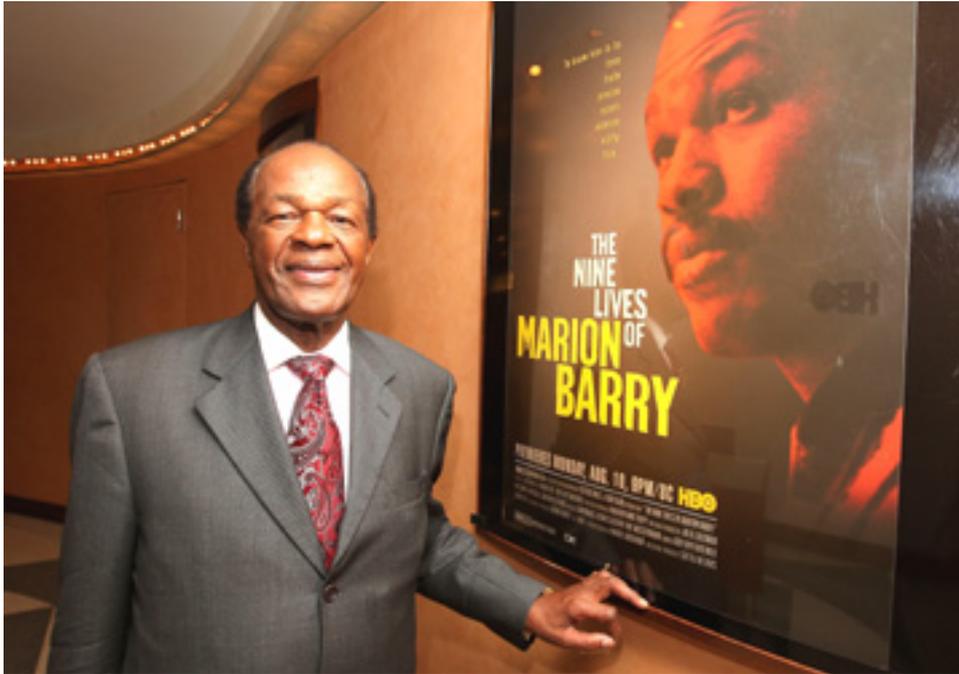


D.C. pol smears Filipino nurses

Written by Administrator
Wednesday, 02 May 2012 16:07



Washington’s controversial former mayor Marion Barry, pictured here in 2009, has come under a fresh storm of criticism after he attacked “dirty” Asian-run businesses that operate in poor parts of the U.S. capital. (AFP photo/Michael Loccisano)

WASHINGTON — For the second time in less than a month, D.C. Council member Marion Barry is having to fend off criticism that he unfairly singled out an ethnic group as he attempted to explain how to get more African-Americans trained and employed in the District.

At a hearing last Monday on the University of the District of Columbia’s budget, he spoke about the need to train more African-Americans to become nurses.

In a video of his remarks aired by WTTG-TV, Barry noted a growing number of nurses are

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“immigrants” from the Philippines.

“[I]f you go to the hospital now, you’ll find a number of immigrants who are nurses, particularly from the Philippines,” said Barry (D-Ward 8).

“And no offense, but let’s grow our own teachers, let’s grow our own nurses, and so that we don’t have to go scrounging in our community clinics and other kinds of places, having to hire people from somewhere else.”

The National Federation of Filipino American Associations (NaFFAA) called Barry’s remarks “racist” and “bigoted.”

“We reject this continued Asian bashing by elected officials like Mr. Barry and demand that he apologize for his insensitive and irresponsible remarks,” Ed Navarra, chairman of NaFFAA, said in a statement.

“We also call on him to engage in a meaningful dialogue with our community so we can better educate the broader American public about the significant contributions that our diverse immigrant communities have made to this country.”

Last Tuesday, Barry said he was attempting to make a larger point about the university and the country’s demands for nurses.

“UDC ought to be a premier nursing school in the country. The nursing shortage is so bad we have to bring in nurses from the Philippines. What’s negative about that? Nothing’s negative about that,” he said.

“It’s an asset to the United States to have access to nurses from other countries, but I want UDC to be the premier nursing institution...Every time I mention a group, it’s not negative, it’s a fact.”

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Earlier this month, Barry was forced to apologize after an election night screed in which he referred to Asian-owned businesses in Ward 8 “as dirty.”

Several of his council colleagues, Del. Eleanor Holmes Norton (D) and several Maryland lawmakers of Asian descent publicly condemned Barry’s statements as divisive.

Barry’s remarks last Monday appear to track with his long-held views that the city needs to do more to reduce unemployment, particularly in neighborhoods east of the Anacostia River.

Along with Barry, D.C. Mayor Vincent C. Gray (D) and a majority of the D.C. Council have embraced policies to require or encourage local businesses and institutions to hire more District residents.

Barry stressed during last Monday’s hearing that local colleges could help lower the unemployment if schools such as UDC, which has a growing nursing program, redoubled efforts to identify and train potential nurses.

Because of shortages nationwide, for years hospitals have had to turn overseas to bolster their ranks of nurses.

More than half the foreign-trained nurses come from the Philippines, according to a 2005 study by *Minority Nurse*, which focuses on career and education training.

But Navarra said Barry made a hurtful mistake by singling out an ethnic group.

“Filipino nurses and teachers have performed admirably in America’s health care and educational system, and they don’t deserve the harmful and xenophobic rhetoric that pits them against other American professionals,” Navarra said.