

Bush touts growth despite opposition

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an "individual who is seeking to derail democracy and freedom for the Iraqi people," McClellan said.

Bush said the economy is getting stronger and that he is optimistic about the future. He cited March unemployment figures showing the best job growth in four years.

Bush said Central Piedmont is incorporating the suggestions of local business leaders into the curriculum so that the jobs students study for and seek actually exist.

Bush is using North Carolina, a state where a new economy is replacing the old, to propose doubling the number of Americans who receive job-training help from the federal government but without additional funding.

"I fully understand that there are people who hurt here," the president said. "Industries like the textiles, and furniture manufacturers are struggling... that is an issue we've got to deal with."

Congressional Black Caucus Chair Elijah Cummings (D-Md.) said new jobs aren't reaching enough workers. Unemployment among African Americans rose to 10.2 percent in March, while

the Hispanic jobless rate remained at 7.4 percent.

"The unemployment picture gets increasingly worse when we consider that (last week) the total number of Americans who have lost their unemployment benefits since December reached 1.1 million people," he said. "These willing workers are struggling to support their families and are actively seeking work."

N.C. Democratic Party Chair Barbara Allen said Bush and the Republican-led Congress have ignored proposals to fund job training programs, especially in the hard-hit manufacturing sector.

"That's what we North Carolinians call an empty promise," she said. "North Carolinians know the difference between rhetoric and real action."

Bush's visit to Charlotte to announce the initiative, part of a wider election-year bid to help workers adapt to the changing economy, also marks his last planned personal appearance in the record-shattering fund-raising drive that brought in more than \$182.7 million in 11 months.

Monday's event collected \$1.55 million from 900 donors, the Bush-Cheney campaign said.

Bush told his contributors

that Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry wants to raise taxes on all Americans, but "fortunately we're not going to give him that chance." Bush said his goal is to make his tax cuts permanent and to open up overseas markets to North Carolina products.

On Tuesday, Kerry traveled to the electoral battleground state of Ohio to promote a plan he says would create 10 million new jobs. He also has proposed rolling back tax cuts on those making more than \$200,000 a year.

Kerry spokesman Chad Clanton called Bush's proposals for job training "a phony baloney plan that does nothing more than shift money between programs and doesn't offer a dime to unemployed workers."

The initiative Bush announced contains no new federal spending with a budget deficit expected to approach \$500 billion this year. Instead, it relies on \$250 million Bush proposed spending earlier this year and forcing state and local governments to spend less on "administrative expenses."

Washington now provides state and local governments more than \$4 billion through the Workforce Investment Act, and 16 million people

receive various services through it. But only 206,000 people completed formal training through the act's programs last year, according to the White House. Bush seeks to double that figure to 412,000 in one year.

The White House says Bush's Jobs for the 21st Century Initiative, announced in his State of the Union address, would move 100,000 more people into job training.

The \$250 million proposal is already part of Bush's budget proposal for next fiscal year's budget, which Congress is considering. The soonest the money would become available would be October of this year.

The money would expand the Labor Department's initiatives to bolster ties between community colleges, public work force agencies and employers. The result, the administration says, is that community colleges produce graduates

with skills in demand by area employers.

An additional 100,000 people could receive job training if the government cut \$300 million in red tape and administrative costs, the administration officials said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Herbert L. White of The Post contributed to this report.

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NATIONAL ARCHIVES PHOTO

Marines saw Corps' values

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Montford Point Marines Museum at Camp Johnson named in honor of Sgt. Gilbert "Hashmark" Johnson, Montford Point's first black drill instructor.

Ironically, two women — Mary McLeod Bethune, founder of historically-black Bethune-Cookman College and an advisor to President Franklin Roosevelt, and First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt — prevailed upon Franklin Roosevelt to open the Corps to all Americans. Executive Order 8802 established the Fair Employment Practice Commission, which forced the door open — to a point.

"We were USMC-R, Selective Service," McPhatter said. "We were on trial. We were not supposed to stay in the Marines after the war. We were going to be off-trial."

"The lack of diversity in the Marines was very pronounced," said retired 1st Sgt. Finney Greggs, director of the Montford Point Marines Museum. "Once the gates were opened and the opportunity presented itself, (blacks) left other services to join."

Training was brutal for the 20,000 African Americans who trained there during the war, with the world's toughest physical program an everyday fact of life.

"Parris Island couldn't compete with Montford Point," McPhatter said. "I feel my knees are gone now because of doing the duck walk (with the knees pointed inward) and my rifle over my head."

Isolation and southern racial hostility of the time compounded the stress of boot camp. Black Marines couldn't train with whites, who were based at nearby Camp Lejeune. But that separation brought recruits and their instructors closer as warriors in a cause that extended beyond battlefields.

"It was rough, but we loved each other" McPhatter said. "There were days when we wanted to kill our drill instructor, but they became our family."

Montford Point graduates served in the 51st and 52nd Defense Battalions, in support roles for white troops at the front. But they also fought in some of the war's bloodiest campaigns. They served in the Pacific theatre, where Marines subdued Japanese forces for control of Saipan and Iwo Jima among others.

"Many of them were cooks or stewards, but many of them wound up in combat," Greggs said. "As the enemy advanced at that point in time, it became very clear that these guys were needed to win the war."

McPhatter, who saw action on Iwo Jima as a sergeant in the 8th Ammunition Company, said the Japanese's kill or be killed attitude tested the Americans.

"The last firefight on Iwo was my company turning back the last Japanese kamikaze," he said. "We were still living in holes and we cut them down as they came down from the north. We just laid them out."

Montford Point Marines — Greggs estimates about 600 of them are alive — went on to prominence in the military and other endeavors since Pvt. Howard Perry of Charlotte broke the color barrier. The Corps' first African American officer was a Montford Point grad, Lt. Fred Branch of Charlotte. Others, like Jacksonville City Council member Turner G. Blount, are community leaders. McPhatter, the last Montford Point grad to retire from active duty in 1983, is a minister in St. Louis, Mo. and San Diego, where he's lived for 44 years.

"You can go across the spectrum in the United States and they're in prominent positions," Greggs said.

Although all-black units like the Buffalo Soldiers and Tuskegee Airmen are better-known, the Montford Point Marines are beginning to receive the recognition they earned. North Carolina and the Marine Corps honored them at the CIAA basketball tournament in February and the Montford Point museum is seeking public donations to acquire artifacts from their service.

"They were Americans and they wanted to serve this grand country," said Robinson, a retired gunnery sergeant. "In essence, what they did was show the United States and the Marines that African Americans could comprehend and do their job."

On the Net:
Montford Point Marines Association
www.montfordpointmarines.com
Telephone: (910) 450-7585.

Marine recruits train on the obstacle course at Camp Montford Point. Black recruits trained in segregated facilities and weren't allowed on base at nearby Camp Lejeune, where whites were based.



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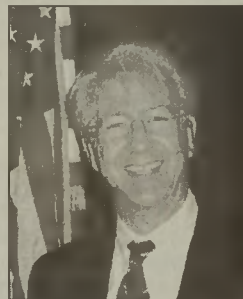
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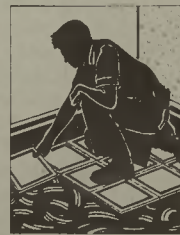


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