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N.C. cities turn to right

By Jonathan C. Jordan
SPECIAL TO THE POST

RALEIGH - Voters in North Carolina's largest cities sent a message of support for less government and more conservative leadership in the recent municipal elections.

When citizens in four of North Carolina's five largest cities, with a total population of 1.2 million, went to the polls this election cycle, they chose Republican mayors to lead their cities. They retained Republicans Pat McCrory in Charlotte and Tom Fetzner in Raleigh and swept into office Republican Jack Cavanagh in Winston-Salem, who defeated incumbent Democrat Martha Wood, and Republican Nick Tennyson in Durham, who defeated Democrat City Councilman Isaac Robinson in an open mayoral race.

Republicans now preside over 83 percent of the population of the largest urban areas in North Carolina.

What explains these victories, unprecedented in our state's history, and what were the issues in these races?

Winston-Salem's two-term incumbent Wood had supported a controversial city bond referendum in June. The \$75 million bond package, designated for city improvements, failed overall by at least a 2-1 margin. City residents objected to the lack of specificity for the uses of the money and perceived that the timing of the vote was to take advantage of low voter turnout.

Cavanagh had been the primary leader of the bond opposition group. Cavanagh defeated Wood 56 percent to 43 in the November election, largely on this issue, becoming the first Republican mayor of Winston-Salem in 84 years. Two other bond opponents were elected to seats on the Board of Aldermen with Cavanagh. One of those new aldermen, Vernon Robinson, has worked tirelessly across the state in support of charter schools and other forms of educational choice.

In Durham, Republican challenger Nick Tennyson defeated Democrat City Council member Isaac Robinson for the open mayoral seat. The Oct. 7 primary results showed the two separated by a mere 135 votes, while the Nov. 4 results gave Tennyson a 3,000 vote lead, with almost 55 percent of the total vote.

Tennyson's campaign focused on how he as an outsider would work to reduce crime, and Robinson made several misstatements during the campaign about the council's stands on crime and the police department. In the end, voters chose the outsider, representing change, rather than the council insider, representing the status quo.

Republican incumbent Fetzner in Raleigh was easily re-elected this election cycle with 56 percent of the vote, largely based on his tax-cutting, crime-fighting stances of the past four years. His successful tax cuts were even mentioned by candidates in other races this year. Though Fetzner no longer has a majority on the council, he pushed through reductions in property taxes during his first term despite having only two allies on the council.

McCrory, the Republican incumbent in Charlotte, was also easily re-elected with 78 percent of the vote, his only opposition being a disciple of fringe candidate Lyndon LaRouche. McCrory will also have a Republican city council, as his party captured that body by a one-vote margin.

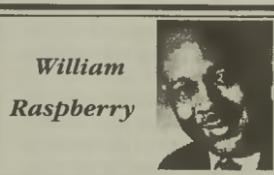
Finally, in perhaps the most interesting episode this election cycle, Greensboro's Democrat mayor, Carolyn Allen, survived her re-election to a third term, but by less than a majority. John Hammer, the publisher of a conservative weekly newspaper in Greensboro called The Rhinoceros Times, ran a strong, last-minute write-in campaign and garnered 31 percent of the vote.

Hammer's platform was a crystal-clear call for "lower taxes and less government." He explained why he decided, a mere three weeks before the election, to run for mayor: "One reason I am running," Hammer wrote, "is to bring some life to this election by giving the voters a choice. The traditional candidates are so similar in their views that a voter who wants any change from the status quo has no choice." Hammer cited his opposition to "giveaways" of taxpayer funds to big business and to nonprofits. Hammer also mentioned Mayor Tom Fetzner's tax cuts in Raleigh as a good model for Greensboro.

The results of the recent municipal elections show that North Carolina's urban residents want leadership that supports less government, lower taxes, and safer streets. As evidenced by results in large cities around the country, such as New York City or Los Angeles, residents of this state's cities also have called for new conservative leadership for the future.

JONATHAN JORDAN is director of research at the John Locke Foundation, a conservative public policy think tank in Raleigh.

We all know better in race debate



William Raspberry

I hear the arguments over affirmative action - highlighted this week by the Supreme Court's refusal to review California's Proposition 209 and by the Senate Judiciary Committee's dogfight over Bill Lann Lee's nomination for the top civil rights job in the Justice Department - and I think: They know better.

No. We know better. But listen to us. One side pretends to believe that racial discrimination, no matter how rampant and flagrant it used to be, is now ended. Oh, maybe there's a bigot or two in the woodpile, but discrimination as a matter for governmental concern is a thing of the past.

The other side pretends to believe that only racists who oppose minority progress could be against affirmative action. Discrimination a thing of the past indeed! A black man in America still hasn't got a chance.

Each side knows (but feels no urge to acknowledge) that there is at least some justice to the other's position. The blatant segregation and discrimination are largely over. Law now forbids such racism, and - I really do believe - public opinion won't countenance it.

But racial fairness (in some instances, in some arenas) still eludes us. Corporate management and directorships, legal and accountancy partnerships, and even concern for the plight of our children clearly are not distributed on the sole basis of deservedness. Race matters.

The truth is complicated and inconsistent and hard to figure out. Instead of undertaking the effort to figure it out, we draw the



FILE PHOTO

Liberals and conservatives both make compelling arguments when it comes to the merits of affirmative action and racial discrimination. But neither side will admit the other may be right.

lines as starkly as we can and force the public to choose one incomplete reality (ours, we hope) and reject the other side's partial truth.

It happens not just in our race relations but throughout our politics. It even happens in our courts, as when the clever Barry Scheck deliberately cut out any middle-gray consideration in the trial of Louise Woodward, the British au pair. Force the jury to choose between the cold-blooded murder of an innocent child and innocence (or at least reasonable doubt), he thought, and surely there won't be a conviction.

His now-famous miscalculation (he was in court this week trying to reinstate the grays) might serve as a lesson to us all. And it might show us the wisdom of changing the terms of the debate. Much of what I'm saying, I admit, is based on my belief that most Americans want to be fair and want our important institutions to reflect that fairness.

I don't believe there are significant, politically influential segments of the society that are happy over the fact that African

American admissions at Boalt Hall, the University of California-Berkeley's law school, are down 80 percent as a direct result of Proposition 209's ban on racial preference, or that the first-year class has but a single black member. I don't believe there are large pockets of secret jubilation that a similar trend is in evidence at the University of Texas.

On the other hand, though, I doubt that many affirmative action supporters - including the beleaguered Bill Lee - want to parcel out society's goodies on the basis of racial entitlement. Many of us may defend, but few of us are thrilled by, voting districts drawn purely on the basis of race.

We want (is this hopelessly naive?) the same thing: a society in which gifts and grit and character matter more than pigmentation.

So what are we fighting about? Mainly, I think, about how to produce such a society. Some of us believe that the best way to achieve a colorblind future is to practice colorblindness now. And

some of us believe that colorblindness after centuries of racism will merely lock in white advantage - that we need to level the playing field before insisting on a single set of rules.

I remember when black quarterbacks were a rarity in the National Football League - when the most talented collegiate passers were, if they were black, switched to defensive back or running back or some such. Then a couple of coaches broke the mold - affirmative action? - and then a couple more.

Do the six starting quarterbacks (out of 30 NFL teams) constitute parity? Wrong question. What is true is that there is, at last, reason for young black athletes to believe they can go as far, at any position, as their talent takes them. As Gene Washington, a black front office executive with the league, told a reporter:

"What's most interesting to me is that I don't notice it. That's a good sign."

That's a very good sign. WILLIAM RASPBERRY is a Washington Post columnist.

au pair (ô' pâr') n. A FOREIGN GIRL OR WOMAN WHO WORKS FOR A FAMILY IN EXCHANGE FOR ROOM AND BOARD... (SEE LOUISE WOODWARD)

idiot (id'ē-at) n. A FOOLISH OR STUPID PERSON... (SEE JUDGE ZOBEL)

DIAMOND HUNTER
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Teaching children survival skills for police stops

Bernice P. Jackson



I remember when I first heard a parent talking about it. It was right after the Bernard Goetz incident in the New York City subways where several black youth were shot by a man who claimed they were menacing him.

The mother was talking about teaching her teenaged sons how to survive in New York City—how not to look "threatening," how to dress, what to look at on the subway. But now, according to a recent

New York Times article, parents of children of color are feeling the need to teach their children, especially their sons, how to act when they are stopped by the police. A new kind of survival skill for children of color.

One African American parent, a banker, had to strategize with his son prior to buying him a new car. They planned what to do when a police officer stopped the son because he was driving a nice car. They decided that the son would carry his father's business card and offer to let the police officer call his father.

A Hispanic parent told how her child, despite much coaching from his parents, already had been stopped three times at gunpoint by the police. Each

time he was in a car that the police suspected of carrying drugs, but no charges were ever brought.

Some agencies which work with young people are teaching them survival skills in dealing with police officers. One Bronx-based youth program is beginning lessons in legal and civil rights issues for youth and a Harlem agency already is teaching a course called Conflicts with Cops to help young people in their encounters with police officers.

Even minority police officers associations counsel youth on how to deal with police. The president of the Latino Officers Association, for example, tells the young people to note the officer's name and to use it throughout their encounter.

Targeting youth of color is not a tactic of every police officer, but clearly it happens too often, across class, education and political lines. Children of middle class families are just as subject to be stopped as children of the poor. And girls are victims as well as boys.

One African American mother told how her two daughters, 17 and 18 years old, were coming out of a subway station with their boyfriends when they heard gunshots. All four found themselves pushed against a wall with guns to their heads by police. And her son, a champion fencer, was stopped in a subway station in a white community and asked what he was doing there.

When he replied he was going

to a fencing club down the street, he was taunted and not believed by police.

And make no mistake about it, this is not just a New York City phenomenon. Parents of color in cities across the nation are finding they must teach their children these new survival skills. Polls show that people of color believe that police officers do not treat people of color and whites with equal fairness. Indeed, that is one of the greatest chasms between white Americans and people of color - their belief in the justice of the criminal justice system.

The fact that many police officers do not live in the communities they serve aggravates many of the stereotypes that

some of them have about youth of color. Thus, they scoff at the story by the black youngster that he is a fencer or they believe that only a drug dealer could be driving a nice car.

It's a sad commentary for children of color. It's a sad commentary for our nation. As long as parents of color find themselves having to teach their children how to survive an encounter with police, we will know that racism is alive and well in this country. In the words of one parent, let's. If I had not told my son to be cool and respectful, he would probably be dead.

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