Obama's tough-love message to blacks

NEW YORK: President Barack Obama had a tough-love message for fellow African-Americans on Thursday, urging black parents to push their children to think beyond dreams of being sports stars or rap music performers.

Obama's election as the first African-American president buoyed the black community.

At the 100th anniversary celebration of the NAACP, the country's oldest civil rights group, he urged blacks to take greater responsibility for themselves and move away from reliance on government programmes.

"We need a new mindset, a new set of attitudes — because one of the most durable and destructive legacies of discrimination is the way that we have internalised a sense of limitation; how so many in our community have come to expect so little of ourselves," he said.

Obama said that blacks need to recapture the spirit of the civil rights movement of a half century ago to tackle problems that have struck African-Americans disproportionately — joblessness, spiralling healthcare costs and HIV-AIDS.

Obama said parents need to force their children to set aside the video games and get to bed at a reasonable hour, and push them to set their sights beyond such iconic figures as NBA star LeBron James and rap singer Lil Wayne.

"Our kids can't all aspire to be the next LeBron or Lil Wayne. I want them aspiring to be scientists and engineers, doctors and teachers, not just ballers and rappers. I want them aspiring to be a Supreme Court justice. I want them aspiring to be president of the United States."

Obama noted that his own life could have taken a different path, had it not been for his mother's urgings.

"That mother of mine gave me love; she pushed me, and cared about my education," he said. — Reuters