

# Penn., Mich., tops for Black homicide victims

By Cornelius Fortune  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

DETROIT (NNPA) — Gun violence is rising and it's happening in Michigan, according to a recent report by the Washington, D.C.-based Violence Policy Center (VPC).

The study drew from information provided in unpublished Federal Bureau of Investigation Supplementary Homicide Report (SHR) data.

Vic's study, "Black Homicide Victimization in the United States: An Analysis of 2006 Homicide Data," uses 2006 data — the most recent data available from the FBI — and ranks the 50 states according to their Black homicide victimization rates. The study found overwhelmingly that firearms (usually handguns) were the weapon of choice in the homicides.

In the three years since, VPC has annually released the report, the numbers have steadily climbed. Michigan now stands at 33.40 per

100,000. This increase places Michigan second, up from 2007's sixth-place ranking in Black victimization.

The top five states are Pennsylvania, 36.86 per 100,000; Michigan, 33.40 per 100,000; Indiana, 32.65 per 100,000; Kansas, 32.47 per 100,000; and Nevada, 32.26 per 100,000.

Josh Sugarmann, VPC executive director, author of "National Rifle Association: Money, Firepower & Fear" and "Every Handgun is Aimed at You: The Case for Banning Handguns," and co-author of the study, hopes the key role played by guns in Black homicide victimization will be directly addressed.

"One of the goals of this study is to show the disproportionate effect that gun violence has on African-Americans," Sugarmann said.

"Unfortunately, it's not a new story and it doesn't get the attention that it deserves. The goal is to focus the attention on these states and to

give advocates and policy makers some catalyst [for action]. In Michigan, guns are by the far the most common weapon. Guns are not the only problem and that's what the message is: You can't talk about stopping Black homicide numbers without talking about guns."

Sugarmann cites the Tiahrt Amendment as contributing to the rising numbers in Black homicide victimization.

The Tiahrt Amendment prevents comprehensive crime gun trace data from

being made available to not only the general public, but to policy makers as well.

For opponents of the amendment this means that there is no access to a city's own aggregate gun data; no access to data from cities and states; no access to or use of gun trace data to hold accountable dealers that break the law; and no access to national ATF (Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives) reports.

The National Rifle Association Institute for Legislative Action (NRA-ILA), sup-

ports the amendment. In fact, they believe "there are good reasons for keeping information confidential: releasing the information serves no purpose; traced guns aren't always 'crime guns'; trace information remains available for law enforcement use; both BATFE and FOP oppose release of trace data; and even the current language has allowed too many disclosures of sensitive information."

"Right now, if you ask what the top crime gun in America is, it's secret infor-

mation," Sugarmann said. "If you want to know what type of guns are used, the manufacturer or distributor, you can't get that information."

Those citizens concerned by the report should raise the issue, he noted, but there are underlying issues that drive violence.

"It's a symptom of a much bigger problem that also for the most part has been ignored the last eight years," he said. "The long term is the hurtles have to be overcome, regardless of race or location." (See Homicide, Page 10)

## Liberty Bank to participate in TARP

Special to Sentinel-Voice

NEW ORLEANS (NNPA) — Liberty Bank customers are about to reap the benefits of a new federally sponsored capital funds program. Liberty Bank, the third-largest African-American-owned bank in United States, recently announced that it has received approval

to participate in the U.S. Treasury Department's TARP Capital Purchase Program.

The voluntary program is designed to increase the flow of capital into the economy by offering financial institutions more funds to lend to businesses and consumers.

The announcement is mu-

sic to the ears of Liberty Bank customers, many of whom are still working toward recovery from Hurricane Katrina more than three years later. Liberty is only one of three banks in the New Orleans area chosen to participate, and the only minority bank.

Only banks with healthy financial portfolios are selected.

"We are very pleased to be selected for inclusion in the Capital Purchase Program," said Alden McDonald, president and Chief Executive Officer of Liberty Bank. "The preliminary approval is an important statement by the U.S. Treasury about its confidence in the strength and financial health of our institution."

Once the program is adopted, Liberty will immediately make the increased funds available to businesses and consumers who meet standard good credit criteria.

"This additional capital will benefit all communities that Liberty serves, and en-

hance our capacity to support the revitalization of the area we cover that has been struck by four destructive hurricanes in the last three years," McDonald said.

McDonald said that Liberty carefully considered all factors in making the decision to participate, including talking with customers, public officials, senior management and their Board of Directors.

Liberty Bank is a holding company headquartered in New Orleans, with total assets of \$380 million.

Liberty offers complete banking services to commercial, retail and mortgage customers in the five states and six cities it serves. Locations include, Louisiana, Mississippi, Texas, Kansas and Missouri.

A model of community banking, Liberty focuses on offering commercial, consumer and mortgage loans and deposit services to individuals, institutions and small- and middle-market businesses.

## Steele

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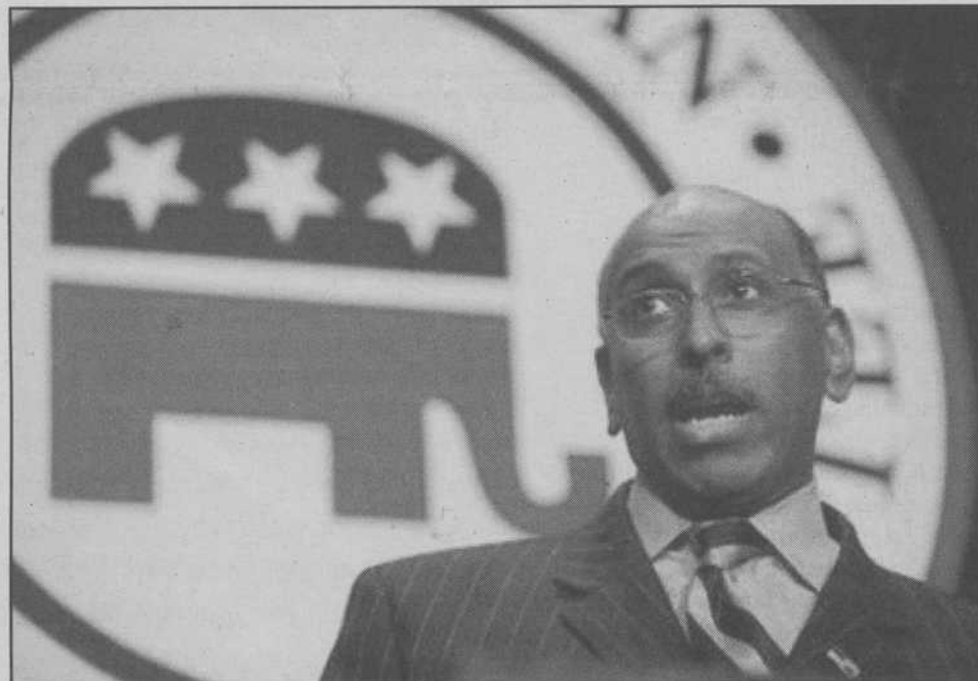
to corral minority voters who will be crucial to a Republican comeback.

Two African-Americans campaigned to lead the Republican National Committee.

Steele, the former Maryland lieutenant governor, was the first African-American to win statewide office in Maryland. Four years later, he lost a bid for the U.S. Senate to Benjamin Cardin, a Democrat.

The other African-American who had hoped to lead the Republican Party was Kenneth Blackwell, the former secretary of state of Ohio. A staunch conservative who believes that the party should stand its ground whether Blacks are attracted to it or not, Blackwell has been serving as vice chair of the RNC's platform committee and was the party's 2006 nominee for governor in Ohio.

Both men ran against several White candidates who included former RNC Chair Mike Duncan; Saul Anuzsis, chair of the Michigan GOP; Katon Dawson, chair of South Carolina Republicans; and Chip Saltsman, a Tennessee party leader who was campaign manager for former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee's presidential bid and who generated contro-



Michael Steele speaks after being elected Republican National Committee chairman in Washington on Friday. Steele bested a field of a half dozen to be the GOP spokesman.

versy when he sent a CD titled "Barack, the Magic Negro" as a Christmas present to RNC members.

Blackwell started with 20 votes after the first round of voting, and he had 15 votes after four rounds. He then dropped his bid for RNC chair and gave an impassioned endorsement of Steele.

Steele won 91 votes out of a possible 168 in the sixth round. A simple majority of 85 was needed, but it took six rounds for Steele to win.

On the sixth and final ballot, Steele bested South Carolina Republican party chair-

man Katon Dawson, 91 to 77.

Promising to bring the party to "every corner and every group" in the nation and warning obstructionists to "get ready to get knocked over," Steele said the party of Abraham Lincoln is a conservative party and "we will cede no ground to anyone on principles... It's time for something completely different and we are going to bring it to them," Steele said after his victory. "This is our opportunity. I cannot do this by myself."

He called his win an opportunity to empower and

grow the Republican base.

"It's time for something completely different... We will make sure that we work hard to make sure those principles, those values that have made us the party of Lincoln are part of the issues, are part of the policies, are part of helping set a new direction for this country," Steele said. "We will cede no ground to anyone on principles and on matters that matter to the people of this country. So my first official act as your new chairman is to end this speech right now."

Alan King writes for the Afro-American Newspapers.

## Teens

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dents, reportedly have told authorities that targeting Hispanics for abuse was a regular activity.

One of them, 17-year-old Anthony Hartford, told police, "I don't go out doing this very often, maybe once a week," according to Suffolk County District Attorney Thomas Spota. Attorneys did not immediately return calls seeking comment on the latest charges, but have previously said their clients are innocent.

The November killing of Lucero attracted international attention and prompted a U.S. Justice Department investigation of hate crime allegations on Long Island.

The department also was reviewing whether to begin a formal investigation on how local police respond to bias incidents. Immigrants in Long Island have said they are often harassed but don't tell police because they fear they'll be deported. Lucero's immigration status at the time he was killed is not clear. In 2003, a Mexican family's home in Farmingville — about 15 miles from Patchogue — was destroyed when teenagers tossed fireworks through a window on the Fourth of July.