

# The Charlotte Post

The Voice of the Black Community

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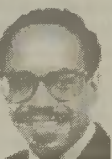
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# N.C. Black Press comes of age

GERALD O. JOHNSON

As I  
See It



In November 1996, Ernie Pitt and I had a casual conversation about the possibility of bringing our companies together in a merger to afford us the opportunity to expand into other markets.

We both had been trying to do this independently, and decided we could gain some economies of scale if we jointly pursued this endeavor.

By March 3, 1997, the casual conversations had materialized into inking the deal that formed Consolidated Media Group. On March 1, 1998, almost a year to the day of the signing date, we witnessed the accomplishment of our first objective. The Triangle Tribune was published.

Both Ernie and I saw the tremendous opportunity that existed in the fast-growing Triangle area and we set our

sights on having a paper there. After much planning, hard work and dedication to seeing this project to its conclusion, we both felt like proud fathers watching the birth of another offspring.

With this effort, we laid a very important foundation for future expansion. We are using technology to network the Charlotte, Winston-Salem, and Durham offices together using a shared T1 line. Furthermore, we extended the network to include our printer partner in Lexington, N.C. This interlinking affords us the capability to move massive amounts of data between facilities in a matter of minutes. Moreover, we can move the three papers to our printer electronically.

The entire process from layout to press is electronic. Gone are the days of painstaking cutting and pasting on paper and driving layout pages to the printer. We use state-of-the-art technology to remove a lot of the labor-intensive tasks in producing a newspaper.

With the technological foundation in place, moving into other areas of the state, or the nation for that matter, becomes

a task of putting staff in place, linking that office to the network, and - voila - instant press.

It is not as easily done as said, but with existing resources we can go into other territories and, within four to six months, have another publication in operation. We intend to prove this theory in the very near future as we take this show to the eastern part of the state. With a little luck and a lot of funding, we also have Georgia on our minds.

We have made tremendous strides in taking this publication to the next level. However, as so often is the case, giant strides forward are preceded by some steps backwards. We suffered errors with transmissions to the printer. We overworked the staff to a point of exhaustion. In addition, all of us are experiencing a learning curve with paper production using the technology. We have made mistakes in order to ultimately bring you a much better product. For the setbacks, I do apologize.

Finally, Consolidated Media Group intends to be a major

player in providing comprehensive news coverage for African Americans, by African Americans, about African Americans. Even though we are not close to being where we intend to be in the near future, we currently are the best providers of this service in the major North Carolina markets.

Consolidated Media Group employs 42 people full-time. We contract with over 105 independent providers of services. We are building coverage areas in the Triad, the Triangle, and the Piedmont. We are looking at expanding to the eastern part of the state, thereby giving us coastal coverage. Once complete, our ability to bring you statewide coverage with up-to-date news will be at hand.

It is very important to both Ernie and I that when people talk about the Black Press it is not in a demeaning manner. We are very confident we can compete at any level with the best the market has. But don't take my word for it.

Just stay tuned.

GERALD O. JOHNSON is publisher of The Post and president of Consolidated Media Group.

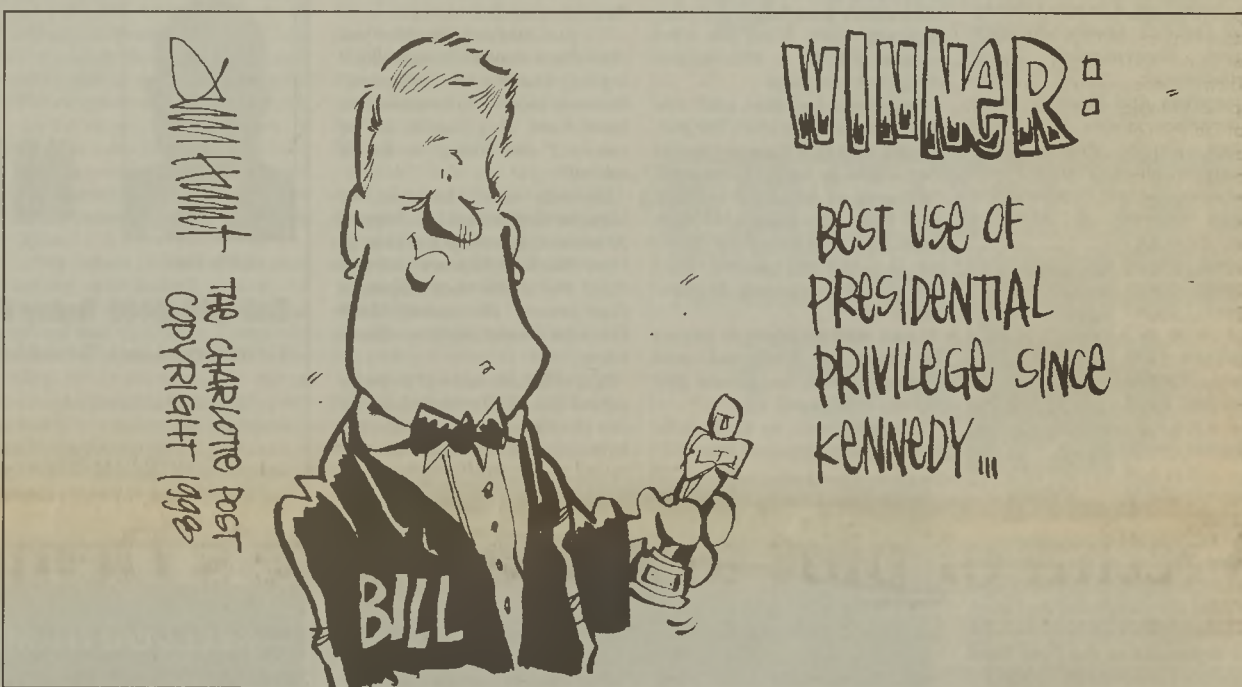
# Clinton, U.S. can do the right thing by Africa

President Clinton's six-nation, 11-day tour of Africa is off to a rousing start, punctuated by large crowds and genuine goodwill from both sides of the Atlantic. For all the historical ramifications of Mr. Clinton's visit, there are also practical applications.

For all the negative stereotypes, Africa is a vibrant continent with natural and human resources that are the envy of the international community. For the so-called industrialized nations such as the U.S., Japan and Europe, forging and maintaining good relations with African nations is economically feasible in the face of dwindling global resources that will ultimately bring the world to the continent's doorstep.

There are problems, of course. Africa has pockets of war, heightened by national and territorial differences that go back generations in some cases. The West's colonial grip has all but disappeared as countries gained independence, but more could be done to build the economies of their former puppets. Genocidal campaigns waged on innocent civilians drew dispassionate responses from the world community. And the issue of slavery, which many African Americans urge President Clinton to apologize for, still scars the continent. "The United States has not always done the right thing by Africa," Clinton said in Uganda Tuesday in a statement that stopped just short of an apology. To Africa's credit, its inhabitants are less enamored with an apology than by partnerships that would benefit the continent economically. Perhaps that's why the President has been warmly received at every stop.

We hope President Clinton's trip to the cradle of civilization will be fruitful and educational. And perhaps he will encourage every American to explore the possibilities that could enrich our relationship with Africa. As the global community continues to expand, it would be foolish to ignore her.



# Need for African American political unity is stronger than ever

By Conrad W. Worrill  
SPECIAL TO THE POST

Throughout America, numerous state, county and local elections are taking place. In Illinois, for example, more than 95 African Americans are seeking statewide and county offices, including the governor's seat and secretary of state.

With more than 8,000 African American elected officials in this country, the question remains why is it that African Americans still have limited political influence and virtually no collective political power to address the critical political

issues facing our communities?

I have stated repeatedly in this column that politics is "the science of who gets what, when, where, and most importantly how." This is an important concept for African people in America to remember. It is important because the black political empowerment movement in this country should be based on the acquisition of political power that will provide what Dr. Anderson Thompson describes as the African principle - "the greatest good for the greatest number of African people throughout the world."

With the host of political issues facing the African American community, the African American community needs political unity.

The only way that we can gain black political power in America is to achieve the highest level of black unity. In other words, in order for the African principle to become a reality we must strive for a level of black political unity.

It is evident the African American masses understand that when our elected representatives do not represent their interests they will not support them, as evidenced by recent

elections across the country.

African American political leaders must not forget that without the support of African American masses, their ability to represent us will be limited.

Group interests in American politics is as old as apple pie. All ethnic groups in this society who have acquired some measure of political power have done so by sticking together when their own ethnic group runs for a political office. The Irish, Polish, Italians and Jewish groups, etc., are all examples of this fact in American politics and African political life.

Until recently, this has not been the case in the African American community. In African American politics of this century, African Americans elected to public office have tended to represent the interest of outside white power groups. This trend needs to change. We should not support those African Americans seeking political office who exemplify this kind of behavior. We should send them a warning shot by voting them out of office.

It must be repeated, over and over again, that the great political movements and battles that African American people

have taken on since the 1960s have been historic and important to the development of our struggles. If we are going to seriously struggle for the continuation of the fight for black political empowerment, we will need a new kind of political unity movement throughout the U.S. It should be clear that black people need our own political agenda that speaks to the collective needs of our community.

CONRAD WORRILL is chairman of the National Black United Front in Calumet Park, Ill.

# Africa trip is Clinton's chance to shore up U.S. commitment

By Richard Sincere  
SPECIAL TO THE POST

President Clinton left on March 22 on an historic 12-day journey through sub-Saharan Africa, the first official visit to Africa by an American president since Jimmy Carter some 20 years ago. While other high level U.S. government officials have been to Africa in recent years including First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, Secretary of State Madeline Albright, and Vice-President Al Gore, the symbolic significance of a presidential visit is not lost on either the Africans or the Americans who will participate in the events of the next fortnight.

Clinton leaves Washington with an important piece of legislation in hand, the African Growth and Opportunity Act, which passed the U.S. House of Representatives with substantial bipartisan support earlier this month. The law, which still awaits action by the Senate, frees up trade barriers with

African countries, encourages investment by U.S. firms in African economies, and nudges African governments toward economic reforms that can only benefit the people who live under their rule. Virtually without exception, African ambassadors in the United States lobbied Congress heavily to see this legislation succeed.

With this African free-trade legislation as evidence, President Clinton can show that Africa is higher on the U.S. agenda than ever before. This may reflect the changes that have swept the continent in the past decade. Certainly Clinton's itinerary seems focused on countries where change-particularly positive change-has taken place in recent years. The president's agenda includes stops in Ghana, Uganda, South Africa, Botswana, Senegal, and Rwanda.

Clinton's visit to South Africa, by itself, may be the most emotionally charged leg of the jour-

ney, and will be sure to elicit comparisons to the visit there by Senator Robert F. Kennedy more than 30 years ago. Since then, South Africa has jettisoned apartheid, broadened is democracy, freed jailed leaders, and legalized banned political organizations. (These are things that too many of Africa's despotic regimes have still failed to do.)

Perhaps one of Bill Clinton's hopes in this foreign-policy project is to look more statesman-like than he has in the wake of the sex-and-perjury scandal that has been enveloping him in recent weeks. Standing side by side with South African President Nelson Mandela, whose gravitas and dignity (and Nobel Peace Prize) have made him Africa's elder statesman by default, Clinton will be hoping for some of Mandela's better qualities to rub off on him.

In fact, Clinton will be surrounded by statesmen of greater and lesser qualities. In Uganda, the U.S. president will

participate in a mini-summit of African heads of state convened by President Yoweri Museveni. Museveni is probably Africa's leading diplomatic and political force today, after bringing Uganda back from the depths of economic and civil terror during the days of dictators Idi Amin and Milton Obote. Museveni has, after a fashion, restored democracy (although it is a "non-party" democracy), and has improved Uganda's economic prospects.

More important, however, is the role Museveni plays as a regional leader. He is the mentor to Rwandan Vice President Paul Kagame and was the major force behind the overthrow of Zairean dictator Mobutu Sese Seko. Zaire - now called Congo - has a new dictator, Laurent Kabila, but Kabila owes his position largely to the maneuverings of Museveni and Kagame.

In the regional summit, Clinton will meet leaders of emerging democracies like Eritrea and Ethiopia. Farther

south, however, Clinton will visit Africa's best-established democracy, Botswana. For over 30 years since independence from Britain, Botswana has enjoyed regular, competitive elections; freedom of speech and of the press; respect for property rights. As a result, Botswana has been peaceful and free from strife; its economy has been growing at a steady rate; and its people have been prosperous.

It is worth noting some of the countries that Clinton chose not to visit on this trip. Despite being under serious consideration as a major stopover, the administration decided to avoid visiting Angola. The arguments for visiting Angola were good ones - the country has emerged from civil war, the disputing parties are beginning to work together toward a stable regime, and Angola (because of its vast oil wealth) is one of America's biggest trading partners in Africa. On the downside, however, is Angola's newfound tendency to strongarm

its neighbors. Angola sent troops to fight in Zaire, and helped former Marxist dictator Denis Sassou-Nguesso overthrow the democratically-elected government of Pascal Lissouba in neighboring Congo-Brazzaville. More recently, Angola has noisily threatened to take military action against Zambia because of that country's alleged aid to UNITA, Angola's chief opposition group.

Will Clinton's trip to Africa be more style than substance, more symbol than achievement? That remains to be seen. But after two decades of neglect, Africa - the world's largest untapped market for U.S. goods and services, source of unexplored and unexploited natural resources, and ancestral home to millions of Americans - deserves to be paid more attention. A presidential visit may provide just the boost that Africa needs.

RICHARD SINCERE is syndicated columnist and expert on Africa.