

North Carolina set for battle

Candidates fight for the Tarheel State

By Will Cornelius
STAFF WRITER

In every election year, lines are drawn and battleground states emerge. In 2008, a year of many firsts, North Carolina emerged as a battleground state for the first time in three decades. Since 1976, Republicans have won a virtually uncontested North Carolina. Although Clinton came close in 1992, North Carolina has remained red since the Carter Administration.

"North Carolina has been a reliable Republican state where conservative, low-tax, smaller government principles resonate with voters," said Buzz Jacobs, Sen. John McCain's campaign manager for the Southeast.

Every year, North Carolina has more registered Democrats than Republicans and features Democratic candidates in most state offices. How can North Carolina vote blue statewide and red nationally?

"Historically, it hasn't been Democrats versus Republicans, but rather progressive versus regressive," said Assistant Professor of history Alvis Dunn.

"Democratic presidential candidates, with their Northern accents, were easily painted as not like us," said Dunn. "They didn't have

the same values, and the Republicans played this off beautifully."

The Democratic Party, well aware of their political frailty in Southern states, have taken the steps necessary to appeal to and win North Carolina in 2008. "Democrats failed to put together a message that appeals to North Carolina (in the past)," said Matt Clausen, president of College Democrats. "It really

"Historically, it hasn't been Democrats versus Republicans, but rather progressive versus regressive. Democratic presidential candidates, with their Northern accents, were easily painted as not like us. They didn't have the same values, and the Republicans played this off beautifully."

Alvis Dunn, assistant professor of history

hasn't hit hard in North Carolina until this year."

Democrats feel that their candidate, Sen. Barack Obama, represents a more progressive vision and better connects with the southern population than Democratic candidates previously. In his attempt to turn North Carolina from red to blue, Sen. Obama has presented

many plans to increase manufacturing jobs and decrease both unemployment and the number of uninsured North Carolinians.

"I'm going to keep on talking about the issues that matter. I'm going to talk about healthcare and education. I'm going to talk about energy. I'm going to keep on standing up for hard-working families who aren't getting a fair shake in this economy," said Sen.

Obama in a recent rally in Asheville, N.C. The message differs slightly than Democratic arguments of the past. Obama has established himself as a voice of change and reason, and appeals to the progressive side of North Carolina.

"The population and demographics of North Carolina have changed drastically

in the last 10-15 years," said Dunn. In 2004, 3.5 million North Carolinians voted. Also, between 1996 and 2006, North Carolina has seen the emergence of 1.5 million new legal residents. This increase in new voters has left Democrats confident in their ability to conquer the once unobtainable North Carolina.

In addition to new residents, an increasing number of out-of-state Democrats are registering to vote in North Carolina. "Out-of-state kids are voting here, registering here. These kids are from Democratic states, voting Democratic here," said Clausen. "These are the people leading the charge for Obama in North Carolina."

The times have changed. Or have they? Although there is an obvious shift of demographics to big banks, big cities, and higher education, North Carolina is still a battleground for the progressive.

The dynamics of politics are difficult to predict and erratic in nature. But one thing is for certain, North Carolina is no longer automatically red.

Even in the event of a Republican win in 2008, North Carolina will continue to straddle the fence in upcoming elections and hold strong as a battleground state for years to come.

Spain opens controversial inquiry into disappearances during Franco regime

By Kylie Gilliams
STAFF WRITER

A Spanish judge has opened an investigation into the disappearance of approximately 114,000 opponents of Gen. Francisco Franco during his administration.

Judge Baltasar Garzon has ordered 19 mass graves to be excavated.

"These days, crimes against humanity are a burning issue, wherever you look in the world, be it Afghanistan, Iraq or Darfur - enough countries to make you realize that this theme never ceases to make the news, just as the fight against this scar, this impunity, never ceases," Garzon told the BBC.

"And if we are referring to the investigations being carried out in Spain in relation to universal justice or eras gone by, then justice needs to follow its course within the parameters of the law," said Garzon. "That is what we judges try to do."

The investigation is focusing on the fate of those who opposed Franco and his regime.

Over a 15-year period, many dissenters went missing and are presumed to have been killed. "It's important for people to know the atrocities of war so that we don't look at what the military does with rose-colored glasses," said senior Maria Kupper who studied in Madrid last fall.

"It's going to show the world how scary it is when you have any kind of fascist or militarized power take control."

The disappearances began with the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1936.

Franco initiated a military coup which turned into a three-year struggle. However, even after the war ended, his regime allegedly continued to execute its opponents.

Franco's reign lasted until his death in 1975. The disappeared are believed to be buried in the mass graves. Although they have been excavated before, this is the first official investigation into the deaths of the people inside

"It was virtually genocide," historian Ian Gibson told the BBC, "It came from the top, it was systematic, and they had planned it before the war began. Documents exist showing that, if the coup failed, they would set in motion this policy

"These days, crimes against humanity are a burning issue, wherever you look in the world, be it Afghanistan, Iraq or Darfur - enough countries to make you realize that this theme never ceases to make the news, just as the fight against this scar, this impunity, never ceases."

Judge Baltasar Garzon

of extermination."

However, Garzon's investigation has provoked controversy on all sides.

Conservatives argue that it breaks a law passed in 1977 that pardons misdeeds committed by all sides during and after the war.

Some of the families of victims also oppose the investigation. The relatives of Federico Garcia Lorca, a poet and one of the most famous disappeared, want to preserve the grave site as a testament to those buried there.

"We should not disturb the dead ... and his fame should serve to protect that place," the poet's niece, Laura Lorca, said to the BBC.

Supporters argue that the benefits outweigh the problems.

The point is to recover their memory, so that people know that they fought for their cause," said Alfonso Abad Mancheño, assistant professor of Spanish. "That means that you open some wounds and it is always uncomfortable to open wounds. But I think that sometimes we learn from



In Spain, judge **Baltasar Garzon** (left) has ordered the excavation of 19 mass graves to investigate the deaths of General **Francisco Franco's** political enemies.

the past."

"It's important from a historical perspective to know what happened, because secrets in history tend to perpetuate future problems," said Kupper. "Opening this investigation will also mean that Spain could establish their values in a new way, and by values I mean accepting multiple political opinions and having the freedom to do so."