

## Southerners complain scheduling of primaries weakens their clout

By Jeffrey McMurray

WASHINGTON (AP) - Democrats thought they had a foolproof plan to win the White House: Hold primaries in several conservative Southern states on the same day, forcing party faithful to select a centrist who could battle in even the GOP's strongest region.

The "Super Tuesday" experiment of 1988 backfired. The day's biggest winner was Jesse Jackson, one of the most liberal candidates in the field. Jackson lost the nomination to Michael Dukakis, who lost the presidency in a landslide.

If the South proves pivotal in deciding who the Democratic nominee will be this year, it won't be due to an early concentration of primaries. Of the first 12 states making their choice, only one is from the South. Of the first 30, only four are from the South.

## New Black Cable Channel Debuts on King Holiday

By Stephen Manning

LANHAM, Md. (AP) - There may be hundreds of channels on cable television, but Johnathan Rodgers says there's still something missing for black viewers.

Sure, there are networks for men, women, animal lovers, game show fans and even people nostalgic for old soap operas. But what typical black viewers don't see, said the president of a new network geared toward blacks, is many people who look like them.

"If you want to see a makeover show where your hair and skin happens to be a different texture or color, what do you watch? If you want to see a horror movie where the first person killed isn't black, where do you go?" Rodgers asks.

The answer, he hopes, is the upstart TV One network, debuting on Martin Luther King Day in several metropolitan markets across the country.

With a mixture of lifestyle shows, documentaries and reruns of old sitcoms and dramas, TV One hopes to woo an audience that Rodgers says is starved for black-oriented programming.

TV One and its corporate backers, Comcast Corp. and urban radio company Radio One, are taking on the dominant and largely unchallenged leader of the urban television market - Viacom's BET.

TV One claims it targets a different demographic, saying it will go for viewers aged 24 to 54 who might not be interested in the hip-hop and other youth-oriented programming on BET.

However, industry analysts say the two will likely compete for viewers and advertising money, although they note that on cable systems with so many different choices, there is probably enough room for both.

"There should be more than two cable channels that aggressively target African-Americans in a universe of more 200 channels," said Jason Helfstein, a media analyst with CIBC World Markets Corp.

Rodgers, a former Discovery Communications executive, said the new network will target the black adult audience, which he called "underserved."

Market research seems to confirm that - Nielsen ratings from 2000 show blacks watched much more television by household and demographic group than the general population. But only one network - BET - focuses solely on tapping the estimated \$631 billion in buying power that blacks flexed in 2002.

A new network will likely be attractive to people frustrated with the current shortage of black programming on cable, according to Ken Smikle, president of Target Market News, a Chicago-based black media trade publication.

"Anything that comes on TV One we already know is targeted to me as an African-American viewer," Smikle said. "If I have to sit through Discovery Channel to wait for something that is specific interest to me as an African-American, I could be waiting a while."

The product of a deal forged last year between Comcast and Radio One, TV One launches with a commitment from both companies and other investors for \$130 million over the next four years. It air Monday, Jan. 19 and be available to 2.2 million cable subscribers in markets such as Washington-Baltimore, Detroit and Atlanta.

For the first few months, much of TV One's programming will be a mix of new shows combined with reruns such as sitcoms "227" and "Good Times," as well as the short-lived CBS drama "City of Angels."

The network plans to add original programming, such as a showdown between gospel choirs for a cash prize, a dating show hosted by radio personality Russ Parr and a series hosted by diva Patti LaBelle during which she will dish out decorating advice, sing and do just about everything with a camera in tow. There are no plans for a news show.

TV One has an edge on most cable startups that have to cajole cable carriers to include them in service packages. With Comcast as part owner, the network has been able to get a spot on the analog tier of service in many markets, meaning viewers with expanded basic cable packages won't pay extra.

Radio One, with a 40 percent stake in the new venture, will also plug the network on the 66 radio stations it owns in 22 urban markets.

Over the next few months, the network will also debut in Philadelphia, Oakland, Calif., and Chicago on Comcast systems. But the channel has not cracked some large urban markets, such as New York and Los Angeles. A week before its launch, it still hadn't signed deals with cable carriers other than Comcast.

"In the long run, that is not enough if they are going to try to build a national network," said David Bank, an analyst with RBC Capital Markets who covers the broadcasting industry. "They are going to need carriage on every multiple service operator (cable provider)."

Then there is the BET challenge. Rodgers is adamant that TV One is meant for a different audience, the type of viewer more interested in a documentary on slavery reparations than the latest rap video.

BET sees things differently. The network, which reaches 74 million households, revamped its programming last year to add gospel shows and a nightly newscast.

BET vice president Michael Lowellen says it is the top-watched cable network among 18- to 49-year-old black prime-time viewers. The perception it is just for the younger set is false, he said.

"In certain parts of the day you will find our programming skewed toward a younger audience, but in prime time and late night our audience demographic is considerably older," he said. "We wish them well in an already crowded cable landscape."

While TV One has a lot in its favor, the network will still have to fight to establish itself, Bank said.

"They are still going to have to compete with 500 other channels on the air. A person could be any ethnicity and they are still going to watch the NFL on another station," he said. "Are they going to have enough programming to attract not only the BET viewer but also the general market viewer?"

Some Southern Democrats are crying foul, complaining the party doesn't seem interested in their perspective on who should challenge President Bush in a region he swept against Al Gore, a Southerner.

"They're going to be finished before they get to the South," said Sen. John Breaux, D-La. "It's going to be over by then. Whoever thinks that Iowa and New Hampshire are reflexive of the country at large, I've got a property in Louisiana I want to sell you."

Officials at the Democratic National Committee defend the schedule. Although there is no "Super Tuesday" contest this year per se, far more states will get the opportunity to vote earlier in the process. The traditional three-week lag between New Hampshire's kickoff primary and the next batch has been shortened to one week.

"Compared to the way things used to be when it was just Iowa and New Hampshire, we think clearly many more Democrats are involved in this process," DNC spokesman Tony Welch said.

On Feb. 3, a week after the New Hampshire primary, seven states from across the country will vote for a nominee. South Carolina has received the most attention, largely because the two Southern Democrats in the race - North Carolina Sen. John Edwards and retired Gen. Wesley Clark of Arkansas - have trumpeted its importance.

"We've seen in the past what happens if you have a Democrat who can't go and campaign in Georgia or Louisiana in October," said Bill Buck, Clark's spokesman. "The problem in the Democratic Party is not that we aren't making the blue states bluer. It's that we're not turning those red states in our favor."

Edwards has long counted on a victory in South Carolina to carry him toward the nomination, and his surprising second-place finish in the Iowa caucuses could help him get it. But it's unclear whether South Carolina alone would give him enough momentum should he fail to carry any other state in the first dozen, including Michigan and Washington on Feb. 7, and Maine the next day. Tennessee and Virginia vote Feb. 10, a date that could be pivotal if the nomination isn't clear before then.

After that, the next Southern primary is March 2 in Georgia, but it will likely be overshadowed by some of the nine other states voting that day. Among them are electoral behemoths California and New York.

DNC Chairman Terry McAuliffe has predicted the nominee will be decided the following week during what is left of "Super Tuesday," when voters in Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas go to the polls. Even if no candidate has clinched the necessary delegates by then, it's likely a clear-cut favorite will have emerged far earlier.

That was the case in 2000, when early primary wins by Gore and Bush

made the outcome of "Super Tuesday" moot and predictable.

But some Southerners contend the early coronation was almost appropriate for Gore and Bush because the South was perceived as their strongest region anyway. That's not the case with two of the apparent front-runners this time - Massachusetts Sen. John Kerry, who won the Iowa caucuses, or former Vermont Gov. Howard Dean, who is trying to rebound from a disappointing finish there by winning New Hampshire.

Should Dean bounce back, some Southern analysts say the schedule could allow him to win in spite of the South, not because of it.

"Once you get outside of urban areas, he is seen as being the kind of albatross who could be very damaging to Democrats running in November," said Charles Bullock, a University of Georgia political scientist. "They see him as being a Northeastern liberal and worry about a stampede for Bush."

Kerry doesn't have any apparent geographical ties to the region, but his image as a Vietnam War hero could make him a little more attractive among the South's heavy concentration of veterans.

Sen. Zell Miller, a conservative Democrat, predicts a Bush blowout in the South regardless of who wins the nomination. As Georgia lieutenant governor in 1988, Miller opposed the concept of "Super Tuesday," arguing it wouldn't necessarily produce a more moderate or electable nominee. Liberal activists, including many blacks, show up in large numbers for primaries, even though their choice may be inconsistent with the preference of the state's entire electorate in November.

Miller predicts that when this year's campaign moves South, the Rev. Al Sharpton - a black liberal who is running near the bottom of most polls - could have a surprising showing.

As for scheduling, Miller says he doesn't blame Southern officials who chose not to spend the extra money to set a presidential primary at an earlier date than state and local elections. Either way, he says, Southerners have little clout in the electoral process.

"They don't want to play in the ballgame," said Miller, who has endorsed Bush this year. "They are sick and tired of the party the way it is. Who wants to be a part of that mess? Not me, and obviously not many others."

Faith that the thing can be done is essential to any great achievement.  
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