offer a politics that genuinely reflect the interests of our community? These are the sorts of questions that will have to be asked."

*I said now people must prove to the people
A better day is coming for you and for me
With just a little bit more education
And love for our nation
Would make a better society.*

George E. Curry, former editor-in-chief of *Emerge* magazine and the *NNPA News Service*, is a keynote speaker, moderator, and media coach.