No sense of guilt

Robb; unconvinced blacks should 'Look to Republicans'

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RICHMOND

Democratic Senatorial candidate, Charles S. "Chuck" Robb, said if blacks are not convinced that his platform is best for the nation, then they should look to the Republicans.

"If the black community is not convinced that I'm going to make every effort to move the country in a direction that will provide all of our citizens with greater opportunities down the road, then clearly they ought to look to the Republican Party or the Republican candidate," Robb told the AFRO at his 8th Street campaign headquarters.

But, that is the type of attitude that political thinkers say could hurt Robb in the long run. University of Virginia political analyst Larry J. Sabato stated recently that Robb's views on certain issues are so conservative that either he or the Democratic Party, traditionally open to issues of the black electorate, will have to eventually bend. He is "much more conservative than the average Democrat," Sabato said.

Some of those conservative stances are of particular interest to blacks. For example, Robb supports U.S. aid to the rebel army of UNITA in the Angolan nation in South Africa. Also, though he calls the segregationist system of Apartheid "abhorrent," he is still against increased sanctions because "the U.S. acting alone will not solve the problem," he said.

Others of Robb's stances considered "conservative" are his beliefs in the death penalty and social security cuts.

However, Robb has received overwhelming support from Virginia's 20% black electorate in past elections. Some believe his popularity has been due to his firm stance on increased educational funding and his record of appointing minorities to state positions.

But, Dr. Avon Drake of Virginia Commonwealth University, say those issues are not enough. Drake, a professor of Black Political Thought, said Robb's position on "domestic and social policy issues should be our prime focus . . . the most pressing need is goods and services," he said.

Robb and his conservative black Republican opponent, Maurice Dawkins, are racing to fill the seat of resigning Senator Paul S. Trible, Jr.

Though recent polls indicate that Robb has far more support than Dawkins, Robb said he isn't taking the black vote for granted.

"I don't assume that anybody owes me anything . . . I'm going to have to earn their support," he said. He plans to actively campaign in black communities and speak on issues important to blacks, he said.

Citing a speech he gave to the Atlanta Urban League, he said he will speak on the "underclass" and "the spread of self-destructive behavior in our poor communities," as quoted from that speech.

He said a number of black leaders had pledged and have repledged their commitments to work for his election since the Democratic State Convention confrontation between him and angry Jesse Jackson supporters.

"It's difficult to say" how that incident has affected the campaign, Robb said. "I'd hoped it could have been avoided."

Robb said he and his campaign manager, Bernard V. Craighead who is black, had met with the angry Jacksoneers several times, during which they aired several grievances, including demands that he bend on certain issues.

They also wanted him to apologize for a comment he made during a Denver speech that Jackson should get an "inspirational" rather than "managerial" role in government.

"I didn't have anything to apologize for," contended Robb. He said the quotation had been taken out of context by a reporter who "used it to try to divide a number of Democrats and used it to make life difficult for me and my friends."

He said he never meant the statement as a "put down," and that he was "distressed" when he learned that the Jackson supporters had reproduced it and sent copies to many constituents before he was approached.

As Governor and Lt. Governor "I have had a good, strong relationship with the black community . . . to give me a list of demands instead of coming to me, I don't react well to that kind of tactic," he said.

As for the floor confrontation between he and Jackson's Third District Chair, Sa'ad El-Amin, who demanded Robb's apology to Jackson, Robb said "a convention is an emotional gathering." He said he had sensed their frustration in meeting with them and had told them to "use this convention as an opportunity to get your message across."

Robb said that through film, "It was clear to others that there was some limited physical contact," towards him by El-Amin. "I did not feel personally threatened and I don't think it was intended."

Robb and Craighead said that they will be visiting the Richmond Crusade for Voters for which El-Amin is president.

"My record on issues that are of concern to black Virginians . . . are strong enough that I can deal with all the questions up front . . . I don't have any sense of guilt in my arena . . . My relationship with the black community doesn't require me to treat Jesse Jackson any differently because he's a black candidate . . . If I disagree with him on issues, I ought to be able to say that honestly and it ought not to carry with it any other implications," Robb said.

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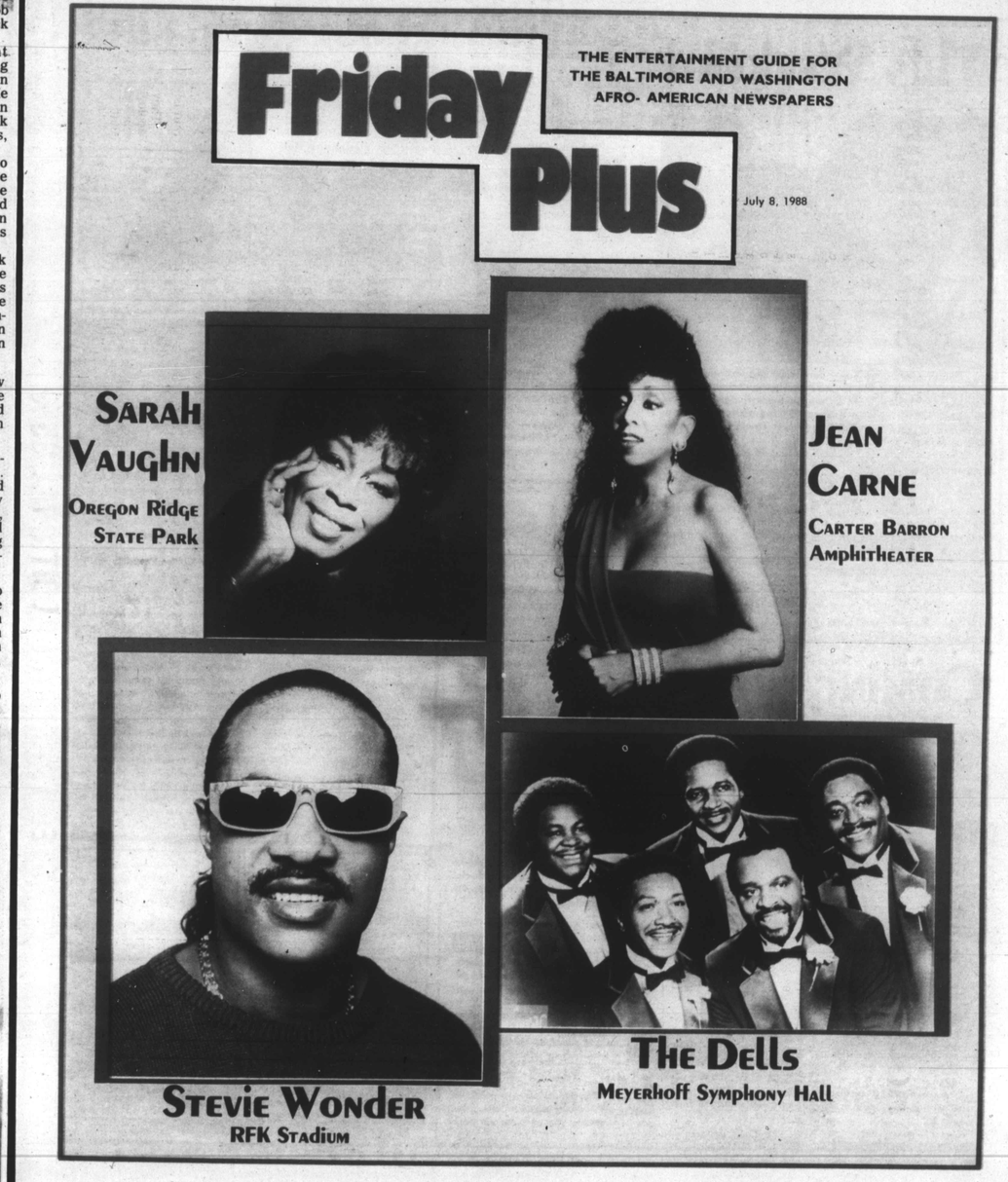
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