

Black organ donors desperately needed

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donors.

"While research among African-American households in Charlotte-Mecklenburg shows that many wish to donate organs when they no longer need them, most people are unaware of the health crisis that exists within our community," said Debbie Gibbs, LifeShare's spokesperson.

In North Carolina, 1,421 African-Americans are awaiting an organ transplant, including, 1,271 in need of a kidney, compared to 842 whites and other ethnic groups.

LifeShare gave promotional hand fans with a donation message to predominately black churches in the Charlotte area. In addition, people are encouraged to visit LifeShare's web site at www.sharelifecharlotte.com to learn how to become a donor and for answers to frequently answered questions.

Over 90,000 people nationwide, including nearly 3,000 in North Carolina are currently awaiting organ transplants. In North Carolina residents can donate by:

- Confirming your choice when renewing your driver's license
- Sign and carry a donor card
- Tell family your wishes, since organs can't be harvested without consent.

LifeShare is the regional organ procurement organization that serves the Charlotte area. It works with the United Network for Organ Sharing to facilitate transplants and Donate Life America in promoting organ and tissue donation.

For information on organ donation, call Gibbs at (704) 512-3303.

On the Net

LifeShare of The Carolinas
www.sharelifecharlotte.com

Voting extension a first step

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"Remember, friends, that where we are today is not complete," Johnnie Rebecca Carr, the 95-year-old best friend and former classmate of the late Rosa Parks, told the gathering. "The thing that we have just gone through today—the signing—that's not the end. That's just a part of it," explained Carr, president of the Montgomery Improvement Association that sponsored the Montgomery Bus Boycott, for the past 39 years.

She concluded, "So we're going to continue to struggle. We still have work to do. Because we want to see our community and our world [become] America, the real America that we get up and sing about. We want it to be the America that it should be."

That America should have a Voting Rights Act that is not only signed, but enforced, says civil rights leaders, who parted, but vowed to hold Bush to the promise that he made in his signing speech: "Today, we renew a bill that helped to bring a community on the margins into the life of American democracy. My administration will vigorously enforce the provisions of this law, and we will defend it in court," the president said to loud applause.

People For The American Way President Ralph Neas has his doubts. In a statement released only minutes after the White House signing ceremony on the South Lawn, Neas said: "[Bush] owes it to all Americans to ensure that the Voting Rights Act is enforced. Unfortunately, that is not the record of this administration — by a long shot."

In a recent report, the PFAW noted that the Bush Justice Department entered the Ohio presidential voting controversy in 2004 on the wrong side, its backing of a redistricting plan in Texas that reduced the political power of people of color and the administration's approval of a voter identification law in Georgia that a federal court has now ruled unconstitutional.

Such perceived lack of commitment has led to a "mass exodus of experienced career attorneys" from the Civil Rights Division, the report

states.

"In the Voting Section alone, more than 20 attorneys, representing about two-thirds of the lawyers in the section, have left the section in the last few years — over a dozen in the last 15 months alone. Included in this talent drain were the chief of the section, three deputy chiefs, and many experienced trial lawyers, representing almost 150 years of cumulative Justice Department civil rights enforcement experience. In the place of these experienced litigators and investigators, this administration has all too often hired inexperienced ideologues, virtually none of which have any civil rights or voting rights experience," the report observed.

It continued, "His administration's well-documented and unprecedented politicization of the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division has dramatically undermined voting rights enforcement. The administration has turned a blind eye to voter suppression tactics moving in states across the country — photo identification provisions, citizenship requirements, and provisional ballots. Voter suppression and intimidation continue to be a problem and continue to disenfranchise voters. But the Bush administration still pretends that discrimination is not a major issue for millions of Americans," Neas stated after the signing.

"You have to notice that there's been a slight change in their attitude," says NAACP Chairman Julian Bond, who has been among the sharpest critics of Bush's record. "The president came to the NAACP convention. He early on loudly endorsed the renewal of the Voting Rights Act. He gave a speech at the signing ceremony where he promised to enforce it, which is a matter of real concern to the civil rights community. If they're not enforcing the existing law, so why should we think they will enforce the renewal of the law? I think we're getting some mixed signals, but if indeed there's a change, however slight, we need to take advantage of it."

Others say leaders must do much more than hope.

"One thing we're trying to

do is make the Senate have an oversight hearing so we can blow it out of the water to really find out why the Justice Department has not been enforcing the Voting Rights Act. We think that is absolutely critical," says Barbara Armwine, executive director of the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under the Law.

Dorothy Height, president emerita of the Council of Negro Women, said: "The president has said that he will enforce it. So we'll have to hold him to that."

In fact, many say the civil rights community believe that's their next challenge.

"It's significant that the president said they would defend it in court because it's going to be challenged, I'm afraid," said Rev. Joseph Lowery, former president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. "But enforcement, that's our next plateau."

Hilary Shelton, the NAACP Washington bureau chief, says the enforcement problem has already been documented.

"We have created a record that very clearly shows that enforcement falls well short of where it needs to be," Shelton says. "Of course, now we need to see that all that information is introduced into the record for the House and Senate, making sure that the oversight goes on with the Judiciary Committees and indeed pressure is put on the Justice Department to fully enforce the law for all American people."

Congressional Black Caucus Chair Mel Watt (D-N.C.), worries blacks might have been exploited as a backdrop to a well-orchestrated photo opportunity.

"I think we're dealing with the same George Bush that's been in the White House throughout the time he's been president," Watt said shortly after the signing ceremony. "On some issues, we work together. But on most issues we're not able to work together because of philosophical differences. Our challenge is to not let those things that we differ with the president on impede our ability to work with the things that we do agree with him on and hope that the president feels the same way."

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Katrina benefits often hinge on 'linguistic profiling'

By Lorinda M. Bullock

NATIONAL NEWSPAPER PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION

WASHINGTON — As the one-year anniversary of Hurricane Katrina approaches August 29, displaced Americans from Louisiana and the Gulf Coast have been slowly rebuilding their lives and looking for a place to call home.

While Katrina's black victims shop the housing market, calling realtors and potential landlords, one thing may be standing between them and their new homes even before an appointment is made or paperwork filled out—their voice.

It's called linguistic profiling.

A study of five states done by the National Fair Housing Alliance and linguistics expert John Baugh revealed in 66 percent of phone tests administered by White and Black testers inquiring about housing as Katrina survivors, "White callers were favored over African-American callers," the report said.

"Yes, people do use the telephone as a screening device in many, many businesses," said Shanna Smith, president and CEO of the Washington-based NFHA, said the organization's report on "Housing Discrimination Against Hurricane Katrina Survivors" showed

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