

African Americans Hold Key Positions At Democratic Convention



MARIO M. COOPER



LAJUAN M. JOHNSON



MAXINE GRIFFITH



MICHAEL J. PITTS

ELECTION '92

The Views Of African Americans: What We REALLY Think

By Tasha Hailey
National Correspondent

WASHINGTON--Home Box Office (HBO), the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies and the National Coalition on Black Voter Participation last week released the results of a national survey of African Americans on a range of issues including the presidential candidates, public policy and race relations. The poll, which was conducted from June 22-30 by telephone by Omnifacts, Inc. of Philadelphia, is the first comprehensive assessment of the views of African Americans in the 1992 election year.

The findings of the survey were discussed in a symposium with participants including Emanuel Cleaver, Kansas City Mayor; Kevin Phillips, editor/publisher, American Political Report; Roger Wilkins, George Mason University professor; and Representative Maxine Waters of California.

Survey results show that concerning partisanship and ideology, African Americans identify with the Democratic party. Seventy-two percent identified themselves as Democrats, twenty percent as Independents and five percent as Republicans. However, while identifying themselves as Democrats, Blacks did not identify themselves as liberals. Thirty-three percent said they were conservative, thirty percent as moderate and twenty percent liberal.

"For the first time, Blacks are identifying themselves. Blacks are more conservative than the media paints us to be," Wilkins said.

Waters says on the findings of partisanship and ideology,

"The labels of liberal and conservative do not work in our community. We're neither conservative nor liberal. We're progressive and we know where our interests lie."

The survey overwhelmingly exhibited dissatisfaction with the nation's direction and the Bush administration. Eighty-eight percent of those polled said they were dissatisfied with the way that things were going in the country. Seventy-one percent blamed the Reagan and Bush administrations for the urban problems. Congress also received a disapproval rating as sixty-six percent said that congress was also to blame.

Perhaps the most interesting findings concentrated around the presidential candidates for the 1992 election. Those surveyed asked if they could rate their feelings toward president/vice-presidential candidates which included George Bush, Bill Clinton, H. Ross Perot and Dan Quayle in terms of favorable or not favorable.

Four national Black figures including Jesse Jackson, Colin Powell, Clarence Thomas and Douglas Wilder were also rated.

George Bush's favorable/unfavorable ratings were 28 percent/ 60 percent and Dan Quayle's ratings were similar (25/56). Bill Clinton had a favorable/unfavorable rating of 57/21 and H. Ross Perot was viewed more favorably than unfavorable, but only by a margin of 9 percent (35/26). Thirty-nine percent surveyed responded either neutrally or had no opinion of Perot.

"While the Black community is flexible, we're not flexible with putting Bush back in the White House," said Mayor

Cleaver. Speaking of Perot he said, "We tend not to go on blind dates."

Concerning Clinton, Wilkins said, "If I were in Clinton's camp, I'd be a little disturbed by the findings. Perot's don't know/undecided margin is large, so he has the chance to impress voters."

The favorable/not favorable ratings for national Black figures showed that Jesse Jackson has the strongest support with a 77 percent favorable. Colin Powell was also viewed positively (67/11) along with Doug Wilder (56/16). Clarence Thomas was viewed more favorably than not favorably (45/30), however, he had the largest share of unfavorable ratings of the Black public figures.

The poll shows that education is a major priority among Blacks. Thirty-one percent said that education was a deciding issue in the presidential election. Forty-nine percent of those surveyed say that Black children do not receive an education equivalent the their White counterparts.

There was wide support in education for "back to basics" programs (75 percent), Afrocentric curriculum (80 percent), special schools for young Black men (63 percent) and support for the elimination

of tracking in public schools.

"Candidates have been searching for the answers to the education problem. The answer is for them to listen to us, the community, and not come to us with preconceived notions about the incapacibilities of our children," Wilkins said.

Fear and crime was another component of the survey. Fifty-three percent of those surveyed said that they were afraid to walk at night within two to three blocks of their home. About a third of those interviewed said that street gangs were active around their neighborhood.

In the aftermath of the Rodney King decision and the riots surrounding it, nine percent polled said that the rioters in Los Angeles were justified in their actions. Thirty-six percent expressed feelings that the rioters were not justified. Half of those surveyed indicated that they did not approve of the rioter's behavior, but understood their frustration and anger.

"This poll is crucial because for the first time this year, our voices are being heard. The candidates will see this poll and hopefully act on our concerns. This poll comes directly from us," said Sonia Jarvis, executive director of the National Coalition on Black Voter Participation.

(Capitol News Service)

Washington---A record number of African-Americans hold key positions with the Democratic National Committee as the 200-year-old political party conducts its 1992 national convention in New York's Madison Square Garden, July 12-16, under the leadership of Gotham-born, Harlem-bred DNC chairman Ronald H. Brown.

More than 40,000 delegates, alternates, elected officials, party regulars, supporters, guests and media representatives will be attending the biggest political gathering ever, with New York City Mayor David H. Dinkins serving as honorary chairman of the host committee.

"I smell victory in the air," Mayor Dinkins jubilantly told colleagues at the opening of the DNC Platform Committee hearings in Washington. Dinkins, as a vice chairman of the Platform Committee, was aggressive in presenting "minority issues" for consideration by the committee.

Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) chairman, Rep. Edolphus Towns (D-NY) a few days later echoed the "victory in the air" theme after a CBC meeting with Gov. Bill Clinton in Washington.

Despite simmering debate at the Platform Committee hearing on such concerns as urban aid, enterprise zones, school choice, women's choice, minimum wages (\$5.25 an hour), unemployed Black youth, minority reports or open floor fights are not expected at the New York convention.

Brown, the dapper DNC presiding officer, grew up about 100 blocks from the "Garden" in uptown Harlem, where his father managed the celebrated Theresa Hotel. However, Brown began his political career as a Democratic leader in suburban Mount Vernon, New York.

Before being elected DNC Chairman in 1989, Brown served as deputy campaign manager for Sen. Edward Kennedy's 1980 presidential campaign, convention manger for Rev. Jesse Jackson's 1988 presidential campaign and senator political advisor to presidential nominee Michael Dukakis.

Two politically experienced African Americans were among Brown's first appointments in preparing for the 1992 race for the White House. He promptly named Alexis M. Herman,

former director of the Women's Bureau, U.S. Department of Labor, as DNC's chief of staff and subsequently as the chief executive officer for planning the convention, and Atty. Mario M. Cooper as convention manager.

Other African-Americans holding top positions on the convention staff are Frank Williams, Jr., Chief Financial Officer; Atty. Hartina Flourmoy, General Counsel; Maxine Griffith, director, Convention Hall Planning and Management; Lujuan M. Johnson, director, Headquarters Hotels; Michael J. Pitts, director of Transportation, and Marilyn Shaw, director of Volunteer Services.

Among the other African-Americans on the convention staff are Yolanda Caraway, senior advisor to the chairman; Howlie Davis, special assistant to the Convention CEO; James T. Day, deputy of candidate, Congressional and VIP Arrangements; Leah Daughtry, director, Office of the Convention Manager; Ivan D. Andrews, deputy director of Housing; and Michele Brown, executive Assistant to the CEO.

Brown announced that one of the keynote speakers at Monday's opening convention session will be former Texas Congresswoman Barbara Jordan and that Atlanta Mayor Maynard Jackson will serve as one of four co-chairs of the convention.

Brown named 23 African-Americans to three convention standing committees, Platform, Rules and Credentials. Seattle Mayor Norman Rice and Ohio Congressman Louis Stokes serve as vice chairs of the Rules Committee, and Missouri Congressman Alan Wheat and North Carolina Speaker of the House Dan Blue are co-chair and vice-chair, respectively, of the Credentials Committee.

Other African-American committee appointees include: Platform--Rep. Eleanor Holmes Norton, Mary Berry, and Bill Lucy of D.C.; Lenore Miller, NY; Myra Jones, AR; Leon Lynch, PA; Rules--Mildred Stallings, MI; Vicki LeGrange, OK; Juanita Miller, MD; Michael Figures, AL; and Sherman Copelin, LA; Credentials-- Lois DeBerry, TN; Irma Hunter Brown, AR; Carrie Meek, FL; Rikki Jones, IL; John Studrivant, DC, Rubin Berkes, MI, and Calvin Smyre, GA.

Blacks Accuse Catholic Agency Of Racism, Discrimination

By David Bash
Staff Reporter

A community meeting held July 9 at New Hope Baptist Church heard members of the Community Advisory Board of the Black Family Center (BFC) accuse that Catholic agency of racism and discriminatory practices in laying off BFC staff, and the placing of the Black regional director on paid administrative leave.

Over 50 people attending that meeting heard charges from Dora Mitchum Simmons, the Catholic Community Services' (CCS) central regional director placed on administrative leave, that she was confronted with a letter containing "untrue allegations" that, among other things to warrant her being placed on leave, she made an offer of an unauthorized \$10,000 position to another employee.

"I did not offer a position. I asked for \$10,000 in the budget to upgrade three jobs," she said, adding, "This whole thing has been orchestrated."

She complained that there were no names, dates or contacts included in the letter containing the allegations of her misconduct.

Simmons' past complaints of mistreatment by CCS, located in the Randolph Carter Center Building at 23rd and Yesler, brought in a "disinterested third party," the Northwest Labor and Law office, to asses the situation.

A worker with that law office at that time, Diane Narosaki, told the audience at the community meeting that the CCS agency does not provide a positive environment for women of color even though the

leadership there knew of "subtle practices" of discrimination within the organization.

"It seemed to us a fishing expedition was launched to find reasons for the termination," Narosaki said. "This looks like a classic case of discrimination," she added.

Funded with United Way and public (state, federal and city) money as well as private dollars, CCS is obligated by law and under its state and federal tax exempt status to not discriminate.

"The Black Family Center is not active today," said acting central regional director, Maryviolet Burns, who is also a Black woman.

Reached at her office in the CCS building Monday, Burns said she wanted to make it clear to the community that the BFC is actually a "program" and not a

"center." And she said the future of the program will focus on service rather than the center being a "symbol."

Though the program is not staffed or active currently, she said the "program" was to be "expanded," and that a job description for the program manager position has been released. "I am at an utter loss how the rumor got started that the BFC is to be dismantled," she said.

Board members at the meeting called for a community mass meeting with Archbishop Thomas Murphy--who has labeled racism a "sin"--to get his high office to respond to the board's concerns over discriminatory employment practices at CCS.

Black Woman Serves As CEO Of Democratic Convention

Alexis M. Herman (right), the first Black woman to serve as CEO of a Democratic Party nominating convention, is joined by Democratic Party Chairman Ronald H. Brown (left) and Robert Russo, senior vice president and general manager of Madison Square Garden, in a final inspection of convention facilities at the Garden.



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