

Brown: A rising new political force

By Zenitha Prince
AFRO Staff Writer *11/1/06*

Outside of Prince George's County, Del. Anthony Brown is an unknown, an enigma.

During his six-year stint representing Prince George's in the Maryland House of Delegates, he has risen through the ranks to become majority whip, but he has done so without public or media fanfare.

Since gubernatorial candidate Mayor Martin O'Malley announced Brown as his running mate, however, public interest has changed. And now the average Baltimore resident wants answers to the question:

Who is Anthony Brown?

"I'm a family guy who wants to make a difference in the world that I live," Brown answered.

The 44-year-old barrister and Harvard University graduate recently celebrated his 13th wedding anniversary with wife Patricia, an attorney with whom he has a 10-year-old daughter Rebecca, and 5-year-old son Jonathan.

Brown, perhaps, inherited this sense of family from his parents.

Born to a Jamaican father and Swedish mother, he grew up with three brothers and a sister as part of a minority African-American population in Huntington, N.Y. Though his father was a doctor, their family was decidedly middle-class, Brown said, as his father practiced in some of the poorest neighborhoods in New York.

"Although my father was a physician, we were not among the Huntington elite; we were a solid middle-class family with a working father and a stay-at-home mom," he said. "I went to public school; I played Little

League football and then lacrosse."

At school, Brown was one of those students who other students love to hate. He was president of the student govern-

ment, captain of the lacrosse team, a volunteer at a senior home and taught English to new Spanish-speaking residents in Huntington. On top of that, he was a bit of an "Einstein." He didn't even have a girlfriend until the 11th grade.

"I was always a serious student; [I] took all the [advanced placement] courses before anyone knew about AP courses and they became the rage they are today. ... I always considered myself a student first, and everything else was second in terms of my high school experience," Brown said. "I wasn't a nerd, but I struggled with not wanting to be just another guy."

After graduating from Harvard in 1984, Brown joined the Army (he is a lieutenant colonel in the Reserves and recently returned from tour of duty in Iraq), graduated from Harvard Law School in 1992, practiced as a zoning and land use lawyer in Washington and in Maryland, taught at Georgetown University, joined several associations and racked up a number of civic leadership awards.

Despite his credentials, some state leaders, like Senate President Thomas V. Mike Miller Jr. (D-Dist. 27), who was quoted in a Sept. 9 *Gazette* story, believe Brown is still politically "raw."

But Brown said he has the energy, ideas and cooperative spirit necessary for this position.

"I believe I am well-prepared," he said. "I don't think you measure [experience] in terms of time. ... It's not the most important indicator of someone's readiness to take on challenges."

Brown said he has been preparing for public service since he was a lad. In the sixth grade, after a teacher told him he could be anything he wanted to be, Brown said he decided to become an attorney, especially after browsing through several

pages of information on the U.S. attorney general in the encyclopedia.

"I said, 'Wow.' You have this government official who is in charge of all these important areas in the law — civil rights and representing the president — and I thought, 'OK, I guess that is what I'll be,'" Brown said.

Yet when the opportunity to run for state attorney general arose late last year, Brown instead chose to run for lieutenant governor on O'Malley's ticket.

"The reason why I accepted Martin O'Malley's offer to be his running mate is because, number one, I believe Martin O'Malley is a proven and dedicated leader and someone with whom I would enjoy being in partnership with," Brown said. "And the other part of it is this office. Because of his confidence in me ... and the similarities of our vision for Maryland's future, he will enable me to fully serve those communities and constituencies that are important to me."

So far, Brown said, he and O'Malley have agreed on three focus areas: higher education, health care and job creation and

economic development, areas that show marked disparities between Blacks and Whites, Brown said, and, therefore, are of particular interest to him.

"As an African-American leader, I believe we have and should never forget our strong commitment to the African-American community. It is the community from which we come, and it is the community to which we always need to be tied," he said.