

# N.C. Democrats watching races in Tennessee, Va.

Last Thursday, President Bush and I were in Richmond, Virginia. We did not get up with each other this time. He did not have time to stop by the offices of the Presbyterian Synod of the Mid-Atlantic where I was busy at a church meeting.



D.G. MARTIN

And I did not have the thousands of dollars it would have cost me to attend the political fundraising event featuring the President.

Bush's event raised about \$500,000 for the campaign to reelect Virginia Senator George Allen. On the same day, former President Bill Clinton was also in Virginia raising about the same amount for Allen's Democratic challenger, James Webb.

Interesting enough, you might say. Then you would ask if the two presidents' visits to Virginia have anything to do with North Carolina.

The high level of fundraising activities signals a very close Senate election in our neighboring state.

Something similar is happening in our neighboring state to the west, Tennessee. That state's senator, Bill Frist, is not running for reelection. Democratic Congressman Harold Ford and Republican Bob Corker are locked in a contest that is very close.

The strong campaigns of the Democratic candidates in Virginia and Tennessee surprised most political experts. Like North Carolina, our neighbor states have been voting strongly Republican in recent presidential elections. None of the three currently has a Democratic senator.

In fact, of the 22 senators from the former states of the Confederacy, only four are Democrats (one each in Florida and Louisiana and two from Arkansas). The South has given the Republican majority in the Senate a reliable bedrock of strength.

Other than John Edwards' victory in 1998, Democrats have not won a Senate election in North Carolina since Terry Sanford's 1988 victory. In the last two Senate elections, Democrats fell short, even with the strong candidacy of Erskine Bowles, who lost to Elizabeth Dole and Richard Burr.

Of course there is no Senate election in North Carolina this year. Two years from now, however, Senator Dole's seat will be on the ballot. While prominent Democrats are already gearing up for statewide races for governor and lieutenant governor, there seems to be very little public discussion of possible Democratic candidates for the Senate.

With the recent Democratic losses in North Carolina Senate races, even with a strong, well-financed candidate like Bowles, it is no wonder that people are not standing in line to take on Dole, assuming she runs for reelection.

The strong Republican hold on southern Senate seats also discourages interest.

But Democrats will be asking whether or not the good showing of Democratic candidates in Tennessee and Virginia might signal an opening for them in North Carolina in the 2008 election.

As they evaluate their prospects, Democrats ought to look at the reasons why the candidacies of Tennessee's Harold Ford and Virginia's James West caught fire.

Ford started as a long shot. If elected, he would be the first African American senator from the South since Reconstruction. He has turned race to his advantage and has carefully campaigned as a moderate, even conservative, on issues that are important to conservative swing voters. For example he has supported a ban on gay marriage, a constitutional prohibition on flag-burning, a repeal of the estate tax, posting the Ten Commandments in courtrooms, and taken "pro-gun" positions.

Ford has also run what some have called the "best" Senate campaign in the country.

James West also started out as a long shot in Virginia. His opponent, Senator Allen, was already being touted as a presidential candidate before he made a few bad mistakes. West was ready to pounce. As a former marine and Republican Secretary of the Navy, he has a crossover appeal other Democrats envy.

If it takes candidates like Ford and West to compete for Senate seats in the South, would North Carolina Democrats be willing to nominate one? Could a moderate-conservative candidate win a Democratic primary?

I don't know.

What I do know is that Democratic Governor Mike Easley has demonstrated an ability to win over conservative swing voters. He cannot run for reelection in 2006. And he began his statewide election career running for the Senate in 1990.

Keep an eye on him.

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# Voting for the evil of two lessers

It's really a shame to say this, but because black people — and everyone else for that matter — are faced with voting for "choices" made by the inner circle of powerbrokers, once again many voters will have to punch the card or touch the corrupted Deibold computer screens while holding our noses. I hear a great deal of talk about voting for the lesser of two evils, but in many of the races it's really a matter of voting for the evil of two lessers.

In what is billed as a precursor for the 2008 presidential election, if Bush doesn't cancel the election that year, black people are again being touted as the group that can determine the outcome of the 2006 election, thus, having the ability to change the face of government from Republican rule to Democratic rule. We will see on November 8, but based on who we have in office now, I am not too optimistic.

First, on the national scene, we have an obstinate "resident" who has proved his incompetence to the world. He still refuses to admit even one mistake during his administration and continues to sacrifice the lives of our young men and women in a war based on lies and deceit. He claims to care about the soldiers but supports cuts in their benefits. His actions belie his words, but we continue to acquiesce to his antics and those of his minions.

Waiting in the wings is his brother, Jeb. Yep, another Bush, member of the Project for the New American Century and the one who participated in the 2000 Florida election debacle, is being touted as the future "resident." And get this, Rudy Giuliani tops the list of prospective candidates for Republicans, followed by John McCain. The outrageous thing is that George Allen, the Senator from Virginia who has a checked past when it comes to his comments about blacks and other ethnic groups, is also on the Republican short list.

On the other side, we have Hillary Clinton and whoever is in second place for the moment, John Kerry, John Edwards, Al Gore, et al. I am sure there will be others moving to the forefront by 2008, but whoever is "chosen" will result in a "Hobson's Choice" for the rest of us, which is really no choice at all.

Bush, Rove, Cheney, Rumsfeld, and Rice are making every attempt to scare the electorate into submission, to keep us so on edge about their impending new war with Iran, which just might be our 2006 "October surprise," and their saber-rattling, paper tiger, emperor with no clothes posture with North Korea.

They are playing us for chumps while they pile up the dollars and euros in their coffers and those of their friends. Remember the words of Dwight Eisenhower: "Only an alert and knowledgeable citizenry can compel the proper meshing of the huge industrial and military machinery of defense with our peaceful methods and goals, so that security and liberty may prosper together." We can clearly see who is prospering in this war economy, can't we?

On a local level, we have candidates running for Congress in both parties who can't wait to get in front of a microphone to say how supportive they are of Israel, which seems to be a litmus test for anyone who is running, even black candidates. Isn't it funny that none of the candidates, black or white, are ever questioned by anyone or ever express their support for Africa, a continent in which you could place 1,000 Israels? Why is Africa not held up as a litmus test, especially for black candidates, but in general for all candidates?

Voters are faced with Hobson's Choices in state, county, and city races this year. Describing many of the races as a vote for the lesser of two evils, I have heard quite a few people say they're just not going to vote for either candidate.

Since several black candidates are running for high office this year, some would have us believe their races are based on "race." It's not a race issue; it's a party issue. Politicians, black or white, who do nothing for Black people should not get your vote, the color of his or her skin notwithstanding. But candidates and their handlers are playing the so-called "race card" to whip black voters into an emotional frenzy rather than deal with us intelligently by engaging in relevant dialogue.

The simple truth is that we are faced with voting for the evil of two lessers in many cases, and we should be politically sophisticated enough to see through the rhetoric and the smokescreens. After all, haven't we heard and seen it all before?

When I see a J.C. Watts defending George Bush and his regime, saying Bush is "protecting American lives," while I simultaneously see thousands of American lives being lost in Iraq and Afghanistan, I want to throw up. When I hear Dick Cheney spout off about how "well" things are going in Iraq, it just makes me sick. These actions alone show you how low politicians and ex-politicians will stoop to keep their game going. Wake up, black folks! Don't vote for anyone connected to or supportive of the Bush regime.

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# China undercuts black economies

"Oh, the wolves are of another mind." It is very strange and downright sad how some of the best pieces of good legislation can be hijacked and used against the very people it is supposed to be benefiting. Not only that, those who think they are representing a certain group of people are the ones who actually pull the "trigger" or drop the "lever" upside their heads.

Such is the case with the so-called "Africa Growth and Opportunity Act." It could have been such a beautiful event but it went the way of greed and advantage for China and those who do business with China. There was a loophole in this legislation that allow "third countries" to be used as substitutes for African countries when it came to textile production. China and sometimes India jumped right in with their processed cotton. As a result, you may buy clothes that say "Made in Kenya" or "Made in Nigeria"

but the reality is the cotton was grown and processed in China. The textile industry in nations such as Nigeria and the cotton farmers from Kenya and other nations have been devastated. This nation through its so-called conscience has, in effect, laid the environment to bring economic devastation to villages and towns throughout Africa.

This third-party exemption was supposed to stop at the end of 2006. But, you know what, the same people who caused it to be, some members of the Congressional Black Caucus included, have surfaced again in an attempt to extend it. Why? As rap mogul P Diddy once proclaimed, "It's all about the Benjamins." Lobbyists representing China and companies that do business with China are slinging cash up on Capitol Hill, causing certain congressmen to do the craziest things. AGOA is supposed to be about Africa doing business with the United States and not third country interference or exploitation. Sadly, that hasn't happen.

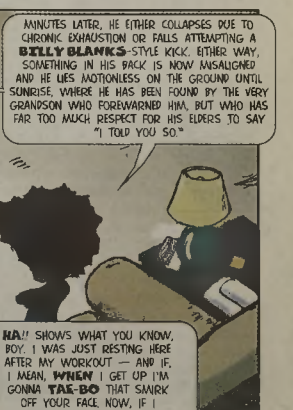
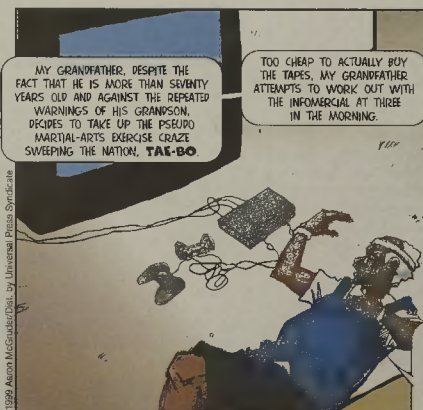
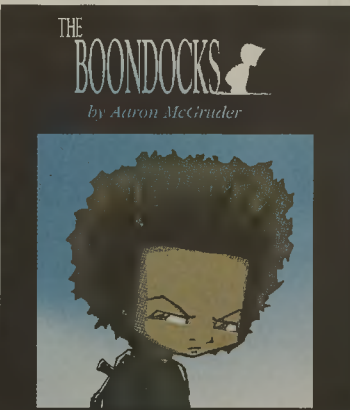
In addition to doing the whammy on Africa again, the greedy have enlarged its appetite for Haiti. The Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA), like AGOA was to open the doors for economic development between the United States and Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic. This time, they got it right in that no third country substitutions can be allowed. But the wolves thought hard and came up with an even more sinister scheme. They are proposing to extend the exemption clause in AGOA but also make it applicable to Haiti.

Why Haiti? It's simple. They can cram China cotton into Haiti and block any textile business in the CAFTA nations. Keep in mind that millions of people of African descent live and work in CAFTA nations. The Dominican Republic, which shares an island with Haiti, is 60 percent Black. It is quickly developing textiles under CAFTA via business with the United States. It also employs many Haitians. When China gets its hooks into Haiti, there won't be anymore textile activity in the Dominican Republic or anywhere else in CAFTA. Like AGOA and Africa, they are going to devastate people of color. Meanwhile, Haiti will get some menial jobs but no business ownership or wealth creation. The clients of the lobbyists will continue to make big time profits at the expense of Americans and workers in the Diaspora. Haiti is getting set up and doesn't see it coming.

We are going to Capitol Hill this week with the Kenya Chamber of Commerce to expose the sad history on these actions and to express our dismay. We need to let those who want to hear the truth understand just what damage is being done and how real black folk deserve a better deal. If it weren't for the love of money, quick sinister money, we would not have to do this. Sometimes I want to scream and cry at the same time. We have to go and find white folk who will be fair minded and step up to do the right thing. Black folks who should be in the vanguard of the opposition. Associations that claim to be focused on Africa are actually brain dead when it comes to economic empowerment and financial freedom. We will win this fight but it is going to take some serious calling out and unfortunate confrontation with people of my own color.

Ignorance is not bliss and someday we will be able to school our own to do the right thing. Please remember — there is nothing slier than for-hire Negro lobbyists selling out their own people for a few crumbs off the table (or under it).

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(SIGH) LET'S SEE IF I CAN GUESS WHAT HAPPENED HERE

MY GRANDFATHER, DESPITE THE FACT THAT HE IS MORE THAN SEVENTY YEARS OLD AND AGAINST THE REPEATED WARNINGS OF HIS GRANDSON, DECIDES TO TAKE UP THE PSEUDO MARTIAL-ARTS EXERCISE GOATZ SWEEPING THE NATION. YAY-BO

TOO CHEAP TO ACTUALLY BUY THE TAPES, MY GRANDFATHER ATTEMPTS TO WORK OUT WITH THE INFOCOMMERCIAL AT THREE IN THE MORNING.

ANNULATES LATER, HE EITHER COLLAPSES DUE TO CHRONIC EXHAUSTION OR FALLS ATTEMPTING A BILLY BLANKS-STYLE KICK. EITHER WAY, SOMETHING IN HIS BACK IS NOW MAUSAGED AND HE LIES MOTIONLESS ON THE GROUND UNTIL SUNRISE, WHERE HE HAS BEEN FOUND BY THE VERY GRANDSON WHO FORSAWHEARD HIM, BUT WHO HAS FAR TOO MUCH RESPECT FOR HIS ELDERS TO SAY "I TOLD YOU SO."

HA!! SHOWS WHAT YOU KNOW, BOY. I WAS JUST RESTING HERE AFTER MY WORKOUT — AND IF I HADN'T, WHEN I GET UP I'M GONNA YAY-BO THAT SWIRK OFF YOUR FACE NOW, IF I CAN'T KICK GET A LITTLE HARD

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