



Kenny Harris

Photo by: Tonya Little

Blacks take action in politics

by Cherie Evans
Staff Writer

The improvement of college life for black students in North Carolina is the goal of the Black Student Leadership Caucus, said senior Political Science major Kenneth Harris, chairman of the caucus.

Harris coordinated the caucus at the North Carolina Black Student Leadership Conference held July 21 in Raleigh during his summer internship at the Governor's Office for Minority Affairs. Harris said the conference was composed of about 140 black student leaders from the 16 public and eight private institutions of North Carolina.

The primary purpose of the caucus is to "... unite the ideals, needs and motivations of black students in an effort to assert black student leadership in North Carolina," Harris said. "It's centered on improving college life for black students across the state."

Harris said the caucus wants to establish voter registration drives on each college campus in North Carolina and it wants to encourage younger black students to get involved with improving black communities. The caucus also wants to educate students about financial aid, Harris said.

"I learned how money is allocated for schools," said junior Psychology major Jevonne Bradley who attended the conference. Bradley said she learned about other grants, loans and scholarships that are available to students and are not based on grades.

The caucus is going to "keep black students informed about oppor-

tunities concerning black affairs," Bradley said. "It's going to look out for the needs of black students on various campuses and make sure the government knows we're concerned with things in our state and things that affect us," she said.

"I knew what the conference entailed before going," said senior English major Johnny Smith who had been invited to a similar conference last year. Harris managed to get influential leaders not only from predominantly black schools but from white schools too, he said, so problems relevant to black and white campuses can be discussed.

Smith said he was very optimistic about the caucus because it is "establishing a network between campuses throughout the state."

Harris said the caucus was still in its organizational stage. The state has been divided into three regions: Western, Central and Eastern, with each school being represented in its appropriate region.

The executive staff, Harris said, is also composed of Vice Chairmen Charles Lewis of N.C. State and Seth Dartey of Livingston College; Region Coordinators David Edwards of West Carolina, Maria Morse of A&T State University and Mary Ann Johnson of Shaw; Statewide Secretary Felecia Washington of UNC; and Treasurer Ron McGuire of Shaw.

"We're trying to make it a working organization right now," Harris said. A meeting will be scheduled this fall to make concrete plans for the caucus, he said.

YOUR CHOICE HUNT OR HELMS

by Winfred Cross
Staff Writer

A large turnout among black voters may decide the winner of North Carolina's U.S. Senate race between incumbent Sen. Jesse Helms and challenger Gov. James Hunt.

Data collected in the Spring 1984 Carolina poll showed that 86 percent of the blacks surveyed said they supported Hunt. Sixty-five percent of all other minorities said they would vote for Hunt.

This overwhelming support by minorities is important to Hunt's election effort because of his poor showing among white voters. Only 40 percent of the whites surveyed said they would vote for him. This was down 10 percent from the fall 1983 Carolina Poll.

In fact, Hunt lost support in all voter categories except blacks. In October 1983 Hunt led Helms by 20 percent over all. By February 1984, his lead was shaved to only 3 percent. The poll had a 3 percent margin of error which means the two were virtually tied. This was the first time since 1981 that Hunt has not led Helms in this poll.

Helms now has a slight lead over Hunt according to results of the latest Observer Poll conducted by the Charlotte Observer in early September. Forty-eight percent of those surveyed said they would vote for Helms. Forty-five percent said they would vote for Hunt. This poll also has a 3 percent margin of error.

The reason for Hunt's slip may stem from his support for the bill that made Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday a national holiday. Helms gained national attention by strongly opposing the holiday. He did this before last spring's poll was taken. According to the poll, 44 percent of all North Carolinians thought the idea of a King holiday was a bad idea. Sixty-three percent of Helms' supporters thought a King holiday was a bad idea.

Thad Beyle, a political science professor at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, said Helms used the King issue in the last debate as a code word for anti-black sentiments. "There's no question (that Helms is doing that)," he said. "It's a very racist approach. That's the tie he has with the voting population. There are a lot of people who feel that way."

Claude Allen, press secretary for the Helms for Senate Committee, said that it was Hunt who was making an issue of race and not Helms. "The issue is Hunt's integrity in running newspaper ads showing he favored the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday in black newspapers only," he said recently. "He is using that issue to play on the emotions of blacks to go to the polls and vote against Sen. Helms."

Allen said Helms has not tried to hide his views on the King Holiday. Unlike Hunt, he said, Helms has "run ads in newspapers all across the state..."

"There's no question that Sen. Helms opposed the Martin Luther King bill to inflame racial sentiment," said Will Marshall, press secretary for the Jim Hunt for Senate Committee. "The governor called him on that very well in the last debate."

"It's a little hypocritical and extreme to say Gov. Hunt is making an issue of race in this campaign when Helms has done that throughout his career."

"It's to his Hunt's advantage to play up to blacks," Allen said. "If you look at the Carolina Poll and the recent News and Observer Poll, you'll see that Hunt needs a big minority turnout to win. That's why he's making this such a racial issue."

Marshall said that Helms treats the recent mass voter registration by blacks as if it was a threat to society. He quoted an article from the Wilson Dailey Times in which Helms said: "Jim Hunt needs an enormous black vote to put him across. But if enough of our people go to the polls it will be alright."

"I'm sure he was speaking to an all white audience so when he said 'our people', he meant white people," he said.

Beyle said it was going to be very important for Hunt to run a unified campaign. "He is going to have to make sure his black vote comes out and that Democrats vote Democratic. This is one campaign in which the undecided are very few."

In the 1984 poll only 8 percent of those surveyed were undecided. This figure has decreased every year since 1981 when it was 17 percent.

Beyle said the race was going to be very close because most of the people who have voted for Hunt and Helms in the past are the same voters. "They have had the luxury of voting for a Democratic governor and a Republican senator," he said.

Although the polls show Hunt and Helms about even, Beyle said if an election were held today, he would "pick Helms because of Reagan at the top of the (Republican) ticket."

"If I had to call the election it would be Reagan (president), Helms (Senate) and maybe even Martin (governor)."

Gardner Johnson, a graduate student at UNC-CH, supports the King holiday and Hunt. He said it is sad that people would change their voting preference from Hunt to Helms because of Hunt's support of the King holiday.

"That tells me that voters in North Carolina look at politics from a very racial aspect," he said. "That shows that racism still exists very vividly in North Carolina."