EDITORIALS

John J. Oliver, Jr.
Chairman of the Board
Frances M. Draper
President
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Beware Candidates

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following editorial appeared in the San Francisco Sun Reporter and is reprinted here with permission from the National Newspaper Publishers Association.

A word of caution must be sent to Vice President Bush and Governor Dukakis telling them that the Black Press of America is irritated by their failure to respond to either written or verbal requests that those two important candidates come to the recent 48th Annual Convention of the National Newspaper Publishers Association—the Black Press of America, held in St. Louis.

For the last 40 years, the Black Press has usually invited the leading Democratic and Republican nominees to its national conventions prior to the fall campaigns. The Democratic alumni of such conventions include Hubert Humphrey, Eugene McCarthy, George McGovern and Walter Mondale and the Republicans include Vice President Nixon, Nelson Rockerfeller and Ronald Reagan.

The leading candidates are usually surrounded by their palace guard to protect them from the ordinary citizens. Such was the case in the 1980 campaign. However, the candidates have become lean and less accessible, and no one was able to reach either candidate or his wife to try and reactivate the policy of having the leading candidates of both parties speak to Black America through the forum of the organized Black Press.

This time, even Jesse Jackson failed to appear at the convention; however, later he explained in a long statement that his absence was due to work he was doing on the Democratic platform.

We, from time to time, have to remind our friends and enemies that the Black Press has a big responsibility which we cannot meet if the candidates feel they can ignore Blacks without cause or reason. When will Dukakis and Bush have another opportunity to speak to 95 to 100 black publishers assembled in one place?

The black publishers must convince both political parties and leading black politicians that black publishers must be taken seriously and that they are prepared to treat politicians in the same cavalier fashion, if they continue to treat Black publishers as children who do not understand how to seek power. Therefore, we take this opportunity to define the role of the Black Press in the USA.

The dean of the Black Press, W. O. Walker, the late editor and publisher of the Call & Post, of Ohio, described the mission of the Black Press best:

"The highest tradition in journalism is service to the people, service by informing and interpreting; service by giving voice to the goals, aspirations and needs of the people. Service by calling attention to injustices inflicted on the people by demanding an end to these injustices. Service by rallying the indignation and the action of the people when the need arises.

"Such has been the role of the Black Press in America and no other mass communication medium has been more effective in serving freedom's causes than the Black Press. For its crusaders, it has directed its attention to the practical realities in the life of the people it serves.

"For the past 160 years, the Black Press has acted as a herald, a champion and an advocate and as a vanguard for black America."

We also remind these candidates that the black publishers of California sent a message to Tom Bradley on his first campaign for governor when he lost by less than 50,000 votes. Of the 16 black publishers of California, 13 decided that they would not accept the same treatment from Bradley as was given to them by white politicians therefore they completely ignored Bradley's campaign.

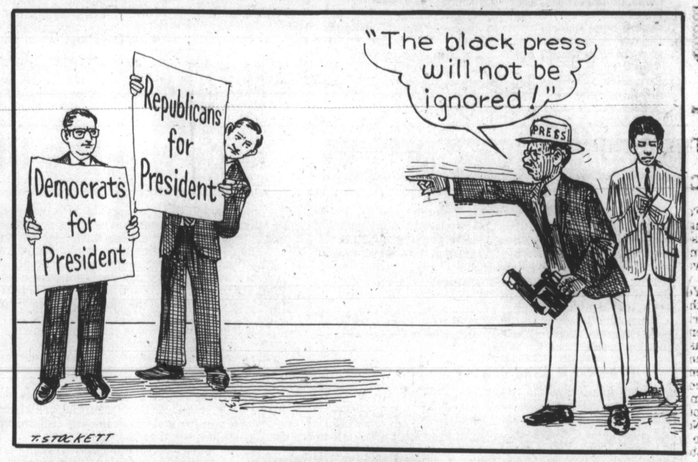
Not only was Bradley guilty of trying to ignore the Black Press but he was also trying to escape the fact that he was a black candidate. Consequently, he did not shore up his house and thousands of people in his own mayoral district did not even go to the polls.

The Black Press has received rather cavalier treatment from the Republican Party since the '36' Roosevelt campaign when blacks, who for 52 years had given the majority of their votes to the Grand Old Party, formed a new coalition. To this day, the last of the old Roosevelt coalition continues to be the black voters and in 1984, 90 percent of the black vote still went to the Democratic nominee.

The possibility of Republicans making inroads into the Black constituency in the old Democratic coalitions is great. It hinges on how well the Democratic leadership treats Jesse Jackson at the Atlanta Convention. This would have been a great opportunity for Bush to build inroads into a disappointed Black constituency, which has become very disenchanted with how the Democrats treat Jesse Jackson.

The truth of this prediction was shown by a shift of 10,000 black votes from the Democrats to the Republicans in three states: Pennsylvania, Ohio and Mississippi and Jimmy Carter won by a very small margin with white Southerners giving Ford 54 percent of the vote and Carter getting 87 percent to 90 percent of the black vote.

Let the Republicans and Democrats know that they ignore the Black vote at their peril!



AFRO welcomes letters

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Baltimore Afro-American
628 N. Eutaw Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21201

LETTERS

Don't take vote for granted

To participate in the election of governmental leadership at the local, state, and national levels is one of the most important legal rights, if not legal obligations, of United States citizenship.

A basic tenet of a democracy is that the governors be competitively elected, responsive, and accountable to the governed, that is, the electorate.

The struggle to expand the coverage of those eligible to be among the electorate is one of the strong currents in the historical experiences of the American society.

Constitutional amendments and passage of the United States Voting Rights Act of 1965 expanded the boundaries of the eligible electorate.

It went from that of white, propertied males who are 21 years of age and over, to include nonwhites, females, and all citizens 18 years of age and over without a property-holding or literacy test requirement.

Yet throughout the United States today there are citizens who disregard or lightly regard or value the right to register to vote and vote. The United States has one of the lowest levels of voter registration and participation among modern democracies.

With Gov. Schaefer's signing of SB 435 (Sen. Albert Wynn, D.-PG, lead sponsor) and HB 24 (Del. Sylvania Woods, Jr., D-PG, lead sponsor) on universal registration, combined with other reform measures adopted and implemented, the MD voter registration system and its operation are in good share with it being easily accessible and convenient for citizens to register and vote.

Therefore, a citing of registration barriers as a reason for low voter registration does not apply to Maryland.

Nevertheless, the Final Report of the Governors Task Force on Voter Registration, issued in April 1986, clearly documented a pattern of low voter registration and participation in Maryland.

Most recently for Maryland, the level of voter registration measured 62.2 at the end of April 1988. That is, out of a 1988 estimated voting age population of 3,373,391, there were a total of 2,091,668 registered voters.

Among Maryland's subdivisions, the level of voter registration ranged from a low of 47.4 in Caroline County to a high of 72.2 in Montgomery County at the end of April 1988.

Falling in between are Baltimore City with 67.5 level of voter registration, Anne Arundel County with 53.3, Baltimore County with 65.0, Carroll County with 55.2;

Cecil County with 52.6, Harford County with 60.4, and Howard County with 70.6. Prince George's County had a 54.1 level of voter registration.

Finally, it is proposed that gubernatorial concern and encouragement be given to voter registration and participation by proclaiming August or September as Voter Registration Month in Maryland.

HERBERT H. LINDSEY

DeWayne Wickham

Understanding Jesse Jackson

Atlanta — Jesse Jackson is to American politics what Jackie Robinson was to professional baseball, the first black to play in the major leagues.

He is both the substance and the symbolism of the political aspirations of millions of people, many of whom believe they have been locked out of the mainstream Democratic Party politics in much the same way blacks once were barred from the playing fields of major league baseball.

And just as Robinson's personal victory also symbolized the dashed hopes of many Negro League baseball players - people like Cool Papa Bell and Josh Gibson - so too does Jackson inherit the deferred dreams of Adam Clayton Powell and Shirley Chisholm.

It is this sense of shared fate that has given the thousands of blacks who came to Atlanta for this week's Democratic National Convention an almost rabid pride in the Jackson campaign.

In the black Baptist they have each invested a small piece of their dream for a better life, just as many of their parents once celebrated Robinson's breakthrough as though it were their own.

Jesse Jackson's run for the White House is both a political campaign and a social movement. His bid for the presidency is an assault on the traditional power structure of the Democratic Party.

In this quest Jackson clearly seeks a prominent role in national politics — an arena in which blacks long have been blocked from competing in the big leagues.

Party power brokers and the journalist who follow in their wake understand such political cravings.

What they have difficulty with are the demands that flow from the social movement that has kept Jackson campaigning for the Democrats' presidential nominating long after Michael Dukakis won enough delegates to assure his selection.

It is the social movement Jackson symbolizes and not a bloated ego that caused his name to go into nomination for the presidency Wednesday. When publicly he demands "shared responsibility" in the fall campaign and "a fair return on our investment," he consciously violated the protocols of convention politics.

"We must be on the side of those who make history, who remove ancient barriers, who make the dream real for everybody," Jackson yelled out to a crowd of thousand in the sweltering heat of Piedmont Park minutes after arriving in Atlanta on Saturday.

"I am not just running for the White House," he told his supporters, "I'm running for every house." It was vintage Jackson - the movement leader, not the politician.

As a politician Jackson understands the limitations of his power. As the leader of a growing social movement he does not. This, I suspect, is so because movements have a way of becoming much larger than the people who lead them.

Just as on Monday when Jackson-the-politician successfully was forging a deal that guarantees him and his supporters a substantial role in the fall election campaign, one troubling manifestation of his movement was threatening to overtake him.

"Jesse has to be careful," the Rev. Hosea Williams, a longtime civil rights activist and Jackson supporter, said during a television interview Sunday. "He is not just speaking for Jesse. He has millions of constituents across the country. If Jesse gives in too much, they will dump him."

This is the kind of talk that buckles the knees of those Democratic Party insiders who have come to support the Jackson campaign.

"We're at the point where polarization and demands will lead to defeat," John White, the former chairman of the Democratic National Committee and now a Jackson advisor, cautioned Williams.

Maybe. But what is more likely is that Williams and White both misjudge the significance of the Jackson campaign.

When all is said and done, Jesse Jackson will neither lose the support of the masses he leads nor stumble to defeat.

What he has been able to accomplish thus far this year can honestly be described as historic.

As Democrats leave this convention, Michael Dukakis is the party's standard bearer, but it will be left to Jackson, more than anyone else, to deliver the margin of victory in November's presidential election.

Having made it to the major leagues of American politics against tremendous odds, Jesse Jackson now is expected to be the "most valuable player" of this election season.

What he wants in return are dugout seats for some of his supporters in a Democratic administration.

The Afro-American
MEMBER
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COMMENTARY & OPINIONS

Kweisi Mfume
U.S. Congressman

Unshakable commitment

For 26 years, Nelson Mandela has languished in a South African prison. Millions of his followers and sympathizers throughout the world have never even heard the sound of his voice.

Yet, he remains the embodiment of the struggle for liberation in South Africa. His unshakeable commitment to the cause of freedom is the reason for his lengthy imprisonment, the South African government's ban on the distribution of recorded or printed statements by him, and his unquestionable popularity.

Nelson Mandela was born 70 years ago this past week. As a young boy, he tended cattle while hoping for a future that would be as exciting as the "good old days" described by village elders.

The times longed for by Mandela's mentors were the decades before political and economic domination by the white man. With deep pride, they spoke of peace and prosperity under the leadership of African kings.

These tales served as the seeds of Nelson's political development and created a thirst for more knowledge that he hoped would be quenched by getting an education.

During his years at the renowned Fort Hare University, Mandela was to become an outspoken student leader—regardless of the personal consequences.

For example, after the South African government passed a series of segregationist laws during the late 1930s, he was expelled from the institution for participating in a strike against the government's actions.

He later went on to study law at the University of Witwatersrand, and was certified as an attorney in 1952.

It was during his stay at the two universities that Nelson Mandela met the two men—Oliver Tambo and Walter Sisulu—who would help sharpen his political convictions and philosophies.

The African National Congress (ANC) was the organization through which they would map out strategies to (hopefully) force the South African government to repeal the pass system, the Native Land Act (which gave whites control of 87 percent of the terroritories), and other discriminatory laws.

Mandela joined the ANC in 1944 and became National President of its Youth League in 1950. In 1952, he headed the "Defiance Campaign," which resulted in 8,500 nonviolent protesters against racial discrimination going to jail.

Shortly after he was elected President of the Transvaal ANC, the government banned him from public meetings for two years, and reimposed those restrictions for five more years in 1956.

His public voice may have been silenced, but he remained a key "behind the scenes" spokesman and organizer for ANC activities.

Realizing that the government considered him to be a major threat to its demonic system of apartheid, Nelson Mandela spent the months leading up to his August, 1962 arrest in hiding, but secretly sharing his views on human rights with African nationalists in neighboring countries.

Once captured, he was sentenced to five years imprisonment—three for incitement to strike and two for illegal exit from the country.

While serving this term, he and seven others were charged with plotting violent revolution in the famous Rivonia sabotage trial.

Every day of his adult life has been proof that iron bars may restrain the body, but no entity on earth can destroy a man's commitment to a cause when it is as solid as that exhibited by Nelson Mandela.

AFRO SURVEY

Do you support the Md. law banning handgun sales?

ABRAHAM AZAB — Deli Operator — I think it's safer if you are allowed to sell it for self protection. It makes it a little safer.

Abraham Azab

JOSEPH HENDERSON — Retired. 76 next week— I'm in favor of banning them. I don't have a weapon of any kind and I think others should be denied the weapons. Only police officers should have them. People with weapons are dangerous and they (weapons) are dangerous to the people who use them.

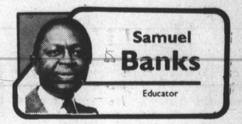
Joseph Henderson

Kevin Eubanks

KEVIN EUBANKS — Asst. Building Superintendent — It's definitely needed. There are too many young lives being lost due to these handguns. 16 and 17 year olds can go out and get handguns while businessmen have to go through a lot of red tape. If they could beef up the police they wouldn't need handguns for protection.

Phil Gray

PHIL GRAY — Clerk, I, would feel safer. There is this proliferation of handguns now that the police are probably swamped with. But you have to start somewhere. The NRA puts forth the claim that anyone should be able to own a handgun but I think the cheap handgun is definitely an instrument of crime.



Samuel Banks
Educator

Jackson at NAACP confab

The recently concluded 79th convention of the NAACP at the Washington Sheraton Hotel provided a kaleidoscopic, urgent and insightful portrayal of critical and pivotal problems and opportunities confronting 35 million black Americans.

The theme, "VOTE! TO BE HEARD," represented a central thread that permeated the thought-provoking, substantive and challenging group meetings and plenary sessions. There was overall agreement that the judicious use of the ballot was the route to empowerment.

I sat in the cavernous Washington Sheraton Ballroom on Tuesday, July 12, and listened to the Rev. Dr. Benjamin Hooks, Executive Director of the NAACP, present the Rev. Jesse L. Jackson to an overflow crowd of over 10,000 persons.

It was after he had received word that the Democratic standard-bearer (i.e., Gov. Michael Dukakis), had chosen Sen. Lloyd Bentsen of Texas as his running-mate.

There was a wide sense of anger, bewilderment and disappointment. Rev. Jackson, in his inimitable and irrepressible manner, allayed the crowd and provided an aura of hope, stability and inspiration.

Rev. Jackson's appearance, to be sure, constituted the center-piece and high point of the convention in regard to the plenary speakers. He was direct in stating why his name was going forward at the Atlanta Democratic convention.

Rev. Jackson was eloquent and direct: "Why is my name going in nomination?" Because if I win, your child wins." In a moving peroration, he concluded, "I may not be on the ticket, but I am qualified. Qualified! Qualified." The audience responded enthusiastically and tumultuously.

Why it is true that the NAACP, as a non-partisan group, does not endorse political candidates for office, it is, nonetheless true, that Rev. Jackson was the overwhelming choice of the NAACP delegates and observers.

There, too, was a keen sense of disappointment that Gov. Dukakis' treatment of Rev. Jackson, in not informing him before the media that Sen. Bentsen was his choice, was gauche, demeaning, cavalier and insulting. Gov. Dukakis now indicates that he tried to reach Rev. Jackson before the announcement to the media.

It is abundantly clear that the adherents of Gov. Dukakis and Rev. Jackson will have to come together and reach an accommodation if the Democratic Party is to emerge the victor in the November election.

If he accomplished nothing else in this presidential year, it is abundantly clear that Rev. Jesse Louis Jackson has made a monumental and enduring contribution to black Americans through his vitality, steadiness, capacious knowledge and dexterity as a presidential candidate.

The message is a triumphant and historic one: Every black American can aspire to the presidency and be taken seriously.

In terms of a final observation, as I sat in the group and plenary sessions listening to the thoughtful, trenchant and impassioned commentaries of highly able NAACP delegates and observers at the 79th convention, I was reminded of a forceful challenge to America by the late Dr. William Edward Burghardt DuBois, one of the founders of the NAACP:

"Against this the Niagara movement we eternally protest. We will not be satisfied to take one jot or tittle less than our full manhood rights. We claim for ourselves every single right tht belongs to a free born American; political, civil, and social and until we get these rights we will never cease to protest and assail the ears of American."

Anthony Armstrong
Political Consultant

Perrier and beer and other stuff

Twenty-eight years ago Kennedy/Johnson responded to Martin Luther King. Today, Dukakis/Bentsen have Jesse Jackson

1988 will be an especially tricky political year for both presidential candidates. Democrats will move to the right, while avoiding the ditch in the road.

Bush must keep the Reagan Republicans and find a place on the political dial that will win the crossover voters he must get - the vast majority of whom are not African-Americans.

Good Democrats, all, Dukakis / Bentsen/Jackson should be able to assume the votes of African-Americans; yet, cannot appear to be taking our votes for granted, lest such assumptions make an - - - of each of them.

Race is the ultimate underlying fact of this election contest; however, everybody has to make it seem it's not.

And whoever said we couldn't be analytical hasn't visited the neighborhood bars or been invited onto the backyard patios of many African-Americans. It's a love/hate relationship we have with Jesse, sure as it's been 100° hot!

The blue collars among us are enjoying beers with pride and derision for Jesse Jackson; and the white collars among us are enjoying Perrier with pride and derision for Jesse.

We've seen that presidential elections take on a character very different than either state or local elections. In the later two, people tend to vote their party; national contest have generally focused on the candidate.

This year's fight will be nip and tuck, and the more it is, the more important the votes of African-Americans take on. Whether we come out to vote or sit this one out; whom we give our votes to; all these present different equations to each presidential aspirant.

It's a volatile chess match that could explode abruptly, and unexpectedly in either candidates' face; and Jesse Jackson is not immune to the dangers of such political shrapnel either. In fact, he may be the most vulnerable.

Trying to figure things out using anything but the latest population and attitude data, especially since the last race in 1984, will force the candidates to play an especially "close-in" tactical game.

For now, no one can claim more crystal balls than anyone else; and the pundits are going to find their predictions turned into silly statements, with almost every release of the latest newspaper.

Pictures are going to play the largest role since the days of the Hollywoodish Kennedy years; with Dukakis looking straight into the camera to mute his exaggerated features, and Bush doing profiles in the manner of a young bomber pilot turned peacemaker.

Someone will be dubbed "campaign assistant for the box;" so that the Duke will always have something to stand on when being photographed with his Texas-tower running mate.

Already, the wives are in the game. Mrs. Dukakis will be prominent, having staked out the mantle of Eleanor Roosevelt. Mrs. Bush, after her post-84 remake, will take the low road.

There is danger here if Mrs. "D" is perceived as a wifely equivalent of Jimmy Carter's, "I talked it over with Amy" statement. Mrs. Bush has problems if too many people remember her, "Who does that ----- think she is," statement hurled at Mrs. Ferarro (y'all remember her).

A major piece of the puzzle still must be put in place - who's going to be Bush's running mate? Some say Bob Dole; I say a Dole too, but the first name is Elizabeth. We will not see pit bulls. What we will see a lot of is nobless oblige against the American dream .... Yet, it'll be hard, sometimes, to tell which candidate is trying to be which.

Yet, over brunch and cold beers the questions for African-Americans will still be the ones they have always been. Which candidates will be the one who will best serve the interest of African-Americans? 88 will not be a race to answer who is best, but who is the least of the evils, and that candidate will be the person whom our heads should lead us to.

However, we are an emotional bloc of voters, but this year so little emotion will be expended that we might find ourselves appearing to be even further out on a political limb than our liberalism would normally place us.

One thing is certain: we cannot afford four or eight years of being outside the loop, and how we find a way in will depend on whether we've supported the eventual winner.

Thus, the need for especially heady treatment of a subject - politics - that we've often approached from anything but a cerebral position.

In all this, somewhere, will be Jesse, being used by both parties. One will attempt to have it appear that he is "in". The other will ask African-Americans to ask ourselves why we shouldn't abandon a party that constantly attempts to keep us out, and all this after we've consistently worked so hard for them.

After all is said and done, however, there are still those who like a cold one, and those that prefer their liquid-Perrier. Neither segment is really any different from the other where it really counts, however.

African-Americans will always be African-Americans. Just as it is with other groups in America who share like interest we must get past our superficial differences to find out own common ground.

So, brunch or beer we'll still have to look to the same presidential policy thoughts to help realize either.