

**Obama**

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winner, accompanied Obama at his Winston-Salem appearance and at some of the senator's other North Carolina events on Tuesday. Franklin, Professor Emeritus of History at Duke University, also sat beside Obama during the discussion with African American journalists. He said that he too got bitten by the Obama bug after hearing the then-U.S. Senate candidate speak at the 2004 Democratic National Convention.

"I had faith in America once. I lost faith in America as I grew up. The hope I have in America today rests to my right side," Franklin said, motioning to a grinning Obama.

The closed-door conversation with Obama touched on a multitude of topics. In many cases, he reiterated his oft-pitched platform positions but related them specifically to the African-American community. The senator acknowledged that when it comes to issues like unemployment and sub-prime lending, minorities are often hit the hardest.

"The saying goes, 'when America gets a cold, black America gets pneumonia,'" he said.

He was asked his thoughts on the recent acquittals of three New York City police detectives who had been charged with firing 50 shots at an unarmed black man.

"It struck me as potential excess force," Obama said of the shooting death of Sean Bell.

The senator added that while he believes that law enforcement should be the responsibility of local agencies, the federal Justice Department's Civil Rights wing should probe cases like those of Bell and the Jena Six.

"Law enforcement has a difficult job, and I am very respectful of law enforcement," he said. "But law enforcement works best when the community has confidence that (the law) is being applied with fairness."

If elected president, Obama said his Justice Department would take a more proactive approach in the hopes of keep-



Photo by Charlie Pfla

**Sen. Obama answers questions during a conversation with members of the black press.**

ing such incidents from occurring in the first place. He talked about his efforts in the Illinois Statehouse to push for law enforcement agencies to provide traffic stop statistics so that any patterns that could be considered racial profiling could be nipped in the bud.

"The federal government can provide best practices to local communities," he said.

Obama said that he has not had second thoughts about not traveling to Memphis on April 4 to mark the 40th anniversary of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. McCain and Clinton both attended ceremonies outside of the Lorraine Motel on that day, but Obama chose to campaign in Indiana, which will hold its primary the same day as North Carolina.

Earlier this year, Obama skipped Tavis Smiley's annual State of the Black Union forum, an event that Clinton attended, to campaign. His absences drew criticism from some, especially Smiley, who is reportedly leaving his gig on the "Tom Joyner Morning Show" because listeners do not like that Smiley has taken issue with Obama. The senator says he cannot be everywhere, all the time.

"I have been running for the presidency of the United States of America. That requires me to reach out to all corners of the country. In order for me to be successful, I have to reach out to communities that don't know me," said Obama, who added that he was in Atlanta with the King family on Dr. Martin

Luther King Jr. Day in January.

He said that if he had attended the State of the Black Union, which was in New Orleans this year, he believes that he would have been preaching to the already converted.

"It would not make sense for me to devote a day to speaking to people, who know me, know my track record, and in large numbers support me, when I can be spending that same day talking to people who don't know me and might not support me," he said.

The senator ruled out the possibility of running as a third-party candidate in November if he should lose his party's nomination.

"I'm a Democrat!" he said.

Obama also has faith in his party. He believes that when the '08 Democratic National Convention convenes in Denver in late August, the party will be united behind its nominee. Obama said Democrats can't afford to sit home and pout if their candidate loses the nomination. The future of the nation depends on their active participation, he said.

"If I were the loser, this campaign is not about myself and it is not about Sen Clinton. It is about the American people," said the senator. "What I am convinced of is that we cannot afford four more years of the same policies that we have seen under George W. Bush and that is essentially what John McCain is offering. So we have no choice when it comes to sitting out (the General Election)."

**W-S Prep's Ellis elected VP of NCAE**

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

Rodney N. Ellis Sr., an eighth-grade language arts teacher at Winston-Salem Preparatory Academy, has been elected vice president of the NCAE. He will begin his two-year term on July 1.

NCAE is the state's largest education association, representing more than 65,000 active, retired and student members in North Carolina.

Ellis has been an active NCAE member and leader for 13 years. He was president of the Student NCAE chapter at Winston-Salem State University from 1996-1998. He was elected to two consecutive terms as president of the Forsyth County Association of Educators (FCAE), the local affiliate of the NCAE, from 2003-2007. He was also FCAE vice president. In 2005, he was elected to his current position on the NCAE Board of Directors, where he has served on both the Government Relations and Finance and Personnel committees.

At the national level, Ellis has represented

Winston-Salem/Forsyth County for the last five years as a delegate to the National Education Association (NEA) annual convention and representative assembly, the world's largest democratic, deliberative body.

An educator for 10 years, Ellis was honored as Teacher of the Year at Winston-Salem Preparatory Academy for the 2000-01 school year. He was the 2002 recipient of the Black Achievers Award from the YMCA and, in the same year, was named Phi Beta Sigma's Man of the Year. Ellis is also currently a member of the Board of Trustees for the North Carolina Teacher Academy, a position he was appointed to in 2005 by the governor's office.

His community service includes being an active member of Goodwill Baptist Church, where he has served on the board of directors and as president of youth ministries. He organizes step-drill teams as well with various community youth groups and churches.

A native of Mocksville, Ellis earned a bachelor's degree in Middle Grades Education from WSSU.



Ellis

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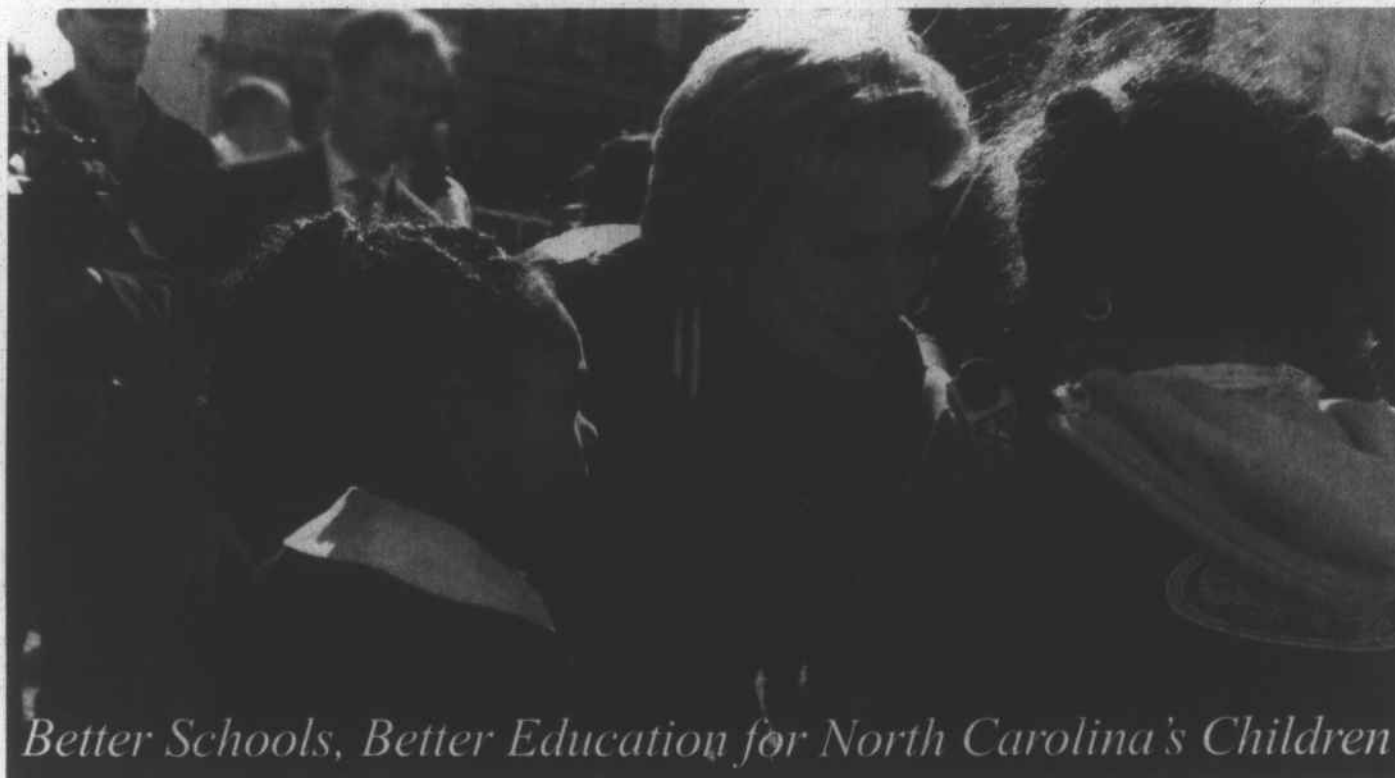


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