

# Slaves built White House

By Bonnie V. Winston  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

(NNPA) — When the new First Family takes up residence in the White House in January, Barack and Michelle Obama and their daughters will be living in a historic mansion that was built in large measure with slave labor. From the early 1790s when the cornerstone of the White House was laid, to the mansion's rebuilding in 1815 after a ruinous fire, the talent and labor of African-American slaves went into creating what is still considered today as America's finest 18th-century stone building.

According to the White House Historical Association, commissioners charged by Congress to build the White House and the newly created District of Columbia under the direction of the president hoped to import workers from Europe. But the recruitment efforts were dismal, according to the association, and they turned to slaves to provide the bulk of the labor.

Free African-Americans and immigrant Scots also participated in the construction. Skilled slaves — from quarrymen to carpenters and brick makers to sawyers — turned raw materials into the lumber, stone, brick and nails that ultimately became the home at 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. Slaves quarried and cut the rough stone from the government's quarry at Aquia, in Northern Virginia.

They also turned out bricks used for the temporary worker huts that were built on the grounds. Much of the lumber came from a slavemanaged mill at White Oak Swamp near Richmond. Many of the slaves were rented out by their owners to help construct the landmark, docu-

ments from the period show.

The owners were paid \$5 a month. Slaves "handled carpentry, cleared the grounds, worked in the quarries and lumber mills and poured concrete," according to a 2005 article in "The Crisis," the national NAACP's magazine. "Fed cornbread, beef and pork and living in huts on the Capitol grounds, the slaves were also given medical attention. The cost of clothing and inoculations were docked from the slaveowners' rent," the article stated. When the White House was nearly finished in late 1800s, President John Adams of Massachusetts was its first occupant. The second occupant, Thomas Jefferson of Virginia, started a tradition that continued with other slave-holding presidents — they brought their personal slaves to help staff the White House.

In 1801, President Jefferson took about a dozen slaves from Monticello with him as he set up occupancy in the White House. Many lived in quarters on the White House's first floor, while others slept on the second floor in the first family's quarters. While largely overlooked, the role of slaves in building the president's home has drawn some attention in recent years. In 2005, Congress created a task force to recognize the role of slaves in the construction of the White House, the Capitol and other government buildings in the nation's capital. A proposal to build a memorial to slaves later was introduced in Congress, but not approved. However, Congress has authorized the Smithsonian to develop the National Museum of African-American History and Culture.

Bonnie V. Winston writes for the Richmond Free Press.

# Black youth set politics course

By Jamisha Purdy  
Special to Sentinel-Voice  
WASHINGTON (NNPA)

— The silent giant awoke on Election Day. America's Black youth dispelled their once apathetic political posture by translating pre-election passion into a powerful turnout on Nov. 4. The election is over, but this new political demographic has declared that the work is not done.

"Within the next 100 days we will really be mobilizing even harder," said Keri Fulton at the eighth annual Black Youth Vote Civic Leadership Training Conference, held in the nation's capital last week. "Election Day was just the beginning. I will continue to work for the next 4, hopefully 8 years, to make sure Obama is the best president we've ever seen in this country."

Black youth are organizing to help that to happen. As president-elect Obama transitions to power, they are taking their civic engagement to the next level — building an agenda.

Black youth from around the nation gathered at the training conference. The three-day event, "We Voted: Now What?" focused on building an agenda on the state and national level, as well as on strategic ways to push the agenda.

Melanie Campbell, president and CEO of the National Coalition on Black Civic Participation, said that Black youth already understood there was a need for change, but "now it's time to connect the dots in the political process... This is the first step. This is where you show your power," she said.

Black youth declared that they will no longer be the invisible political demographic. Some of the principle priorities on the Black youth agenda include the affordability of higher education, health care, the job market and the environment.

Carmen Berkley, recent college graduate and president of the U.S. Student Association, said youth around the nation have expressed "great concern" over the affordability of college. Berkley, who has \$90,000 dollars in student loans, said college is "too expensive."

"In this country we act like going to school for free is such an imaginary thing,

but in Canada they go to school for free, in Europe they basically go to school for free," she said.

Jacqueline C. Ayers, a legislative representative for the Planned Parenthood Federation of America said health care is disproportionately affecting African-American youth.

Despite the \$2 trillion a year spent on health care in the U.S., 44 million people are still uninsured, said Ayers, quoting common statistics.

"When we talk about communities of color, for African-Americans ages 19 to 29, they represent 36 percent of the uninsured," Ayers said.

"When we look at the reality of the lives of our young African-American youth, we don't need a lot of statistics to tell us that the HIV-AIDS epidemic, that teenage pregnancy rates, sexually transmitted infections, impact disproportionately communities of color.

"The celebration may be over, but these youth say they will retain their Election Day momentum to hold their elected officials accountable.

"[We must] stay active, aware and mobilized," said Fulton. "We can make a big difference in public policy."

During the race for the White House, both candidates tapped into this new surge of voters. But according to Election Day exit polls, 68 percent of voters, ages 18 to 24, voted for Obama, a U.S. senator from Illinois, to become president. This is a number Berkley said Obama can never forget.

"I personally feel like president-elect Obama and the Congress people actually owe it to the youth. They owe it to make sure that we're being taken care of not only in the next four years but in the next 25 years," Berkley said. "We have to make sure that we are taken care of."

Youth have fueled each other.

"Other Black voters excite me," Berkley said. "When I see people that didn't want to engage in this process... and they're out standing in a three-hour line, they're out knocking on people's doors, that gives me energy."

But it's going to take more than simple excitement to (See Youth, Page 11)

## Your Horoscope Says... Nov 20-26

### ARIES

Personal finance stays in focus this week, and you'll be looking at new ways of creating and managing wealth. If you keep your mind open to the flow of abundance, you're sure to be happily surprised this week.

Soul Affirmation: This week I find joy in the gifts that life has already given me.

Lucky Numbers: 28, 37, 44

### TAURUS

Lots of love and good vibrations are in the air this week. You'll be whole-heartedly open to a proposal that involves something very important to you. Keep your energy constructive and positive.

Soul Affirmation: I give my busy brain a rest from worrying this week.

Lucky Numbers: 16, 48, 51

### GEMINI

This week's vibration seems to have only a single point for you, and that is to get out and have some fun with friends. You could use the relaxation, so leave your chores undone and go have a good time!

Soul Affirmation: True friendship is a mirror into which I look to see the beauty of my inner self.

Lucky Numbers: 9, 13, 30

### CANCER

Don't underestimate the power of persuasion. Continue to persevere and stay adamant with your ideas and pursuit. The universe is balanced, so your efforts will pay off. Learn to positively distract yourself as you wait and continue to let your enthusiasm rise about all negative feelings.

Soul Affirmation: I enjoy whatever life brings me this week.

Lucky Numbers: 1, 15, 30

### LEO

Go into yourself this week and find

those impulses that make you a good steady builder of relationships and long-range attitudes. You are a master at staying on the scene like a steady machine. Smile because this talent will put you ahead of the pack this week.

Soul Affirmation: Moving slowly is often the fastest way to get there.

Lucky Numbers: 5, 17, 31

### VIRGO

Patience! Patience! Make a game of patience, and it will not seem as boring. Smile as you apply yourself to routines that would otherwise drive you up a wall. Stay alert to the possibility of disruptions to habitual patterns. Make a game of dealing with obtrusions.

Soul Affirmation: Cheerfully handling what comes at me is the test of who I am.

Lucky Numbers: 22, 45, 51

### LIBRA

Things that have others upset this week will not bother you quite as much. This week is a good week to show that you can be depended upon when things get a little heavy for others. Handling heaviness is not all that tough for you. Turn this asset into a dividend producer.

Soul Affirmation: Helping others is the true measure of my worth.

Lucky Numbers: 20, 26, 34

### SCORPIO

This is a week when you can be a singular beacon. Shine for those around you. Go inside yourself and find those rays of sunshine that others need. Sure you're a bit touchy yourself, but that's just the situation in which you can do yourself proud.

Soul Affirmation: Shining brightly is something that I can do even in shadows.

Lucky Numbers: 13, 18, 28

### SAGITTARIUS

Loving care is what the world is in

need of this week and you get a lot of inward joy out of giving it. Your ability to move back emotionally from problems and thereby administer to them will give you an advantage this week. Use it wisely.

Soul Affirmation: Confusion gives me an opportunity to show my love.

Lucky Numbers: 11, 43, 51

### CAPRICORN

Cheer them up. They don't see the big picture. You can. Let them know about the light at the end of the tunnel. It is clearly in focus for you. Enjoy it and make your joy contagious. Give love this week but wait for a while to search for its return.

Soul Affirmation: Hope is a beautiful jewel. I enjoy owning it.

Lucky Numbers: 7, 16, 25

### AQUARIUS

Endurance and regeneration are keys for you this week. You'll be needing both those qualities to get you past the negative thinking that is flooding the spiritual environment this week. Soar high where the sun is shining. Seek resources from the highest levels of your nature and spread them to those you love.

Soul Affirmation: I get joy from giving good things.

Lucky Numbers: 9, 32, 46

### PISCES

Eternal optimist, eternity is now. Get in touch with your hopefulness and be a beacon to others. Try not to be taken in by promises made by others or promises you've made to yourself. Concerning your own affairs, avoid contemplating lofty subjects and seeking long ranged solutions.

Soul Affirmation: This week is the day the Lord has made. I rejoice in it.

Lucky Numbers: 4, 8, 39