

The Charlotte Post

Published weekly by the Charlotte Post Publishing Co.
1531 Camden Road Charlotte, N.C. 28203

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How President Clinton failed Black America

By Earl Ofari Hutchinson
NATIONAL NEWSPAPER PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION

At the NAACP's annual convention last July, President Clinton beamed as the mostly black delegates enthusiastically chanted "four more years, four more years."

In his speech, Clinton blasted Bob Dole for snubbing the convention and promised to continue the fight against racism. But Clinton didn't tell the delegates how. Then again he didn't have to. Clinton has read the polls. He knows that nine out of 10 blacks like him and rate him higher than Louis Farrakhan and Jesse Jackson. The delirium of the NAACP delegates for Clinton points to several enduring political dilemmas black voters face this election year.

In every presidential election in the past three decades, blacks have given the Democratic presidential nominee more than 80 percent of their votes. They will do the same again even though Clinton is the most conservative Democrat since Grover Cleveland, and the Democratic Party bears no resemblance to the Democratic Party that championed New Deal, Great Society, labor and civil rights reforms.

Clinton has spent two elections trying to out-Reagan Reagan and out-Bush Bush/Perot in a chase to grab back defecting white middle-class, ethnic and blue collar voters, and distance himself from "special interests" (i.e. women and minorities). He has been modestly successful. This election, he may clone 15 to 20 percent of Republicans who agree with his positions into "Clinton Republicans."

The Republican Party has systematically rejected blacks for three decades. The ouster of black conservative Allan Keyes from a Republican candidate's forum in February, the Buchanan right wing's assault on Colin Powell, and Dole's refusal to address the NAACP convention this year make 1996 no different.

There is no present possibility of blacks forming an all-black political party to challenge the Democrats and Republicans. During this century the Afro-American Party, The Negro Political Union, the Freedom Now Party, the Black Panther Party, the National Independent Black Party, and the National Independent Black Political Party have crashed on the hard bedrock of black loyalty to the Republicans and Democrats, political opportunism and conservatism.

Although some polls show that many Americans are receptive (on paper) to a third party, this is mostly due to their momentary reflexive anger and disgust with corrupt and inefficient government and politicians. Even if Americans really wanted a third party, to be credible and competitive such a party would have to raise \$40 to \$50 million, build a national organization, develop a campaign strategy, project a broad vision of change, and break the corporate media's traditional freeze out from the airwaves of minor party candidates. It would also have to overcome the divine belief by Americans, blacks included, that the two party system is the best of all political creations.

Still, if blacks abandoned the political playing field, it would turn the electoral process into a white, middle-class primary, exile blacks even further to the outer political margins, and give conservatives an even bigger excuse to ignore or torpedo black needs. That's what Reagan did. He ignored blacks. Blacks ignored him. And they are still paying a huge cost.

Despite Clinton's popularity, a significant number of blacks call themselves independents. This could translate into millions of votes and potentially transform blacks into independent political power brokers to both the Democrats and Republicans. History has shown that ethnic bloc voting can make or break a candidate, campaign, and agenda.

In 1960, Martin Luther King threatened to boycott the Republican and Democratic conventions to force a stronger civil rights platform. Both did. Harlem congressman Adam Clayton Powell issued a "Black Position Paper" in 1965 to the Democrats demanding that "where we are 20 percent of the voters, we should command 20 percent of the top political jobs." Eventually we did.

In 1972, the Black Political Convention forced Nixon to increase minority business funding, propose non-punitive welfare reform, and strengthen affirmative action programs in the trades, and pushed the Democrats to adopt one of the most liberal activist platforms ever.

The social and economic wreckage facing blacks has raised the political stakes. As independent political brokers, blacks can lobby, challenge, and pressure both parties to support full funding for jobs, affirmative action, education, health, drug and crime prevention programs, and non-punitive welfare and criminal justice reform. This is the price that the Republicans and Democrats, especially Clinton, should be forced to pay for black votes.

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Evaluation of the Clinton years, all the good, bad, and ugly

By Eric Kearney
NATIONAL NEWSPAPER PUBLISHER

Before the November election when we will elect the final president of this century, we should evaluate the performance of our current President, William Jefferson Clinton. Such a review may assist the African-American community in deciding whether he deserves a chance at a second term.

President Clinton's cabinet

In the first few months of his presidency, President Clinton had a difficult time with making choices. You will recall that he chose Zoe Baird for Attorney General and then Judge Kimba M. Wood; both were withdrawn because they had hired an illegal alien as domestic help. Each

of these women had fine credentials and were guilty of peccadillos, yet President Clinton did not stand behind them. He withdrew his support after several members of Congress complained about them.

His propensity for nominating someone, then withdrawing his support was also seen with the nomination of Lani Guinier, an African American law professor, whom Clinton nominated as Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights in 1993. Conservatives and moderates attacked her based upon her erudite and complex writings found in some of the most prestigious law journals. Instead of fighting on her behalf, Clinton, perhaps due to his newness in the office, withdrew his support without allowing her the opportunity to present her case to the

Making sense of city council

GERALD O. JOHNSON

As I See It



I enjoy watching city council meetings because it gives me so much material for editorials. Plus it gives me so much insight into the elected officials.

For instance, Mayor Pat McCrory forgets that the mayor's role is to preside over the meetings. Several meetings have gotten out of hand because the mayor is in the middle of the fray instead of managing the meeting. The mayor has to remember he is no longer a councilman. Regardless of what people thought about Richard

Vinroot, he was a very good meeting manager. He exercised his role as the meeting moderator even when he had to be rude and tell people to shut up.

Subsidizing Panther fans

You also learn that logic and city government do not have to intersect. For instance, our subsidized bus system is transporting Carolina Panthers fans between parking lots and Ericsson Stadium at a loss. It cost a little over \$36,000 to transport the fans and the fans paid \$21,000. Now I am beginning to see why we have to subsidize this system. The price of the \$3 fare needs to be \$6 to break even. I am going to give the city the benefit of a doubt by assuming cost figures were

not available when the fare was set. Thus an adjustment to \$6 is forthcoming. Otherwise, I am confused as to why taxpayers are subsidizing getting Panthers fans to games. The bus system should be looking for ways to make as much money as possible to help curb the amount of future burdens on taxpayers. Surely people who can afford shelling out money for seeing the game, concessions, parking, hotels, etc. can ill-afford to argue about \$3 additional for bus fare.

Litter amendment

The city staff has proposed an amendment to require downtown property owners (special tax districts 1, 2, and 3) who have their properties littered as a result of an event to clean their lots within 48

hours of the event. Failure to comply would result in the city cleaning up the property and billing the property owner. If the property owner is profiting from the event, then I see no problem with this amendment. However, in situations like Panthers' games, people are parking on properties where owners have not solicited this activity and in some cases are unaware this is even happening. Why then should they be held responsible for this cleanup? The event profiteers should be held accountable for litter caused by the event. This amendment needs a lot of revision because in its current state, it should be...well, trashed.

Peace
GERALD O. JOHNSON is publisher of The Charlotte Post.



Green power in our communities

Bernice P. Jackson



Vernon Johns was considered one of the foremost African American preachers in the 1940s, ranked with Howard Thurman and Mordecai Johnson. He was Martin Luther King Jr.'s predecessor at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery and one of Dr. King's mentors. He was also a fierce proponent of economic development in the black community and a visionary who saw a special role for the black church in economic development, often prodding his sometimes reluctant congregation to accept that role.

Johns' modern-day counterpart might be Dr. Henry Lyons, president of the 8.5 million member National Baptist Convention USA and chief executive officer of the newly-formed

Revelation Corporation of America. Revelation is the new private corporation founded by five of the largest African American denominations to provide greater access to home mortgage loans, all kinds of insurance, automobile and consumer loans, affinity credit cards and discounts for food products and durable goods to the African American community.

African Americans spend \$1 billion every day and Revelation's founders believe that putting our community's dollars together can mean new-found economic clout.

"The Revelation Corporation of America is not a call for government assistance or hand-outs. Revelation follows Dr. King's vision of black Americans helping themselves through the leadership of the church," said Dr. Lyons.

The five denominations which control 70 percent of the Revelation Corporation repre-

sent 20 million African Americans, nearly half of black America. Revelation is patterned after the American Association of Retired Persons, offering African Americans the opportunity to join its buyers group and receive discounted products and services. In addition, 70 percent of all gross revenues generated by Revelation will be deposited into a National Housing Fund which is designed to build affordable homes for African Americans. The additional revenues will go to individuals churches for their own use and for their pastor's pension fund.

While Revelation focuses primarily on the 43,000 congregations which belong to the five founding denominations, they are also reaching out to other African American congregations. These congregations can also benefit from the discount coupons for goods and services which will be available to Revelation users and which will

generate the \$88 million which corporate leaders expect to raise in the first two years. These dollars, in turn, will be used to provide loans to home buyers with a less than "A" credit rating.

Revelation Corporation is not without controversy, as some in the African American community have questioned the 30 percent ownership of a white developer.

Clearly, economic development is the key for the future survival of the African American community. Revelation Corporation follows in the tradition of those African American leaders like Vernon Johns, Booker T. Washington and Marcus Garvey who have tried to harness the economic power of the African American community.

To contact Revelation Corporation, call 1-800-893-5555.

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American public.

Since then, however, it should be noted that Clinton has nominated several African Americans to his cabinet.

Health care reform

Later in his first term, President Clinton with First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton initiated an ambitious and radical health care reform plan. While Clinton should be applauded for his vision, one must question his choice of the First Lady as the leader of the plan - not because she is not talented enough, but because of the country's unclear position on the role of a first lady, as well as Clinton's seemingly uncompromising approach.

Health care reform died late in 1994; however, it raised the nation's consciousness on health

care issues and social security. But poorer Americans still do not have adequate health care.

Crime

With this and other domestic policy issues, President Clinton has had success. For example, in 1994 he signed a \$30.2 billion anti-crime package. It provided for more police and banned the sale of certain assault weapons.

Foreign Policy

On the foreign policy front, President Clinton has had mixed results. For instance, in Haiti, the U.S. Navy was embarrassed by a group of demonstrators who would not allow American troops on the island. Clinton also did not keep his campaign promise of sup-

porting Haitian relief.

He sent additional troops to Somalia, yet did not use the country's vast resources to develop a solution. Similarly, the U.S. has provided support through the United Nations in the African nations of Rwanda and Burundi, but has not taken an active role in stopping the violence and killing.

Trade

Trade issues have been a central theme during the Clinton presidency. In November 1993, the Congress passed the North American Free Trade Agreement.

Budget deficit

The reduction of the budget deficit was another Clinton

campaign promise. Some reports are that he has been able to reduce the budget deficit by \$3 billion. In the fight over the budget late last year the federal government shut down. Like virtually every president, President Clinton has had successes and failures. Scandals involving his personal life prior to becoming president still haunt him, yet he is still leading in the polls.

Perhaps the next few months will provide reasons for the African American community to support President Clinton for a second term. Many feel that the African American community must support President Clinton if we are to have any say in government. It does seem like the only appealing alternative.

ERIC H. KEARNEY is a Cincinnati attorney.