



In speech, Obama confronts racial division in America

Nedra Pickler and Matt Apuzzo

PHILADELPHIA — Barack Obama unsparingly criticized his longtime pastor's words while strongly defending the man himself Tuesday in a politically risky speech that appealed to the country to overcome racism and the black anger and white resentment it spawns.

Forming a more perfect union "requires all Americans to realize that your dreams do not have to come at the expense of my dreams," said the Illinois senator running to become the nation's first black president.

"This union may never be perfect, but generation after generation has shown that it can always be perfected," he said.

In his most pointed speech of the campaign, Obama confronted the nation's legacy of racial division head on, tackling black grievance, white resentment and the uproar over his former pastor's incendiary statements.

Drawing on his half-black, half-white roots as no other presidential hopeful could, Obama urged Americans to break "a racial stalemate we've been stuck in for years."

"The anger is real; it is powerful; and to simply wish it away, to condemn it without understanding

its roots, only serves to widen the chasm of misunderstanding that exists between the races," he said in a speech at the National Constitution Center, not far from where the Declaration of Independence was adopted.

The speech was the most racially tinged during his campaign to

ing shortly before he took the stage. They said Philadelphia was chosen not because it has the highest concentration of blacks in Pennsylvania, the next state to vote on April 22, but because of its historical significance.

Obama said sermons delivered by his longtime pastor, the Rev. Jeremiah Wright, "rightly offend white and black alike." Those sermons from years ago suggested the United States brought the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks on itself and say blacks continue to be mistreated by whites.

While Obama rejected what Wright said, he also embraced the man who inspired his Christian

faith, officiated at his wedding, baptized his two daughters and has been his spiritual guide for nearly 20 years.

"I can no more disown him than I can disown the black community," Obama said, speaking in front of eight American flags. "I can no more disown him than I can my white grandmother — a woman who helped raise me, a woman who sacrificed again and again for me, a woman who loves me as much as she loves anything in this world, but a woman who once confessed her fear of black men who passed by

Obama, continued to page 17

Obama rarely talks so openly about his race in such a prominent way, but he recognized it has been a major issue in the campaign that has taken a "particularly divisive turn" in the last few weeks.

Campaign '08

become the first black president, covering divisions from slavery to the O.J. Simpson trial to the recovery efforts after Hurricane Katrina, along with his own background.

Obama rarely talks so openly about his race in such a prominent way, but he recognized it has been a major issue in the campaign that has taken a "particularly divisive turn" in the last few weeks as video of his longtime pastor spread on the Internet and on television.

Obama's advisers say the candidate decided last Saturday to make the speech, and spent much of Sunday and Monday writing it, finish-



Rafer Johnson (right) poses with Ethel Kennedy, widow of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy, at the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library in Boston. In 1968, Johnson, an Olympic gold medal-winning decathlete, went to work on the senator's presidential campaign, sticking by Kennedy's side until he tragically fell to an assassin's bullet. (Tom Fitzsimmons photo)

Running with RFK

Rafer Johnson looks back on the 1968 campaign

Brian Wright O'Connor

When Olympic gold medalist Rafer Johnson signed on with Sen. Robert F. Kennedy's insurgent 1968 presidential campaign, the commitment came with a price.

"I had just gotten the best job I could imagine in my life — as a sports commentator on KNBC in Los Angeles," said Johnson. He knew that traveling around California with the candidate would cost him airtime, and maybe even the plum assignment itself.

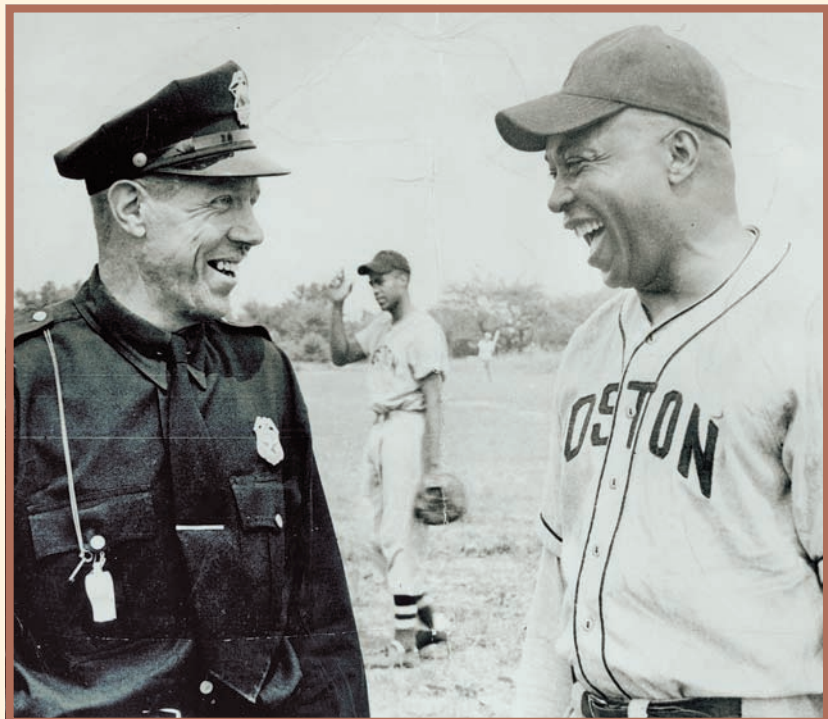
But the decathlete, having pledged to support the senator years before, knew he couldn't back down. Johnson would remain by Kennedy's

side throughout the whirlwind Golden State campaign, right up to the end in the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles.

Forty years to the day after the launch of Kennedy's candidacy, Johnson joined other veterans of the 1968 contest to reflect on the passions, intrigue, and politics that engulfed the Kennedy camp — and the nation — during the 11-week campaign that started in the Senate Caucus Room and ended with the senator's assassination on the night he won the California primary.

Johnson, now 72, still looks like the sculpted athlete who set world records en route to victory at the 1960

Rafer, continued to page 29



"Cannonball" Bill Jackman shares a laugh with a Boston police officer in this photograph, believed to have been taken between 1945-1950. One of black baseball's forgotten titans, many considered Jackman a talent equal to — or greater than — the premier pitchers of his time. (Photo courtesy of National Baseball Hall of Fame Library)

"CANNONBALL" BILL JACKMAN

One of the greatest pitchers — ever

Dick Thompson

Editor's note: Last December, Bridgewater resident Richard J. Thompson sent me a letter about a story he wanted published in the Bay State Banner. The story had been published before but Thompson, a member of the Society for American Baseball Research, wanted to spread the word that he was compiling information to complete a full biography on Bill Jackman and African American teams in New England. Unfortunately, Thompson died unexpectedly Jan. 2 after a brief illness. Below are excerpts from Thompson's work.

— Howard Manly, Executive Editor

Black HISTORY Hank Greenberg and Wes Ferrell were two of the many major leaguers who began their careers in East Douglas, Mass., playing semi-pro ball for Walter Schuster, the millionaire owner of a string of textile mills along the Blackstone River on the Massachusetts-Rhode Island border. Schuster hired Lefty Grove of the Philadelphia Athletics for a championship contest in October 1927, paying him \$300 with a \$10 bonus for each batter struck out.

For the 1929 Blackstone Valley league title game, Schuster paid Bill Jackman of the Philadelphia Giants \$175 and gave him the same strikeout bonus. Greenberg played first base, and a pitch-by-pitch account of Jackman's work — he tossed 151

Jackman, continued to page 6

What's INSIDE

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT . . . 19-22
BILLBOARD 22

LISTINGS

BUSINESS DIRECTORY 32
CALENDAR 31
CHURCH GUIDE 33

PERSPECTIVE

EDITORIAL 4
OPINION 5
ROVING CAMERA 5

CLASSIFIEDS

HELP WANTED 37-40
LEGALS 34-36
REAL ESTATE 36-37