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## Obama Clinches Democratic Spot First Black Presidential Nominee

By Hazel Trice-Edney  
NNPA Editor-in-Chief

WASHINGTON (NNPA) - U. S. Sen. Barack Obama has won enough pledged and super delegates and has seized the Democratic presidential nomination. By doing so, he has defeated Sen. Hillary Clinton by becoming the presumptive Democratic nominee and the first African-American to be nominated for the U. S. presidency by a major party.

"Sixteen months have passed since we first stood together on the steps of the Old State Capitol in Springfield, Illinois. Thousands of miles have been traveled; millions of voices have been heard," Obama told more than 20,000 supporters in St. Paul, Minn., Tuesday night. "And because of what you said, because you decided that change must come to Washington, because you believed that this year must be different than all the rest, because you chose to listen not to your doubts or your fears, but to your greatest hopes and highest aspirations, tonight we mark the end of one historic journey with the beginning of another, a journey - journey that will bring a new and better day to America. Because of you, tonight I can stand here and say that I will be the Democratic nominee for the president of the United States of America."

The historic win has sent a wave of euphoria through the black community and America in general as supporters cheered at the news after a long-fought primary contest against Sen. Hillary Clinton (D-N.Y.).

But, it is not just an American celebration, but a world celebration, says the Rev. Jesse Jackson Sr., a former Democratic presidential contender.

"The whole world is celebrating today, and rightfully so," says Jackson in a phone call from the United Republic of Tanzania to the NNPA News Service. "It is a glorious, mountaintop moment in American history. It is a great victory for Barack, Michelle and a hard fought campaign. It is a greater victory for America, a redemptive moment, a transformative moment, and so we have reason to celebrate."

Jackson, who was in Africa attending the annual Leon Sullivan Summit, said he cried when he heard the news; especially because of "the martyrs who paid such a big price for this moment."

Tanzania borders the Indian Ocean, between Mozambique and Kenya, the homeland of Obama's late father. Exuberant celebrations were taking place in Kenya after the news of Obama's win.

Clinton, who would have been the first woman nominee, did not concede Tuesday night. But it is Obama who will be running in the general election against Republican Sen. John McCain in the fall.

"America needs to be proud of itself tonight, that it has offered the nomination of a major political party both to a woman and to a major party. And the African-American has won," says civil rights icon the Rev. Joseph Lowery, co-founder of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. "And I think America can be proud that the people have listened to the voice that leads us into a better future and not a voice that causes us to cling to the hostile, conflicting politics of the past."

The root of this historic moment is steeped in slavery. Jim Crow, the struggle for civil rights and the injustices and inequities that still prevail.

"Our nominee will be giving his acceptance speech on the 45th anniversary, August 28, of the 'I Have a Dream Speech,'" says U. S. Rep. Jim Clyburn (D-S.C.), who as House majority whip, is the highest ranking African-American in Congress. He was reflecting on the upcoming Democratic National Convention in Denver in August, where Obama will formally become the nominee. "I just think it's kind of interesting for the first African-American nominee to be laying out a vision for this country on the anniversary of that 'I Have a Dream Speech' - poised to turn Martin Luther King Jr.'s Dream about judgment of people [being by] the content of their character rather than by the color of their skin. That to me is history worth living for," Clyburn said.

It was during returns from the South Dakota and Montana primaries that Obama crossed the line of the 2,118 delegates needed to seize the Democratic nomination. She won South Dakota. He won Montana. But, it was the last minute decisions of super delegates - party leaders who can cast their delegates in either direction - that put him over the line.

Clinton, who had been expected to concede, chose not to do so Tuesday night. Appearing as if she was still running, she listed the ills of America, giving only brief recognition to the Obama campaign.

"I want to start tonight by congratulating Senator Obama and his supporters on the extraordinary race that they have run. Senator Obama has inspired so many Americans to care about politics and empowered so many more to get involved. And our party and our democracy is stronger and more vibrant as a result. So we are grateful," she said.

But, later in her speech, she stated emphatically, "This has been a long campaign and I will be making no decisions tonight. And in the coming days, I'll be consulting with supporters and party leaders to determine how to move forward with the best interests of our party and our country, guiding my way."

In stark contrast, Obama, in his speech, lavishly praised Clinton's campaign as well as her for all that she has accomplished for the nation.

"We've certainly had our differences over the last 16 months. But as someone who's shared a stage with her many times, I can tell you that what gets Hillary Clinton up in the morning - even in the face of tough odds - is exactly what sent her and Bill Clinton to sign up for their first campaign in Texas all those years ago, what sent her to work at the Children's Defense Fund and made her fight for health care as first lady, what led her to the United States Senate and fueled her barrier-breaking campaign for the presidency: an unyielding desire to improve the lives of ordinary Americans, no matter how difficult the fight may be."

Democratic National Committee Chairman Howard Dean, in attempt to quickly unify the party, has said he wanted all super delegates - including all members of Congress - to make their decision between the two candidates as soon as possible after the primary season, which ended June 3.

Clyburn says he chose the Illinois senator over Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton because of the impact that he has made on the electorate.

"He has conducted a campaign...in such a way that it has elevated the political discourse in this country. He has energized voters like I have not seen since the 1960s. He has in fact, helped to draw a new map for the Democratic Party nationally," Clyburn said.



DEMOCRATIC PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE BARACK OBAMA

Obama has surprised the black population in such states as Iowa, a state with less than 3 percent black swarming. He has inspired young voters and African-Americans to register to vote and vote in record numbers. But, he has struggled in states like Pennsylvania and West Virginia where working class white voters didn't appear to take to his candidacy. Clyburn says he has advised Obama to, in coming months, tell them the hardships of his life story, which he says will share empathy and identification.

"You have not talked about those things that you've had to overcome to get to where you are," he recalled a recent conversation with Obama. "We have spent so much time talking about Sen. Obama, the first African-American chair of the Harvard Law Review. We have not spent enough time talking about the ordinary person raised by some extraordinary grandparents and a mother who made significant sacrifices on his behalf. That is the story that he has to tell going forward."

The celebrated win was clearly dampened by Sen. Clinton's refusal to concede.

There has been much speculation of a so-called "dream ticket" with Clinton as vice president, but after her refusal to concede Tuesday, Lowery says that does not appear as a realistic possibility. "If there were a realistic possibility for that, I think that she has muddied the waters. She was not conciliatory, she was not peaceful. She was still drawing a line in the sand. In his speech, he was a statesman. And I think the contrast between the two candidates was never more obvious in that Sen. Clinton's was the speech of a politician," Lowery says. "But, Barack was gracious, he complemented her beyond what anybody could expect. He was nice to her and then he went on to talk about the campaign is over."

Though many are in suspense, there appears to be a clear sentiment, as stated by Lowery:

"The battle is over. It's over. And there's no point when the ninth ending is past and the score is not tied, the game is over. And then you have to talk about where we go from here as a party, as a nation, as a united people."

## Racial Justice Act - Advocates want passage of NC Racial Justice Act

By Whitney Woodward

RALEIGH (AP) - Spurred by the recent release of three black men from death row, judicial reform advocates called on lawmakers to give defendants in capital murder cases the right to challenge their prosecution on racial bias grounds.

The North Carolina Racial Justice Act has sat dormant in a Senate committee since the House voted 68-51 to approve the measure last year. The proposal would allow death penalty defendants to use statistics to claim their conviction or sentence was driven by race.

The state's district attorneys oppose the measure, arguing it could detract from the merits of an individual case. But advocates said the bill is desperately needed to ensure innocent people are not sent to death.

"You can overturn a wrongful conviction, but you can't un-pack a wrong grave," said the Rev. William Barber, the president of the state chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

Since December 2007, three black men - Jonathan Hoffman, Glen Edward Chapman and Levon Jones - have been released from North Carolina's death row. They were among those lobbying lawmakers May 27 at the Legislative Building.

The law would require defendants to "state with particularity" how race played a role in either the prosecution's decision to press charges or to seek the death penalty. The plan would apply retroactively, so inmates currently on death row could make such arguments.

The state's prosecutors said only the merits of an individual case - and not a defendant's race - should be considered during a capital prosecution.

"No case is the same. None are the same. There are

different facts," said Pitt County District Attorney Clark Everett. "The decision to prosecute someone capitolly should be based on the facts of the case and the merits of the case, not what happened in other counties."

Everett, who serves as the president of the N.C. Conference of District Attorneys, said he fears the legislation will prompt a "battle of statisticians," where defense attorneys would hire such specialists and make arguments on racial grounds, regardless of the merits of the claims.

"Statistics can be used to show most anything," Everett said.

Senate Majority Leader Tony Rand, D-Cumberland, said May 27 he didn't know if the chamber would vote on the proposal this year.

## Funeral honors last surviving plaintiff in Brown lawsuit

TOPEKA, Kan. (AP) - The governor is joining family and friends of Zelma Henderson for her funeral.

Henderson is the last surviving plaintiff from Topeka in the historic Brown v. Board of Education lawsuit.

That lawsuit and four others across the nation led to the U.S. Supreme Court's 1954 ruling that declared segregated schools unconstitutional.

Henderson was among 13 parents in Topeka who sued the local school board in 1950. They were challenging its policy of requiring black students to attend segregated elementary schools.

The other plaintiffs included the Rev. Oliver Brown, whose name is listed first.

Henderson died last week at 88, six weeks after being diagnosed with pancreatic cancer.