

Betting on the next election

Gambling and politics.

Say the words in North Carolina these days and a lot of people will wince, especially Democrats. Some of the tough politicking that pushed the lottery through the legislature last year looks worse and worse the more light that shines on the process.

But there might be some good news in the realm of gambling and politics for those North Carolina Democrats who think their favorite son, John Edwards, has a good chance to win the Democratic presidential nomination in 2008. In fact, anyone who has some extra money can make a lot more money by betting on Edwards than they could ever expect to win in the state lottery-if Edwards wins the nomination.

Here is how. For every \$6 that someone "bets" on Edwards, he or she will win \$100-again, if Edwards wins the nomination. (Or \$60 would get you \$1000; \$600 brings back \$10,000, or \$6,000 would give a \$100,000 return.)

To make a "bet" on Edwards, go to the Internet political futures market firm, Intrade (www.intrade.com). Intrade calls itself a "Trading Exchange for Prediction Markets," which means that it accepts wagers on the various possible outcomes of political races and other news events.

The good news for Edwards "bettors" might not be such good news for Edwards himself. The low price for an Edwards contract means that many other bettors do not give him much of a chance.

On the other hand, if you wanted to bet money on Hillary Clinton winning the Democratic nomination, you would have to put up about \$43 to get the chance to win \$100. For a betting person, Clinton does not have nearly as much upside as Edwards. A lot of people are betting on her.

But for Edwards, Clinton's high price is not good news. The smart money is betting on her.

However, there may be worse news for Edwards. The price to bet on former Virginia governor Mark Warner is about \$24 for a chance to win \$100.

One of Edwards's appeals to Democrats has been his claim to be the "southern" candidate, which could be important because the only Democratic presidential candidates to win the popular vote since the 1960 election have been Southerners. (Lyndon Johnson-1964, Jimmy Carter-1976, Bill Clinton-1992 and 1996, and Al Gore-2000)

Now, the political bettors are telling us that Edwards has a challenger for the "Southern Candidate," namely Mark Warner, and that Warner has four times better odds to win than Edwards.

What about the chances of other Democrats, in the eyes of the political bettors? Here is a quick rundown from a recent Intrade listing. These are prices for the chance to win \$100:

Al Gore-\$5; Russ Feingold \$4; Joe Biden \$2.50; Bill Richardson-\$2.50; Evan Bayh-\$3.50; Barack Obama-\$1; John Kerry-\$2.

There are lots of others. For a dime or two, you could win \$100 if Mike Easley should become the Democratic nominee.

What about the Republican possibilities?

The political bettors favor John McCain. To get \$100 if he should win the Republican nomination, you would have to put up about \$35.

As in the Democratic race, the second strongest candidate comes from Virginia, Senator George Allen. His \$100 bet would cost you about \$28.

Former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani's bet cost about \$11 and Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney, about \$7; Condoleezza Rice, \$4; Florida Governor Jeb Bush, \$3; Newt Gingrich, \$3; Bill Frist, \$3.

If you are looking for a North Carolina long shot on the Republican side, you can buy a \$100 contract on our Senator Elizabeth Dole for 20 or 30 cents.

Finally, Intrade offers contracts on the party to win 2008 presidential election.

If you are willing to bet about \$47.50, you can get \$100 if the Democratic candidate wins. If you want to bet on the Republicans to win, it will cost about \$51.

Are you tempted by any of these possible bets? A lot of North Carolinians have learned never to underestimate the political skills and attractiveness of John Edwards. Some of them will surely bet on him at the "bargain" price listed for his contracts.

But remember, most gambling in North Carolina is a still a crime.

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CMS restructure: That dog won't hunt

During a recent school board meeting, a series of speakers, including this writer, addressed the board on recommendations of the corporate-appointed task force whose mission was the proposed re-structuring of Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools. And generally, without exception, all speakers expressed opposition to proposals by the Task Force, although a few of these 21 proposals may have some merit.



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Nonetheless, upon review of all Task Force recommendations, I have concluded, metaphorically, that dog won't hunt; that is, collectively, these proposals will do very little, if anything, to address problems of crisis proportions within CMS, especially in relation to blacks. Conversely, many of these recommendations will do far more harm than good for our African American community.

Perhaps the most dangerous of these recommendations is the requirement for at-large elections of board members, after a so-called robust political contest within each district. Indeed and obviously, this recommendation, if accepted, would destroy black political representation that, already, is far too weak, probably providing us with an all-white school board that controls a predominantly black student body, presently around 44 percent of CMS students.

However, we blacks should accept the recommendation that electoral districts should be realigned to reflect growth and demographic changes, but only as these demographic changes are measured by the proportion of students attending CMS, providing blacks with about 44 percent of school board members, in contrast to the present political under-representation.

Unfortunately, there are many other proposals in this Task Force report that should be rejected, categorically. For example, the granting of - charter-like - autonomy to certain high performing (read: predominantly white) schools, when, in fact, it is the so-called low performing (read: predominantly black) schools that need greater autonomy, especially to provide our black students with an African-centered, genuine education, best defined as wholistic development, which they are not receiving now within CMS.

Moreover, we should reject, categorically, the outsourcing of non-instruction services such as transportation, food service, and printing - a proposal that, predictably, will reduce, if not eliminate, many service-oriented jobs presently held by blacks.

Most tragically, these task force recommendations do not address many problems of crisis proportions within CMS that impact negative upon African Americans, as narrated and documented by this author in "The Crisis and Challenge of Black Mis-education in America: Confronting the Destruction of African People Through Euro-centric Public Schools" (2001). Apparently, for example, the task force ignored the critically important insight of Professor Roger Wilkins; that is, we can't have equal outcomes for children whose parents face dreadfully unequal economic circumstances in this life. Bingo!

In essence, since race is a key factor in these unequal circumstances in life, as well as within CMS, the corporate structure that commissioned and paid big bucks for this task force, should have mandated a focus on disproportionate black poverty in Charlotte-Mecklenburg, in conjunction with attention to major, systemic problems within public schools, beyond governance. For example, we need major changes in our Euro-centric curriculum that, presently and perhaps subconsciously, teaches black students to worship white people while, also subconsciously, teaching blacks to hate themselves.

Indeed, many black students are disconnected psychologically from CMS, devoid of a more positive sense of ethnic identity, a major factor in recurring disciplinary problems among our students - problems unheard of when we-blacks had greater control over our students under the old segregated order. Indeed, our historically disadvantaged (read: socio-economically ripped-off) black students and parents have a critical need for an African-centered, truthful-genuine education again, which CMS is not providing.

Additionally, CMS has major race problems in relation to student tracking, especially since many blacks are tracked into dead-end courses or programs that impact adversely upon their education and chances for success in life. And there are many other issues that cry out for attention: the failure to provide ongoing, professional, culturally relevant education for teachers, the use or potential abuse of drugs, such as Ritalin, on students, a paucity of black teachers, especially males, within the system, etc, ad nauseam.

To reiterate and generally, that dog won't hunt, in relation to recommendations of this Task Force. Therefore, we may anticipate, that the more things change, the more they remain the same unless and until all of us better understands the dictum of the late Honorable Elijah Muhammad; that is, those who do not treat you right cannot be expected to teach you right. Accordingly, we blacks must accelerate our efforts to create alternative after-school and weekend educational programs for our academically abused students and parents, while continuing to seek major reforms within CMS, our tax-supported institution.

As author Randall Robinson has noted, in "Quitting America," (white) America will never tell our people's story, fully or accurately. That we must do for ourselves. Amen!

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OUR VOICES

A journey with a testimony

By LaSonya Robinson

SPECIAL TO THE POST

In the beginning the earth was without form and void, and darkness was on the face of the deep. Broken down by the forces of hatred and evil our minds have been enslaved, our freedom to learn, speak and write have been taken from us.

Blacks have endured much torture and punishment, from freedom to slavery has truly been a journey of struggles and challenges. I can only imagine the feeling of those who were mistreated with such cruelty. Slavery began several hundred years ago, it was not until the end of the 14th century that Europeans began to bring slaves into Europe.

Both the Spanish and Portuguese sailors were exploring the coast of Africa trying to establish trade relations, they carried Africans to Europe and made servants of them. By the mid-15th century Europeans were selling in their home markets many African commodities such as fruit, olive oil, gold and Negro slaves, within a few years the slave trade became excepted.

During that time eight hundred slaves were being to Portugal every year; this made preparation for the New World, making slavery and the slave trade profitable. Fastened to a lifetime of slavery the voyage to America was a huge nightmare. There are records of small ships carrying about four hundred slaves at a time. Chained together by twos, hands and feet, the slaves had no room to be free or move about. The millions of Africans being withdrawn from their country constitutes one of the most drastic social revolutions in the annals of history.

That is why black history today is so very important to many. We celebrate the past and present, victories lost and won and the many adversities we had to overcome. Harriet Tubman, Rosa Parks, and Martin Luther King just to name a few of our great leaders that paved the way for our future. Never forget your history for that is what has made us tough, strong, courageous and bold. Black is beautiful, black is gold.

LASONYA ROBINSON lives in Charlotte.

Lowery speaks truth to power

As the funeral of Coretta Scott King wore on, there was a sense in which I thought that she might rise up from the casket and ask where was the legacy to which she and her husband had devoted their lives being memorialized, because it sure wasn't being projected in that house. Then, as if to answer the question, Rev. Joseph Lowery stepped forth to do so. He



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read a poem that was mostly celebratory of Coretta, but near the end he said: "We know now there were no weapons of mass destruction over there, but there are weapons of misdirection right down here. Millions are without health insurance, poverty abounds, for war billions more, but no more for the poor."

The furor over the statement reached heights resembling what might occur if Bin Laden is captured. Both CNN and Fox news ran the Lowery statement, but edited out the 18 seconds of standing applause that followed them. National newspaper headlines all over the country questioned whether Coretta's funeral was the place for "political statements," similar to Chicago Tribune's header that read, "when a pulpit turns to politics."

There never has been a separation between politics and the black church. Rev. Lowery noted in a subsequent interview with Chris Wallace on Fox News, the statement by George H.W. Bush who said he had "never had such an experience like this before" and Bill Clinton called him one of the "frozen chosen" for that remark.

But the remark was also profound in defining the difference that existed for a long time between the black religious experience and white churches. black churches tended to enjoy the black experience because they were the major institution allowed by the slave institution for so long. So, they ran social services such as schools, health clinics and mutual aid societies, but were also the base of the civil rights movements and represented the community to the dominant political structure.

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