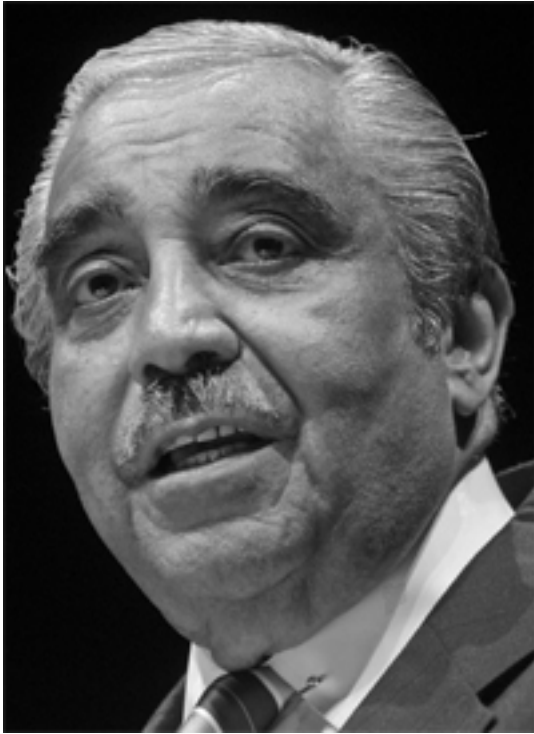


Waters, Rangel seek to downplay race in investigations

Written by Hazel Trice Edney NNPA Editor-in-Chief
Monday, 16 August 2010 14:36



WASHINGTON (NNPA) – US Reps. Maxine Waters (D-CA) and Charles B. Rangel (D-NY) are apparently seeking to downplay public allegations of racism as they seek to make the facts of their cases heard before the Office of Congressional Ethics.

“People are speculating all kinds of things,” Waters said in an August 6 interview with the NNPA News Service. “There is one thing that I am clear about though. I am clear that if this gets obscured with any other argument before we get our facts out, we don’t stand a chance because people will say we’re hiding behind race or something. So, I think what has to happen is the charges have to be clear, we have to have our day in court and then let’s deal with the process and how the system is working or not working.”

At NNPA deadline, Waters awaited enumeration of charges involving the receipt of \$12 million in bailout funds by the Massachusetts-based One United Bank, where her husband owns stock. Rangel faces 13 charges involving reporting of income on his financial disclosure forms and alleged fund-raising violations.

Rangel is moving on with campaigning for re-election to the office he has held since 1971. He is being challenged by Adam Clayton Powell IV. Rangel succeeded his grandfather, Adam Clayton Powell, Jr.

“Do I believe the case is racially motivated? No. So, I’d like to acknowledge my re-election which I’m concentrating on,” Rangel said in a message left on the NNPA voice mail. “And the hearing date has not been set, so that’s about the size of it.”

The fact is that of 30 probes considered since late last year, the only members considered for full-fledged investigations have been CBC members. So far, Rangel and Walters are the only two to face charges. This has drawn charges of racism from pundits, Black journalists and publishers. Both Rangel and Waters have been icons for Black justice in Congress and

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pioneers for programs to help the poor and underserved.

"If It Sounds Like Racism and Acts Like Racism, Then It is Probably Racism," states the headline on a commentary written by NNPA Chairman Danny J. Bakewell, Sr. and published on the NNPA News Service.

Political Scientist Ron Walters says it seems both Waters and Rangel would politically embrace the racial allegations given their Black constituencies. Her 35th Congressional District is about 35 percent Black; about 10 percent White and the rest predominately Latino. His Harlem-based district is predominantly Black. "But they don't want race to get in the way of the facts," Walters says.

Both Rangel and Waters acknowledge the support from Black newspapers and other leaders for justice.

"I thank the NNPA for the supportive work that they've done and Mr. Bakewell has been terrific. Thank you," he said in the voice mail.

"You guys are doing fine. Just keep doing what you're doing," says Waters, expressing her respect for the First Amendment.

"Other people need to have the opportunity to say what they think. We have to have a chance to get our story out," she said. "If we don't have a chance to get our story out, we don't stand a chance. And so let other people speculate. But for us, we just have to deal with our facts and let those chips fall where they may."

Waters is pushing for a speedy trial long before the November 2 election in which she faces Black Republican homeless activist Ted Hayes. He is not considered to be a formidable candidate or a threat to her seat. But, her reputation and the truth are still concerns, she says. "I am deeply concerned by the Committee's failure to announce a date for a public hearing in its most recent press release," she wrote in a letter to Reps. Zoe Lofgren (D-CA) and Jo Bonner (R-AL), chair and ranking member of the ethics panel. "I feel strongly that further delay in the scheduling of the hearing violates the fundamental principles of due process, denies my constituents the opportunity to evaluate this case, and harms my ability to defend my integrity."

CBC Chairwoman Barbara Lee (D-CA) is standing with Waters as she has with Rangel.

"Throughout her tenure in Congress, and in the California State Legislature before that, Waters has been a tireless and effective advocate for underrepresented and underserved communities and institutions. She continues to be an important voice on those and many other issues and should not have her rights usurped by politicians or the press," Lee wrote in a statement.

Lee says the media has appeared to try to convict Waters before the trial, an appearance that is particularly frustrating to Waters.

"The media doesn't even have the story yet. The facts are not out yet," she said in the NNPA

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interview. “And that’s why I have asked that the charges be put forth and that we have an opportunity to respond to them and have a fair proceeding in which all the facts are laid out.”

She is emboldened by the longstanding support for her and her legacy.

“We have a lot of support out there. People want to know what’s happening,” she said. “We will be fighting both legally and politically.”