

# Local Elections Fail to Attract Many Minority Candidates

BY ROCHELLE KLASKIN  
ASSISTANT CITY EDITOR

Seventeen percent of all elected officials in Chapel Hill and Carrboro are minorities.

And if all of the candidates who represent minorities win during the local election Tuesday, that number could increase to 30 percent.

## The Black Community

While some minority leaders, elected officials and candidates said they wished their communities could be represented by more African Americans, they understood why they were not.

James Brittan, president of the Chapel Hill-Carrboro chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, said Chapel Hill and Carrboro didn't have a large black population like Durham County, which was the reason for the lack of black candidates.

In Chapel Hill, 13 percent of the community is black, and in Carrboro, it's 17 percent. Not enough time and resources was the number-one reason why many black leaders said there were not many black candidates running.

"There is a reluctance of the African-American community to enter various local races because of the time commitment. They can help those who are running for the short-term but not the long-term," school board candidate Mark Royster said.

Council member Barbara Powell said she believed the large time commitment discouraged minorities whether they were

younger or older. "I think that people find it too time consuming when they are working and have children, and once they are retired, they may not want to be bothered," she said.

School board candidate LaVonda Burnette said candidate stereotypes needed to be broken. "People don't think they are qualified to win, unless they have a Ph.D. For the school board, all you need to be is a concerned parent," she said.

Sen. Howard Lee, D-Orange, who became the first black mayor in North Carolina when he was elected in Chapel Hill in 1969, said whoever ran for an elected position sacrificed a great deal of time, resources and personal life. But Lee said elected bodies should not measure progress by how many minorities held positions.

"I take a different perspective. I don't look at how many minorities are elected, but if we have the best people serving our community. Even if there were no minorities, I don't think we should judge the attitude of the community as being racist or prejudiced," he said. "Chapel Hill has a strong history of being willing to elect minorities and those who are different."

Brittan said he believed there weren't as many blacks running because they didn't want to run against each other. "The black community wants to unite for one black candidate to make sure that there is at least one black candidate elected to office. The community doesn't want to show that they are not united. Difference in the white community is called diversity, but in the black community it's called division."

Some African-American candidates said

they felt a heavier responsibility to represent their minority communities.

Royster said: "You are no longer an individual — you are representing a section of the population. We do feel a need to make certain decisions that are conducive to the concerns of the minority community, but we have to balance those concerns with the community as a whole."

Carrboro mayoral candidate Hilliard Caldwell said he looked at his role as elected official in a broader sense than just black and white. "I'm not just a black candidate, I'm a candidate for the people of Carrboro."

Carrboro alderman candidate Hank Anderson III said African Americans tended to concentrate on state and national elections rather than local ones.

"African Americans see the bad side of politics," Anderson said. "They look to the national and state levels because they don't see hope at the local level. At the local level, the issues are not the concern of African Americans."

## The Gay and Lesbian Community

When Joe Herzenberg resigned from the Chapel Hill Town Council, he left the political world in North Carolina with no openly gay elected official.

Mike Nelson said he hoped to change that on Tuesday in the Carrboro aldermen race. "If I were elected, I would be the only openly gay elected official between Florida and New York. That's a pretty sad state of affairs," he said.

The movement to elect gay officials is in its infancy, but it is making progress, he said.

Herzenberg said that historically, this area had been a good atmosphere for the gay and lesbian community because of its liberal attitudes. "It's important to have a gay presence. We just want our fair share, and getting it would be easier if there were more representation," he said.

Herzenberg added that he may not have resigned if Nelson weren't running for a seat in Carrboro. "My chief regret (of resigning) is that there is not a gay or lesbian official in this part of the world," he said.

Doug Ferguson, founder of Orange Lesbian and Gay Association, said that although gay and lesbian issues and concerns could be addressed by heterosexual officials, it was not their first priority.

"Despite promises a straight candidate may make, they don't understand the dire importance of civil rights for gays and lesbians. Take Bill Clinton, for example," Ferguson said. "We elected someone who we thought was an advocate and now he's barely an ally."

Nelson said that if elected, he would feel a heavy responsibility to represent the gay and lesbian community. "Whenever a community has been so locked out of the debate and denied having a seat at the table, if a candidate is elected, then he or she should live up to the responsibility and be that voice for the community," he said.

## Women

In Carrboro and Chapel Hill, 43 percent of elected officials are women.

Carrboro Mayor Eleanor Kinnaird said women were well-represented in the area. "This community is very responsive to

women's concerns. The people in this community are very aware of women's issues."

Many leaders said they thought the opportunities for women to become involved in local politics had increased throughout the years.

Katherine Emerson, spokeswoman for the Orange County Women League of Voters, said, "We take great satisfaction that there has been no barrier based on sex."

Janet Allen, state president of the National Organization for Women, said women would continue to be a minority in the political world until 50 percent of all elected officials were women.

"Until women are naturally elected to 50 percent of both the town council and aldermen, I see it as a problem," she said.

Women will support feminist issues like reproductive choice, family issues and violence against women, Allen said. But she added that she thought female elected officials did face undue burdens to represent women as a whole.

"If you are a white male, no one ever says you are speaking for all men. But when you are woman or an African-American, they do," she said.

Powell, who is the first African-American woman to serve on the council, said that women were more sensitive to certain issues, like civil rights.

Kinnaird also said women had a different style of management.

"Women will generally be much more open to hearing everyone and arrive at a consensus," she said. "There aren't any top-down decisions."

## Campus Calendar

### MONDAY

3:30 p.m. The Statistics Department will present Leonard Smith, from the Oxford University Mathematical Institute, speaking on "Predicting Chaos and Exploiting Nonlinearity: Promises and Limitations" in 324 Phillips Hall.

4 p.m. The Writing Center will present "Writing an Analytical Essay" in 222 Greenlaw Hall.

4:15 p.m. N.C. Hillel Mitzvah Corps will meet at Hillel to prepare dinner for the IFC Kitchen.

5:30 p.m. CUAB Public Relations Committee will meet in Union 213.

6 p.m. UNC American Chemical Society Student Affiliates will host a Chemistry 99/undergraduate research forum in 308 Venable Hall.

7 p.m. Tar Heel Recycling Program will meet in the Campus Y for Recycling Week.

The Executive Branch of Student Awareness is holding a panel forum in the North Dining Hall of Lenoir to discuss UNC's slip in national rankings.

CUAB will kick off Rape Awareness Week with a "Take Back the Night" march and a Tracy Drach empowerment concert in the Pit.

7:30 p.m. The UNC Ballroom Dance Club will tango in the Women's Gym.

### ITEMS OF INTEREST

Phi Sigma Pi, national honor fraternity, will sponsor a clothes drive for the Orange County Women's Center. Clothes will be collected in Union 230.

WAR, RAP and POWER will have a table in the Pit until Thursday for the Victim Assistance Fund to pay for rape victims' medical bills.

Elections Board will accept petitions for anyone interested in running for the Student Congress Dist. 7 seat. Petitions are available in Union Suite C. They are due at 5 p.m. today.

## For the Record

In Friday's article "Congress Finds Extra Money for Appropriations," Student Body President Jim Copland was misquoted as saying the BCC could request student funds. The quote should have said the BSM, not the BCC — which is not a student group — could ask Student Congress for funding.

The DTH regrets the error.

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PAID POLITICAL ANNOUNCEMENT

**VOTE TO RE-ELECT ALAN RIMER**

**CHAPEL HILL TOWN COUNCIL**

Alan is an adjunct faculty member in the Department of City and Regional Planning.

Graduate students endorsing Alan include:

Thomas Cook	Matt Lawlor	Pat Byker
Chris Steele	Toby Kennedy	Charles Vester

Paid for by the Committee to Re-Elect Alan E. Rimer

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