

# What kind of party guy is Bloomberg?

BY RYAN CHATELAIN  
ryan.chatelain@am-ny.com

On which, if any, party line might Mayor Michael Bloomberg seek his third term? And does it even matter to voters?

Published reports have differed over what the Democrat-turned-Republican-turned-independent mayor's plans might be when he seeks re-election this fall. In December, signs

indicated that Bloomberg was eyeing the Democratic nomination. But speculation has since shifted, and it appears the mayor is more interested in running for the third time as a GOP candidate — evident by a scheduled Feb. 25 meeting between him and Republican county leaders, according to published reports.

To run as a Republican, Bloomberg would need permission from a majority

of the party's five county chairmen — three of whom are reportedly not happy with the mayor's politics in recent years, including his leaving the party in 2007.

But pundits believe the GOP will ultimately have a hard time telling Bloomberg no.

Rich Galen, a conservative columnist, said he

believes party leaders will likely get over their ideological differences with Bloomberg.

"The issue becomes, 'Or who?'" Galen said. "He might not be the perfect candidate for Republicans, but he's a hell of a lot better than no candidate." Bloomberg's campaign did not reply to requests for comment.



Bloomberg

Of course, the mayor could also opt to run as an independent or third-party candidate or pursue a combination of party lines.

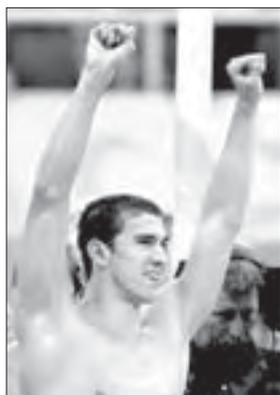
Some Democrats argue that Bloomberg should return to the party he belonged to before his political launch in 2001.

"New York City is the bluest part of one of the bluest states, and by running as a Democrat, you don't have to convince a bunch

of Democrats that they should vote for somebody who isn't a Democrat," said Democratic political consultant Evan Stavisky.

New Yorkers, meanwhile, said they would not likely be swayed by Bloomberg's party ties on Election Day.

"I like to think that I would be able to choose a candidate based on their own merits," said Tom Schwans, 34, a Brooklyn Democrat.



Swimmer Michael Phelps avoided a pot arrest. (AP)

## Phelps out of deep end in pot fiasco

A South Carolina sheriff said yesterday he was not going to charge swimmer Michael Phelps after a photo of the 14-time gold medalist showed him smoking from a bong.

Richland County Sheriff Leon Lott said during a news conference that he didn't have enough physical evidence to charge the swimmer.

"Michael Phelps is truly an American hero ... but even with his star status, he is still obligated to obey the laws," Lott said.

Phelps released a statement after the decision.

"I'm glad this matter is put to rest. But there are also some important lessons that I've learned," Phelps said in the statement. "For me, it's all about recognizing that I used bad judgment and it's a mistake I won't make again."

The photo showed Phelps smoking a bong at a party in November when he visited the University of South Carolina. Lott said he seized the bong, that was in the photo but couldn't prove Phelps had smoked from it. (AP)

# President rewrites black history books

## Obama's rise alters meaning of the month

BY MARLENE NAANES  
mnaanes@am-ny.com

Black History Month has leaped from the pages of textbooks into the lives of city students, making this year's celebration perhaps the most meaningful ever while raising questions about the commemoration's future.

The rise of President Barack Obama, the nation's first African-American president, posed unique opportunities for educators this February, and the significance was not lost on students.

"I didn't really understand the purpose of Black History Month and why we had to do it," said Rashaan Stenbridge, 10, an African-American fifth grader at Corpus Christi School in Morningside Heights. "I think I understand it more than I did before. I think I'm really part of it."

When Obama's election entered the annals of black history, teachers used the milestone to show how far African-Americans have come. Many students



Sixth-graders Kevin Moncrief, left, and Donovan Adams rehearse a Black History Month performance last week at The Children's Storefront school in Harlem. (KRISTY MAY)

chose him as the topic of their research papers and class speeches.

"I think there's an excitement," said Suzie Schugt, a kindergarten teacher at Corpus Christi School. "I think it's more real for them — they can see it."

Educators at The Children's Storefront school said they celebrated the election and inauguration

but kept the emphasis of their Black History Month lesson plans on African-American literature.

"We feel the best way to honor him is to carry on what we are doing," said Michael Williams, assistant head of school at The Children's Storefront. "We didn't feel the need to change our formula."

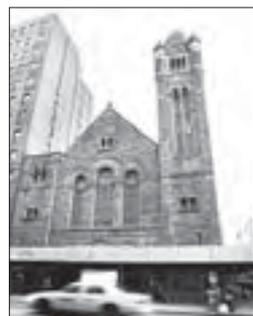
Some teachers won-

der about Black History Month's future.

Williams and other educators at The Children's Storefront hope that other months honoring communities, such as Hispanic Heritage Month and Women's History Month, will gain as much recognition as Black History Month now that an African American has reached the

ultimate milestone.

"I've begun to question the legitimacy of Black History Month," said Candace Cardwell, a sixth-grade teacher at The Children's Storefront. "I feel it should be integrated and not segregated to a month. I feel that it's kind of hard to justify having Black History Month when you have a black president."



West-Park Presbyterian Church (RJMICKELSON/AMNY)

# Church in between salvation, demolition

BY LANA BORTOLOTT  
Special to amNewYork

An Upper West Side church that could take its first step today toward landmark designation may still not have a prayer, preservationists say following a false alarm last week about

a clandestine demolition.

Preservation group Landmark West issued an alert last week raising concerns that the 119-year-old West-Park Presbyterian Church at West 86th Street and Amsterdam Avenue was being prepared for demolition.

Last week, neighbors reported seeing workers hauling debris into unmarked trucks over 10 days, raising suspicions of an under-the-radar demolition. The church confirmed the activity, but the pastor said it was related to three burst water pipes.

The Landmarks Preservation Commission's spokeswoman said the commission will vote today to calendar a public hearing on the church.

Once the vote is calendared, a hearing considering landmark designation would be scheduled.