NYC 9/11 Public Portal Document

THE NEW YORK TIMES, THURSDAY, OCTOBER 4, 2001

Ferrer and Green Battle in Debate Over Claim of Divisiveness

By ADAM NAGOURNEY

Mark Green and Fernando Ferrer battled last night over Mr. Ferrer's promise to be the mayor for "the other New York." Mr. Green denounced his opponent's central campaign theme as "divisive," while Mr. Ferrer responded that his opponent for the Democratic mayoral nomination was "denigrating the issues that I've raised."

"Do you still think it's two cities, Freddy?" Mr. Green demanded, invoking, with a slight alteration, what had been Mr. Ferrer's central campaign theme until he won a spot in the runoff eight days ago. Mr. Green pointedly noted that two men who endorsed Mr. Ferrer — Edward I. Koch and Peter F. Vallone — had earlier said that Mr. Ferrer was running a divisive campaign.

Mr. Ferrer responded that Mr. Green was misrepresenting his appeal, and that he was speaking on behalf of New Yorkers who had been left behind over the past eight years.

"You know, Mark, I never said it was two cities, I always talked about the problems of the other New York," Mr. Ferrer said.

"You ran on two cities, Freddy, I mean, come on," Mr. Green responded.

Mr. Ferrer chastised Mr. Green again: 'You don't elevate yourself by denigrating the issues I've raised, or me."

The sharp exchange between the two men came as they face a primary next Thursday that most Democrats believe has become highly competitive. The exchange at the debate, sponsored by NY1 News and WNYC radio, and broadcast from the studios of CUNY-TV, underlined the complicated racial and ethnic dynamics that both Mr. Ferrer and Mr. Green face in trying to assemble a winning coalition.

Mr. Ferrer, who if victorious would be the first Puerto Rican mayor of New York, campaigned in what was a four-way primary by talking repeatedly about the "other New York," an appeal that his advisers believe helped him build a coalition of black and Latino voters that propelled him to first place. Mr. Ferrer has largely abandoned that language now that he is in the runoff against Mr. Green, faced with the need to draw more white votes in order to win.

When a questioner asked Mr. Ferrer whether he thought that appeal still held given the way New York has changed since the attack on the World Trade Center on Sept. 11, Mr. Green honed in, attempting to remind viewers of what had been Mr. Ferrer's defining theme.

Both Mr. Ferrer and Mr. Green acknowledged that the attack on the trade center would, at the least, force them to alter some of their campaign promises.

Continued on Page D3



James Estrin/The New York Times

Mark Green and Fernando Ferrer debated last night, eight days before the runoff primary vote.

CITY_21MC100_01183064 9

NYC-WTC_000413151

NYC 9/11 Public Portal Document

Continued From Page D1

Mr. Ferrer spoke less firmly about his call for a 30 percent salary increase for teachers, which would have been linked to some productivity savings. And Mr. Green said he would have to defer financing for construction of such public transportation projects as the Second Avenue subway.

Much of the 90-minute debate was cordial and low-key, and both men — and Mr. Green in particular — seemed fatigued as they headed into the last week of a Democratic primary contest that has stretched on 17 days longer than expected. The primary was originally supposed to take place on Sept. 11; it was postponed shortly after the attack on the World Trade Center.

In response to a question, Mr. Green declined to criticize the Rev. Al Sharpton, who has emerged as one of Mr. Ferrer's most prominent supporters. A number of Democrats have urged Mr. Green to go after Mr. Sharpton as a way of rallying white voters to his side, but Mr. Green did not do so last night.

Mr. Green did assert, however, that he had "never sought Al Sharpton's support, as he will tell you. I would have accepted it if he had dropped it on me." Mr. Sharpton called later in the evening to note that Mr. Green had taken Mr. Sharpton and his wife out to a play, attended two private meetings with him, and was a guest at a recommitment ceremony Mr. Sharpton celebrated with his wife a month ago. "He's trying to play the polarizing game," Mr. Sharpton said. 'I thought Mark was above that."

But even as he declined to attack Mr. Sharpton, Mr. Green pointedly noted that Mr. Ferrer had attacked Mr. Green's most prominent supporter, William J. Bratton, the former police commissioner.

Still Mr. Ferrer did not back down, saying that Mr. Bratton promulgated police policies that Mr. Ferrer has often seized upon during his campaign as being harmful to minority neighborhoods in New York. He also noted that Mr. Bratton had told reporters that he might want a job in a Green administration, adding: "I find it troubling that someone who has offered himself in that way would be involved in a partisan political campaign. That really is troubling and unprecedented in the New York City Police Department."

Mr. Ferrer used the debate to announce that he would form a commission, made up of former police commissioners, to screen candidates for the highest ranking police post. He made the proposal after he was asked about a remark by Mr. Koch in New York Magazine, before Mr. Koch endorsed Mr. Ferrer on Tuesday, that Mr. Sharpton would have veto power over who Mr. Ferrer's police commissioner would be.

Mr. Ferrer said no — twice — when asked if Mr. Sharpton would have a place on his police commission.

For much of the debate, Mr. Green appeared intent on undoing some steps he has taken this week that have drawn criticism. For example, he said he was "inartful" in declaring, in a radio interview, that he would have done as well or better in running New York City over the past two weeks.

And Mr. Green, who has been criticized by Mr. Ferrer for bowing to a request by Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani to extend his term in office to allow for an easier transition, repeatedly portrayed himself as one of the mayor's main critics over the past eight years. He disclosed that he would have interrupted his campaign for mayor to sue Mr. Giuliani had he tried, as the mayor said he might if the candidates didn't agree to his proposed extension, to overturn New York's term limit law.

From the start, Mr. Giuliani was in the room with the candidates. Both of them effusively praised his performance after the World Trade Center disaster. And both also praised him for abandoning any effort to overturn term limits and seek another four years in office.

'Do you still think it's two cities, Freddy?' Green asks his rival.

Both offered slightly different views on Mr. Giuliani's sense that the next mayor would face a difficult transition. Mr. Ferrer said he was disappointed that Mr. Giuliani was not encouraging commissioners to stay on to get the government in place; he said that he was prepared to spend as much time as necessary at meetings at City Hall, should Mr. Giuliani prepare him. "I'm willing to put my campaign on hold for the time it takes to attend those meetings," he said.

As suggested by a question to Mr. Ferrer, the attack on the World Trade Center set the backdrop for the debate between these two candidates. Mr. Green and Mr. Ferrer made clear that they held different views on the extent to which the attack would affect the life of New York's next mayor: Mr. Green repeatedly described it as a central force that would require planning and preparation, while Mr. Ferrer said the city had to take pains to make certain that it does not abandon other problems in order to deal with rebuilding New York.

CITY_21MC100_011830650

NYC-WTC_000413152