

OPINION

THE CHRONICLE

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Our Mission

The Chronicle is dedicated to serving the residents of Winston-Salem and Forsyth County by giving voice to the voiceless, speaking truth to power, standing for integrity and encouraging open communication and lively debate throughout the community.

50 years later, Voting Rights Act under attack

2015 has been a year of milestones, from an African-American president of the United States marching in the re-enactment of the final march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, to Confederate flags being taken down off government property.

Today (Aug. 6) is another milestone. It is the 50th anniversary of the signing of the 1965 Voting Rights Act into law.

President Lyndon Johnson signed the measure into law on Aug. 6, 1965. The law was designed to overcome legal barriers at the state and local levels, especially in the South, that prevented African-Americans from exercising their right to vote under the 15th Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, such as paying a poll tax. It is considered among the most far-reaching pieces of civil rights legislation in U.S. history.

Who would have thought that 50 years later, African-Americans would be again fighting for the rights our forefathers gained through blood, sweat and tears?

On Monday, July 13, the trial in the lawsuit N.C. NAACP vs. McCrory began. It ended Friday, July 31. This trial challenged the repressive acts of the North Carolina General Assembly to roll back voting rights gained under the 1965 Voting Rights Act. The lawmakers acted in 2013 after the U.S. Supreme Court gutted part of the Voting Rights Act. Chief Justice John Roberts said at the time that times have changed, so Section 4(b) – which contains the coverage formula that determines which jurisdictions are subjected to preclearance based on their histories of discrimination in voting – is invalid and needs to be revised. Congress has yet to revise it.

On July 30 in Winston-Salem, the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) held a screening of a documentary it made, titled, "Selma: The Bridge to the Ballot." It focuses on the participation of high school students and teachers in Selma in events that led to the 1965 Voting Rights Act becoming law. (It will be shown again at the Winston-Salem Urban League on Friday, Aug. 7 at 9:30 a.m.)

What was striking about this documentary was how young people took a stand, even though they couldn't vote. As they walked out of their segregated high school to protest, they held signs that advocated for their parents, seeking the right for them to register. They were arrested along with adults and sent to jail.

Fifty years later, those students are adults in their later years of life. Fifty years later, their counterparts in North Carolina see the government pass a law to suppress the voting rights gained over 50 years. Why do older African-American people anywhere have to grapple with the basic right of voting all over again? Because the same elements and mindset that want to keep African-Americans from voting are still around.

A discussion on voting rights was held after the SPLC documentary was shown. One African-American man in the audience said he was only 3 years old when the 1965 Voting Rights Act was signed, but he has faced racist comments on the job in 2015. He said a white co-worker, who is the same age as he is, told him that racism would go away if African-Americans didn't create it.

The Rev. Dr. William Barber II, president of the N.C. NAACP, revealed in a Forum piece in The Chronicle last week that the N.C. NAACP received an email note that said:

"blacks should not hold so much hate about their past as slaves confederate flags and historical monuments. they should rather embrace their past. If it had not went the way it did, u would still be in Africa dying of hunger, aids and ebola.think about it. slavery was your ticket to the best country in the world... yet u bitch, wine and complain .barber enough is never enough. I don't think blacks really hate items from the past, rather I think u people hate yourselves" [actual grammar, spelling and punctuation used]

These racist views remain in the minds of people and governments in the United States of America and North Carolina. So, the fight for voting rights continues.

Will it still be going on 50 years from now?



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Register to vote and go to polls for victory

To the Editor:

We won one battle, but we have three more to fight!!!

The confederate flag came down the pole.

Gerrymandering is still up the pole.

The confederate flag came down the pole.

Gerrymandering is still up the pole.

The confederate flag came down the pole.

Voter suppression is still up the pole.

We won one battle in bringing the confederate flag down but we have three more battles to win. We can only declare victory when we register and go to the polls in record numbers and vote in 2016!!!

James J. Hankins
Wilmington, N.C.

Forsyth County should approve funds for new Konnoak Elementary

To the Editor:

The construction of a new Konnoak Elementary School facility is a major concern, not only for the Konnoak School family, but also the Christ Lutheran, Covenant Presbyterian, Konnoak Baptist, Konnoak Hills Moravian, and Konnoak Hills United Methodist Congregations.

Built in 1956, the school is in disrepair and deals with air quality issues caused by its aging HVAC system and failing roof. Almost one-fourth of its more than 750 students are housed in "temporary" mobile classrooms, some dating back to the 1990s.

In 2006, funding for the school's replacement was cut from a county bond referendum package, when approval fell short of the school district's needs. Last January, nine years later, school officials reiterated

the school's replacement is overdue.

The Forsyth County Board of Commissioners is responsible for providing funds for this \$18.9 million reconstruction. This spring, the board raised the county's debt service ceiling to 18 percent, creating the possibility of providing these funds immediately. The board has yet to approve the building cost and may subject approval to the contingency of a 2016 bond referendum, delaying construction at least until the summer of 2017. If so, a new building could open no sooner than fall 2018, twelve years after officials identified the critical need for replacement.

Our neighborhood has tolerated an insufficient and unhealthy school building far too long, and the governing boards of our five congregations invite our neighbors across Forsyth County to ask the Commissioners to approve the construction cost for Konnoak School without further delay.

The Christ Lutheran Church Board of Deacons; Don Murray, Pastor

The Covenant Presbyterian Church Session; Laura Gaylor, Clerk
Konnoak Baptist Church Board of Deacons; John Bishop, Pastor

The Konnoak Hills Moravian Church Joint Board of Elders and Trustees; John D. Rights, Chair
The Konnoak Hills United Methodist Church Administrative Board; Randy Manser, Pastor

Work to overturn high court's gay marriage decision

To the Editor:

The recent controversial decision by a sharply divided (5-4) Supreme Court to concoct a Constitutional "right" to homosexual "marriage" won't be the last word on the subject. The ideologically based, politically biased decision, which basically puts heterophobic homosexuals on the same level as normal heterosexuals, so flies in the face of reason that it will eventually be overturned

by more intelligent, less biased judges.

Thinking people have known for centuries that homosexual activity is immoral and a bad legal precedent. The ancient and primitive Greek and Roman societies once valued homosexual activity, but people ultimately



U.S. Supreme Court

wised up and deprecated it. Plato, for example, wisely and logically opposed it as unethical. Would that some Supreme Court Justices were as wise as Plato on this subject.

As female minds in male bodies and male minds in female bodies are sure signs that something went wrong somewhere (in nature and/or nurture), so homosexual minds in heterosexual bodies are also sure signs of mind/body mismatches, are sure signs of disorders. To put obvious disorders like homosexuality on a par with normal heterosexuality is clearly absurd. To equate homosexual "marriage" with heterosexual marriage is nonsensical.

Someday in the future people will look back at this regressive, inane decision and wonder, "What were they thinking?" (or IF they were thinking). In the meantime, it's up to decent ethical people to work to overturn it. Let's get started.

Wayne Lela
Downers Grove, Illinois

We Welcome Your Feedback

Submit letters and guest columns to letters@wschronicle.com before 5 p.m. Friday for the next week's publication date.

Letters intended for publication should be addressed "Letters to the Editor" and include your name, address, phone number and email address. Please keep letters to 350 words or less.

If you are writing a guest column, please include a photo of yourself, your name, address, phone number and email address. Please keep guest columns to 550 words or less. Letters and columns can also be mailed or dropped off at W-S Chronicle, 617 N. Liberty St., W-S, NC, 27101; or sent via our website, www.wschronicle.com.

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