

The Charlotte Post

The Voice of the Black Community
 1531 Camden Road Charlotte, N.C. 28203
Gerald O. Johnson CEO/PUBLISHER
Robert L. Johnson CO-PUBLISHER/GENERAL MANAGER
Herbert L. White EDITOR IN CHIEF

EDITORIALS

Why The Post makes political endorsements

For a growing community, it's our duty to provide readers an idea of who best serves our interests

Next week, The Post will publish its recommendations for the Nov. 7 elections. We will endorse candidates for the U.S. House of Representatives, N.C. General Assembly, Mecklenburg County commissioners and bond referendums in order to relay to Post readers what we think are the best choices for Charlotte in general and African Americans in particular. Against that backdrop is the question that is as prevalent as campaign signs this time of year: Why do endorsements at all?

The answer is simple. As the publication of record in the African American community, The Post takes its role as journalistic standard-bearer and Charlotte institution seriously. As a result, we take our leadership role seriously, which means it's our duty to provide insight on what we feel is right for the community in which we live and serve.

So, how do we come to our conclusions on what to support on an election day? There is no one litmus test for candidates. As an organization, we use a combination of factors, starting with candidates' voting records, either in their current positions or previous. We also attend forums, research candidates' websites and interview political observers and neighborhood leaders to determine who can best serve this community.

Is the process perfect? No. But it does represent our efforts to give readers who may be further removed from the political fray to draw their own conclusions. By no means do we expect readers to march in lock-step with everything we suggest. Endorsements are a tool to help voters understand our stance when it comes to the election process and we try to explain why we back a particular candidate or referendum.

At The Post, we endeavor to be fair in weighing candidates' positions on issues, pro and con. In the past, we've gone against the grain of what political activists and pundits figure is the safe route. But that's not the role of newspapers. It takes a mix of ideas and ideals to create a healthy, vibrant community, and the same goes for the political process. As a publication, we have backed relatively conservative candidates over the relatively liberal and whites over blacks. The process is never easy, but it is our best effort at establishing a framework for what we believe is best for the aspirations and hopes of black Charlotte and Charlotte as a whole.

Gorman an apt pupil when it comes to learning district

New Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools Superintendent Peter Gorman hit the ground running when he officially took over in August, and he hasn't slowed down.

Over the past couple of months, Mr. Gorman has met with countless community groups and individuals to get a handle on what makes the state's largest school district tick. Needless to say, he's probably heard from just about everyone who has an opinion — parents, the business community, politicians, teachers, administrators and students. We can only admire his initiative and drive to in Mr. Gorman's words "listen, learn and lead." He's certainly done his share of listening, and we're pretty sure, he's learned an awful lot, too.

After his first semester with CMS, it appears Mr. Gorman is a very apt pupil, soaking up all that there's to know about the district. Education advocates and parents from both ends of the economic, ethnic and geographic spectrum give Mr. Gorman high marks for putting himself in the middle of the fray and being responsive to their concerns. He's even managed to bring the often-fractious school board together to actually work together, something we figured would happen with a massive overhaul of representation.

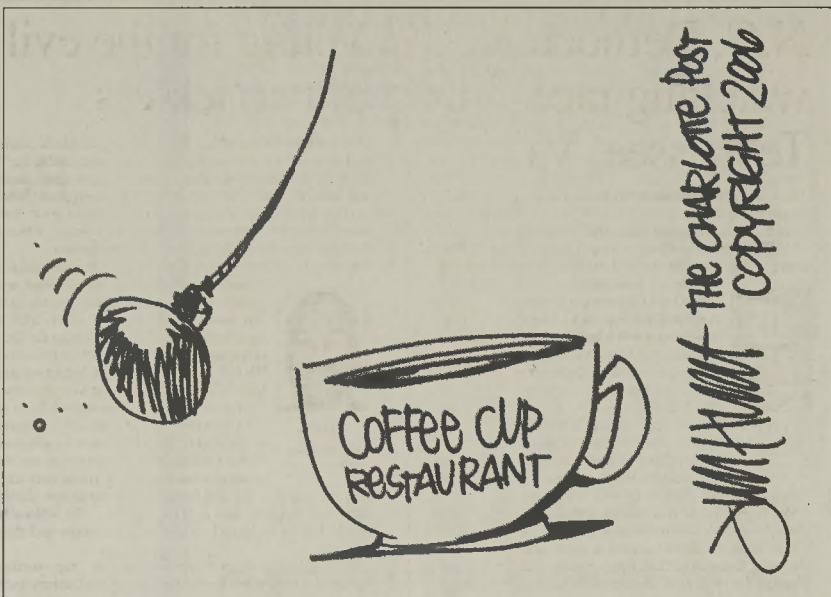
Once he's totally up to speed on the district's needs, Mr. Gorman's pledged to do the due diligence to attack CMS's most pressing issues, which range from overcrowding in the suburbs to inner city schools that historically miss out on the most experienced teachers. Mr. Gorman's go-getter attitude is to be commended, although we think he is overly optimistic at what can be done and when. Regardless, Mr. Gorman is off to a good start and from what we've seen, he deserves a passing grade.

At JCSU, Bulls are golden

Johnson C. Smith University's turnaround from football has been to contend in the Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association is one of Charlotte's best sports stories this year. Not bad, considering the Golden Bulls have been perennial doormats.

JCSU, which is 6-2 going into Saturday's homecoming game against Savannah State University, has earned a boatload of milestones this season. Breaking a 24-game losing streak, winning its first game at Irwin Belk Complex since the building opened in 2003, contending for the West Division championship and perhaps a spot in the Pioneer Bowl. Last week, the Bulls clinched their first winning season since 1998 — before 50 Cent and iPods became household names.

Coach Daryl McNeill, the Bulls' head coach, is an old hand at turnarounds. He took JCSU from disaster to fabulous during a two-year stint from 1995-96, going 7-3 before leaving for Savannah State. Now he's done it again. We congratulate the Bulls, coach McNeill and the administration for having the foresight to bring him back, hopefully for a longer and more successful stay.



Appreciating Jesse Jackson's impact

Jesse Jackson has turned 65 and his birthday coincides with his four decades of service to the Civil Rights Movement.

There is a big bash planned in his honor this Saturday in Chicago and I regret that I will be unable to attend. After covering him for most of my 36 years in journalism, including his 1984 presidential campaign for the Chicago Tribune, it would be a delight



GEORGE E. CURRY

to attend activities that are certain to be part testimonial, part family reunion. Instead of being in Chicago, I'll be in Tennessee, attending my Knoxville College Board of Trustees meeting on homecoming weekend and chairing a search committee that is in the final stages of selecting a new president for my alma mater. As a product of North Carolina A&T, a historically black university in Greensboro, I am sure Rev. Jackson understands the necessity of my not being in Chicago this weekend. We must prepare the next wave of civil rights leaders, many of whom will continue to come from historically black colleges and universities.

Wherever we are this weekend, it will be a good time to step back and reflect on Jackson's lifelong dedication. As a community, we're pretty

brutal in our critique of men and women in public life. We laugh at their foibles, note their voracious craving for publicity and are especially critical when they hop from issue to issue or press conference to press conference, with no follow-up in sight. When you're a public figure, that's all considered fair game.

But we shouldn't stop there. At some point, we should also express our admiration and gratitude to those who spurn lucrative careers in the private sector to keep the spotlight shining on the seemingly intractable issues of racism, unequal education, inadequate housing, unemployment, and criminal injustice. They are the ones, in Jackson's words, who keep hope alive.

Love him or loathe him — or dangle somewhere in between — it is undeniable that Jesse Louis Jackson has spent his entire adult life at the forefront of the battles over civil rights. After leaving the seminary to participate in the Selma-to-Montgomery March that paved the way for passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act, Jesse Jackson has been on the case. In some respects, he has been ahead of his time.

During his 1984 campaign, he often talked about how asinine it was for the United States to have a "no talk" policy toward its most ardent enemies. Talking to one another provided no guarantee that differences would be

settled, Jackson argued. But not talking forestalls any likelihood that parties can set aside their differences, I remember him saying at the time. Today, more than two decades later, we're in an imbroglio with North Korea and like some spoiled kid, we refuse to talk to their leaders. George W. Bush still misunderstands what Jackson understood in 1984.

Journalists covering Jackson's maiden campaign were provided an experience that would also prove to be valuable years later. When Jackson took his low-budget national campaign to New Orleans, we did not head for Bourbon Street. Instead, he took us to the Desire housing project. As a person who grew up in public housing in Tuscaloosa, Ala., I had not seen the likes of poverty and suffering in Desire or the Robert Taylor Homes in Chicago. Even the infamous Pruitt-Igoe, a public housing complex in St. Louis that was deemed such a failure that dynamite was used to level it, could not match the suffering we witnessed in New Orleans. So when Americans were shocked to learn last year that poverty was so widespread in New Orleans, Jesse Jackson had already made that point clear to us during his campaign.

Right-wing critics often accuse Jackson of expecting too much from the federal government. His is a generation that understood that the

federal government, especially for those living in the segregated South, was the government of last resort. But they miss a larger and perhaps more important point: Jesse Jackson is extremely traditional and over the years, he has exhorted students to turn off the TV and get turned on to studying.

Rather than bemoaning race-based white voting patterns, he has challenged African-Americans to increase their voter registration and participation. More than black conservatives, he has practiced self-help. The SCLC, Rainbow/PUSH, National Urban League and NAACP are all self-help organizations. Conservatives don't have a monopoly on self-help.

Finally, my friends, as you lift a toast to Jesse Jackson this weekend, lift one for his courage. I have heard death threats relayed over police radios. I know about the hate mail he receives and I know the sacrifices the Jackson family has made to allow Jesse to be Jesse. And while he and I have disagreed on some issues in the past and will probably do so again in the future, I've never questioned his commitment. It's time to step back and say to Jesse Jackson: Thanks for your unselfish service. We're all the better for it.

GEORGE E. CURRY is editor-in-chief of the NNPA News Service and BlackPressUSA.com. On the Web at www.georgecurry.com.

Time to make work pay for Americans

Tabitha and her husband are raising three sons, ages 8, 6, and 20 months, near Columbus, Ohio. They are both employed. Tabitha



MARIAN WRIGHT EDELMAN

works at check-out at Value City and her husband works at Subway. Both earn the federal minimum wage, \$5.15 an hour, for monthly earnings of \$1,785. Their combined annual earnings of \$21,424 still leave them below the poverty line of \$22,543 for a family with two parents and three children.

Tabitha and her husband are among the 2 million Americans who know that the minimum wage isn't always a living wage. Throughout October, people are joining together across our country to hold Living Wage Days worship services and community events to bring attention to the plight of the working poor. The days of action were sponsored by the Let Justice Roll Living Wage Campaign, a partnership of more than 80 faith,

labor, and community groups formed to mobilize support among Americans for raising the minimum wage at the state and federal levels.

October's events were the latest in a series of similar events Let Justice Roll has mounted to educate people about the tremendous challenges low wage working Americans face and what must be done to bring about change. They've played a leading role in recent state minimum wage increases in Arkansas, Michigan, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia and helped win similar victories in California and Massachusetts.

Why does a living wage matter? Without it, too many Americans are finding that having a job and working hard are still not enough to keep them from being close to or in poverty. Poverty matters — deeply. Poverty kills. It also maims and stunts the growth and eclipses the dreams of hundreds of millions of children around the world.

Here at home, many Americans don't realize that America's poorest residents continue to be worse off than those of almost any other

country in the industrialized world. Poverty in America is a political problem, caused less by a lack of resources than by a failure to come to terms with reality and build the will to change it. It's universally understood that food, shelter, health care, and other basics are crucial to the well-being of children and families. But what our leaders, the news media, and the public largely ignore is that two million workers — many in families like Tabitha's — still lack adequate incomes to provide these basic necessities. As Let Justice Roll puts it, "A job should keep you out of poverty, not in it."

Wages are tied to workers of course, but their children are always directly affected. A childhood spent in poverty can have negative impacts on an individual's entire life. The multiple barriers associated with poverty build on one another and unjustly deprive children of the opportunity to reach their full potential as parents, employees, and citizens. The Children's Defense Fund has identified poverty as the largest driving force behind the Cradle to Prison Pipeline crisis, which leads too many children to margin-

alized lives, prison, and premature deaths. Children in families with annual incomes below \$15,000 are 22 times more likely to be abused or neglected than children in families with annual incomes of \$30,000 or more, and children in poor families are more likely than non-poor children to attend failing schools, get inadequate health care, live in unsafe housing, and suffer poor nutrition.

CDF believes one solution is to support policies that make work pay, including raising the minimum wage to help ensure workers at the bottom of the earnings scale are not left behind and expanding the Earned Income Tax and Child Tax Credits. And all poor working families need to be informed about and helped to get current tax refunds and benefits for which they are eligible. I'm grateful for Let Justice Roll's Living Wage Campaign and others who are helping all Americans see the too invisible working parents who constitute the majority of the poor today.

MARIAN WRIGHT EDELMAN is founder of the Children's Defense Fund.