

Sharpton leads successful shadow inaugural protest

BY RAOUL DENNIS
NNPA NEWS SERVICE

WASHINGTON - In spite of cold rain, near freezing temperatures and the fact that despite their efforts, George W. Bush was to be inaugurated the 43rd president of the United States, hundreds of protesters took to the streets of the nation's capital Saturday morning to make known their anger and disappointment with the ceremonial enactment placing Bush in the White House.

Amid several protests around the city and in Tallahassee, Fla., demonstrators came from around the nation - as far as Montana, Boston and California - and descended on the United States Supreme Court, known as the "scene of the crime" in the decision of the controversial 2000 presidential election crisis.

"They were going to try to stop this march from happening," said organizer Mark Thomson. "But by sheer weight of your numbers, they are going to allow us to move forward," he said to the crowd.

Protest signs ranged in style, tone and temperament from "R.I.P Democracy: 1776 to 2000" and "A Car In Every Garage And An Execution In Every Family" to "The People Have Spoken, All Five Of Them" and "It's The Vote, Stupid."

Diverse in color, economic background, sex and sexual orientation, the crowd moved through the inclement weather under an umbrella of leadership provided by the NAACP and the Rev. Al Sharpton. The crowd's participants ranged from young African-American Georgetown students to gay black men, to farmers, white working-class students, farmers, busi-

ness professionals and even toddlers, elders and young adults. In raincoats, snorkels and trench coats and ponchos layered with sweaters, the shadow inauguration crowd was in sharp contrast to the pro-Bush visitors in their polished suits, cowboy hats and cleanly-cropped haircuts.

Over the course of the event, more than 1,000 came out into the center of the city to protest the Bush inauguration. Although some obstacles seemed placed in order to prevent visibility of the protest - such as city buses parked in the center of the protest march route, the call by police for protesters to walk only on the sidewalks as opposed to the center of the street and the effort early on to stop the march altogether.

In spite of time delays and obstacles, the demonstration was singled with aggressive banners, political chants and commentary and high spirits inspired by Sharpton's biting message.

"Bush says, 'Get back!'; we say, 'Fight back!'" Sharpton said as he led demonstrators at the top of his speech. "You will have to do more than get messy with Jesse in order to deter us, from the dreams and rights that African-Americans historically fought for within the civil rights movement."

The reference was to the Rev. Jesse Jackson's disclosure last week that he was the father of a 20-month-old daughter out of wedlock. The story broke in The National Enquirer as Jackson prepared to lead a simultaneous demonstration in Tallahassee, Fla. Jackson, saying he was taking a break from public life in his brief statement on his situation, did not lead Saturday's protest.

"Just like we stopped your granddaddy from robbing us of our right to vote, we will stop you," said Sharpton.

As the temperature dropped, the veteran minister continued his rant, calling on demonstrators to continue to fight for voter reform and against the Bush ceremony.

"We came out in the rain and the cold and the mud because we are not going to let you turn us around. We are not going to give up a woman's right to choose; we are not going to give up affirmative action; we are not going to accept police brutality, and profiling."

"It was cold in Selma jails 30 years ago," Sharpton said, comparing the harsh weather to conditions civil rights activists endured in the 1960s. "It was cold in Birmingham jails. We know what it is to struggle and that's why we will not go away."

Sharpton evoked memories of civil rights martyrs such as Schwerner, Goodman and Cheney as well as Medgar Evers, King and Malcolm X in his passionate delivery calling on all Americans to fight for voter education so that their deaths would not be in vain.

He warned that the masses of Americans who are angered over the Supreme Court's ruling, which they say "selected" Bush as president, will not be silent on the matter. His message was clear that people were to become active in the effort to make voter reform a reality and to make the Bush administration accountable to women and minority communities.

"This is not just another march," Sharpton said of the need to challenge the Bush inauguration. "This is like looking at a situation where someone breaks in



Protesters march in Washington last Saturday during President Bush's Inauguration.

Photo by Raoul Dennis/NNPA

your house and steals your TV, and when you chase them and catch them, the court says there was no crime and awards the thief the television. The American people must stand up to unjust rulings."

Sharpton pressed specific venom toward Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas, the high court's only African-American member.

"Clarence Thomas has the nerve to sit on the Supreme Court and vote against the very rights that provided him a career in the first place," he said.

"(Bush) needs to know who he is fighting against. He needs to understand the strength and convictions of our lineage: Ida B. Wells, Sojourner Truth, Marcus Garvey," Sharpton said.

He noted that Moses did not have the great financial and military might of Pharaoh, but that he had God on his side. "Moses said to God as he looked at the burning bush, 'I am not a statesman, I can't speak well,' but God told Moses, 'I don't need you to speak.'"

After saying that "we are all deputies, for vote reform" at the

shadow inauguration in Stanton Park, less than six blocks from the Supreme Court, the New York-based minister encouraged demonstrators to continue to work on election issues when they returned home.

"Don't be discouraged. We have come too far and the Lord did not bring us this far to leave us now," said Sharpton.

Other speakers at the rally and demonstration were Rev. Walter Fauntroy, a former aide to Martin Luther King, and U.S. Rep. Don Payne (D-N.J.).

Faithful few black Republicans express big hopes for Bush administration

BY HAZEL TRICE EDNEY
NNPA STAFF WRITER

WASHINGTON - It was cold, rainy and almost 1:30 a.m. But, for the thousands of White Republicans who had converged on Washington, D.C., from across the nation early Saturday morning, it was Inauguration Day morning and the party had just begun.

Among them, a comparative handful of black celebrators also revealed in the moment. They did so, knowing that the inauguration of George W. Bush would draw throngs of protesters - many of whom would be Black and righteously indignant about the perceived disenfranchisement of black voters that resulted in the former Texas governor's election.

Nevertheless, from the glitzy pre-inaugural festivities to the muddy Capitol grounds, black Republicans expressed big hopes for the new president.

"The issue is that they really don't know the president-elect," said Eric Bost, who worked more than three years for Bush as head of the Texas Department of Human Services. "They will see very soon that he will run this country with honesty, loyalty and intelligence."

Bost and his wife, Rose, were among the relatively few black Republicans who partied among thousands at the election-eve Black Tie 'N' Boots Ball, held at the Marriott Wardman Park until 3 a.m. Saturday.

"I've had a fantastic time!" said a jazzy Nathaniel Moore, 51, holding a drink and grooving to the live country music. He told a reporter he was here "because I'm a Republican. That's right. I'm an intellectual, not an emotional."

Then, breaking into a chuckle, he took pot-shots at Democratic President Clinton, who was largely beloved by the black community.

"I think Clinton was the best Republican president we ever had," Moore said sarcastically. "He killed welfare with welfare reform, he got NAFTA through and created thousands of new jobs - at McDonald's!"

Bending over in laughter, he then added seriously as he walked away: "Don't believe what they say. They're all white folks."

Economics seemed to be the main buzzword among those willing to discuss their specific hopes for the Bush administration.

"I honestly feel like this," said Southern Californian Tarnisha Davis, 27, who attended the ball with her husband, Brandon, 28. "It's about tax-sheltering and making people better," she said.

Her husband chimed in that the protests being held by the Rev. Al Sharpton and other black activists "won't matter because most black people and most poor people don't vote - and the election is four years away. Most people - black or white - vote on two things: cash and whatever issues directly affect them personally," he said.

Jaime Moore, 27, outside the packed ballroom so he could converse with friends, said both his parents are Democrats. But the issues have changed, said the computer and Internet software specialist.

"It's about what's going to be important for the next generation."

Moore said he disagrees with his mother on the Republicans' perspective of black people and working people. "My mother says that the Republican Party doesn't really strive for the working class. I found that the Republican Party is trying to empower people to empower themselves rather than rely on government programs," he said.

As the misty rain and bitter cold continued into Inauguration Day, a sea of white faces crowded into the coveted seats lining the Capitol grounds. The handful of black Republicans maintained their big hopes as protesters raged only blocks away.

"This is what makes this country great," said veteran Republican

Deborah Burston-Donbraye, Ohio's only black member of the Electoral College. "We can have a peaceful transfer of power and peaceful protests," she said.

Burston-Donbraye acknowledged that racism lingers heavily in America. But, some black activists, such as Sharpton, "are so wrong-headed because they are unreasonable," she said.

"We're living in the past. We should be dealing with pregnant women instead of pregnant

chads."

New Yorker Russell Hatcher, who aspires to become a Bush speechwriter, said he liked the inaugural address in which the new president promised to work to build a single nation of justice and opportunity.

"I think they should give him a chance to heal the racial divide and to see what's going to happen," he said.

As a Marine band approached in preparation for the big inaugu-

ral parade, veteran Republican Rayford L. Harris Sr. scurried along the sidewalk with his adult son, Rayford Jr., who strongly declared himself an independent.

"This is a positive change," Rayford Sr. said of the new administration. "After eight years of Democrats leading and setting an admirable pace, I see that as an inspiration to anyone coming along afterwards to do better. And that's a win-win situation for us all."

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"We have to give our children, especially black boys, something to lose. Children make foolish choices when they have nothing to lose."

- Jawanza Kunjufu

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10 DAYS (PG-13)_TUE	1:30-4:30 10:05
TRAFFIC (R)_SR	1:00-4:00 7:00 10:00
CHOCOLAT (PG-13)_SR	1:45-4:15 7:15 9:45
WHAT WOMEN WANT (PG-13)_TUE	1:30-4:30 7:35 10:05
FINDING FORRESTER (PG-13)_TUE	1:00-3:45 7:00 9:45
SAVE THE LAST DANCE (PG-13)_TUE	1:15-4:15 7:15 9:45
CASTAWAY (PG-13)_DO	1:00-4:00 7:00 10:00
SUGAR AND SPICE (PG-13)_DO	1:30-3:30 7:30 9:25
SNATCH (R)_TUE	1:30-4:30 7:30 9:45
THE FAMILY MAN (PG-13)_SR	9:30
EMPOWERS NEW GROOVE (G)	1:15-3:15 15:00
MRS CONGENALITY (PG-13)_TUE	2:40-5:15 7:40 10:00
WEDDING PLANNER (PG-13)_TUE	1:30-4:30 7:30 9:45

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FINDING FORRESTER (PG-13)_TUE	1:00-3:45 7:00 9:45
THE PLEDGE (R)_SR	1:15-4:15 7:15 9:45
THE CITY (R)_SR	1:10-4:00 7:30 9:30
TRAFFIC (R)_TUE	1:00-4:00 7:00 10:00
O BROTHER WHERE ART THOU (PG-13)_TUE	1:30-4:30 7:30 9:45
SUGAR AND SPICE (PG-13)_TUE	1:30-3:30 7:30 9:25
DOUBLE TAKE (PG-13)_TUE	1:00-3:00 5:00 7:15 9:30
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CASTAWAY (PG-13)_TUE	1:00-4:00 7:00 10:00

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