

of Voting, Leadership Positions

African Apathy Has Foiled Effective Political Involvement

dominantly black organizations that they don't feel comfortable around so many blacks; this is to cover up the real reason—that they believe in the superiority of the established structures. The BSM serves as a case in point.

All of this talk about voting with solidarity and strengthening the community looks good on paper and in theory but the reality of diversity within the black community poses a tough question of how and for whom to vote. Of course we cannot have an effective voting bloc when the majority of the people do not vote. We have to become politically active. This does not mean everyone running for office or practicing the backstabbing brand of politics so prevalent in America today. This does mean, however, that we become cognizant of the candidates' platforms, past experience, and histories in order to make an informed decision. It also means that we make a pact, in the true spirit of *ujamaa* (cooperative community building and vision sharing; familyhood), to vote for the most qualified and responsive candidate as a community. We must also keep the candidate, if elected, accountable to the black community. *Ujamaa*, then, is critical and crucial to the concept of Black Power and without it we are swimming in quicksand—the more we struggle, the faster we sink politically, socially, economically, and culturally. We must, as Malcolm X suggested, come together on the basis of what we have in common and put aside our petty differences in order to fight our common foe. He also advocated that the black community practice what he called "positive neutrality," something similar to what Kwame Nkrumah based in Ghana -- non-alignment. Simply put, the black community accepts any positive aid from any group, with no strings attached, to be used in the way that the community sees fit. This way, outside influences will not control the community. We must stop bickering among ourselves, making it easier for the neo-colonialists to exploit us. We must unite.

Another question encountered

is, "Should it matter if a person is black or white, just as long as he or she has the best experience and is

intense loyalty to blacks, even when experience was lacking. With *ujamaa*, a person knows where he

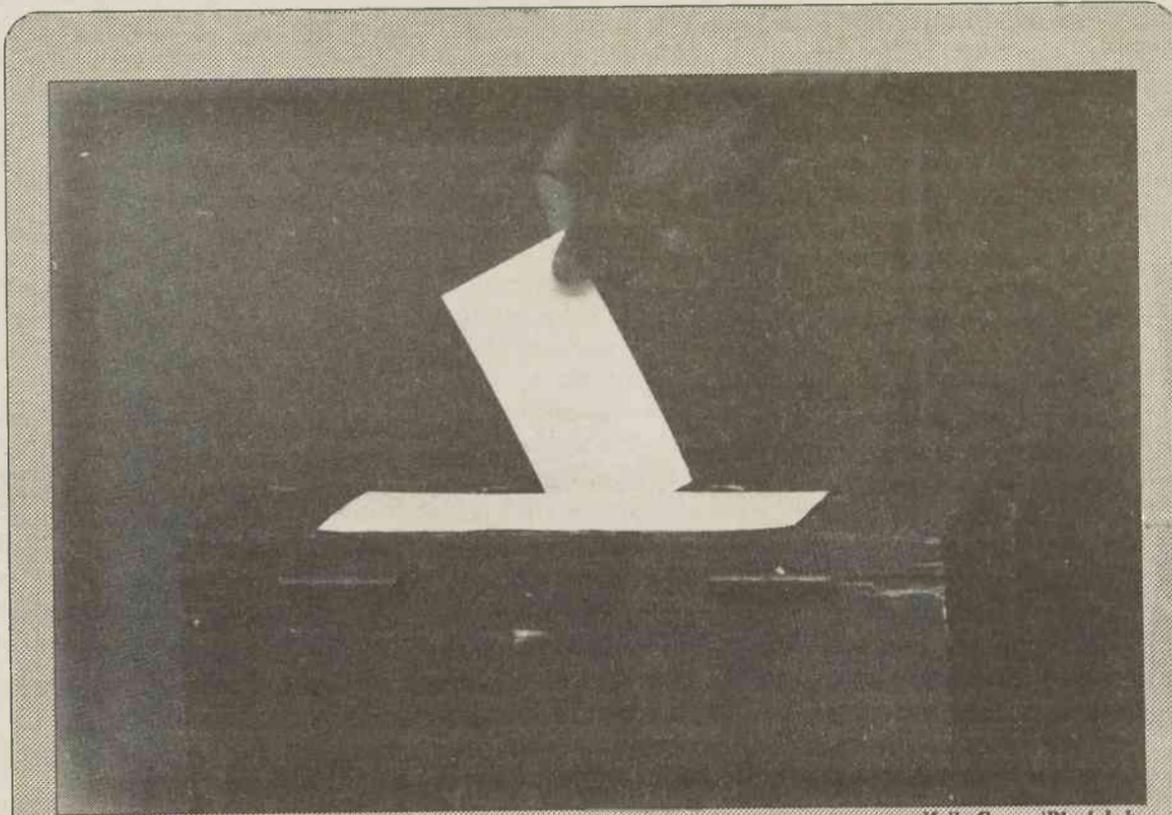
whole college community in the same way, we are not excluded from issues that impact the majority.

benefitted.

We cannot afford to resign from the fight like the non-political "cultural nationalists." These n.p. "cultural nationalists" celebrate their blackness with extreme pride but solely by relating to African culture, thereby closing their eyes to the political scene in order to pursue their "new found" blackness. One of the great advantages of history is that we in the present can look back, analyze it, learn valuable lessons, and apply what we learn to present-day problems. Malcolm X pointed out that, "History is a people's memory, and without a memory man is demoted to the lower animals." I fully support anyone who celebrates his or her African legacy in whatever way he or she chooses, but I cannot support anyone who ignores the problems of today by living in the past. The Black Panthers also advocated cultural awareness but it's co-founder, Huey P. Newton, put it best when he said, "Africa is, after all, no longer a virgin; she's been raped. We relate to here and now."

What the African-American community at UNC needs in 1992 is a leadership training seminar. This seminar needs to be geared toward educating African-American students about the diverse leadership styles and ideologies of past African-American and Black leaders. The seminar needs to go a step beyond just instructing about styles and ideologies; it also needs to serve as an incubator for future black leadership—on this campus and in America. It needs to nurture those qualities that make salient, powerful, and responsive leaders as well as nurture a spirit of hard work and activism. Community-building must also be a focus of the training. In terms of UNC, graduates of the seminar need to aspire to positions that relate to campus life. These positions are: student body president; Student Congress positions; Carolina Union Activities Board president, Homecoming committees; RHA President; Daily

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Blacks must take part in deciding their own fate by electing to key positions those sympathetic to their interests.

the most qualified?" Ideally, this should be the case but it functions mainly inside interest groups, whether it be the Democratic or Republican parties, or etc. By virtue of being a member of a group, the candidate has the majority of that group's interests in mind. Why would anyone vote for someone who does not have their best interests at heart, no matter how "qualified?" The criteria for choosing a candidate are experience and sincere concern for the constituents. A balance must be struck between the two with major emphasis on sincere concern. The reason for this is simple; candidates must have experience in order to deal with their opponents but without concern for their constituents, the people supposedly represented are left out in the cold. Competency is easier to attain than cultural identity and loyalty. The most effective black leaders had an

or she comes from, cultivates a sense of loyalty, and can become better equipped to handle the oppressor through leadership training, if such training exists.

Historically, a low and disproportionate number of African-Americans have aspired for leadership position, especially on this campus. Never before nor after has the African-American been so involved in politics than in the 12 years of Reconstruction, over 100 years ago! One reason for the lack of political involvement at UNC is the feeling of apathy that is, in part, due to the notion that we have nothing to do with these positions—that they don't have a major effect on us. This is a myth! Everything that happens in this campus affects us because we are a part of the student body. While it is true that many issues ("black issues") that adversely affect the black community do not concern the

Because it is true that we are "doubly veiled"—that we are both African and American -- we can escape neither the African nor the American part of our ancestry. History has proven that to effectively survive and function in America, blacks need to learn "proper English," American history (which often excludes black's contributions), and the Eurocentric system upon which America was established. All of this is learned in addition to our own culture, way of thinking, way of talking, etc. In order to induce positive change of the system we must get inside the system, learn the in's and out's of the system, gain seniority and eventually wield power that will be used for the good of the black community. Consequently, the rest of America will also benefit from the positive changes of the power structure because in the past, as blacks benefitted, everyone