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Parents Are Legitimate

People's Alliance Addresses Durham Schools Merger

By Donald E. Mason
 "We know that many black parents fear that merger will mean a loss of control, the denial of their children, and the loss of black administrators and school board members. These fears are legitimate. They must be addressed. And yet, at the same time, we must rectify the wrong that unjustly separates our children from our community." These were the words of Michael E. Freemark,

chairman of the Education Committee of the People's Alliance, a Durham political action organization, as he discussed the Alliance's proposal to be presented first to the County Commissioners and then to the school board. The pronouncement was made Monday during a press conference at the Durham County Library auditorium.
 Although merger is not a solution to all of the education

problems in the city of Durham, the People's Alliance points out that merger will ensure equitable funding of the school system, lend credibility to all of the public schools in Durham, and provide educational opportunities for Durham's children.

"We call it a proposal for unity and opportunity," Freemark said. "Unity because this proposal will unify our community in support of education; opportunity because it will bring new educational opportunities to the children of Durham."

Freemark said that the People's Alliance proposal consists of three components, and all three must be fulfilled to make the merger plan a success. "First, in a unified school system we must focus on the educational achievement of all our children," he said. "Second, we must establish goals to remedy the racial imbalance that now exists between the city and county schools; third, we must ensure that racial minorities are represented in positions of authority in the merged system."

It is commonly accepted in Durham that county schools facilities are better than those of the city and that a higher caliber of courses is offered.

Freemark said that the merger would make a big difference in the African American community because it would allow its members to have the same opportunities as whites. "We consider the separation of races intolerable," he said. "The plan would eliminate the racial imbalance that exists."

There has been some speculation and fear that in a merged system, disadvantaged, high risk children will come in from the city schools and create problems by merging with the students from the county schools.

"Studies show and prove that disadvantaged and underprivileged kids actually do quite well in a merged system. Also in this system, every child has the opportunity to take the same courses," Freemark explained.

Freemark believes that it is imperative that African American school board members and administrators retain their positions in the merged system. "It is also essential that the members of the new school board come from diverse communities and truly represent the people they are to serve," he said. "However, we also believe that the school board should be responsive to the community at large and we think that this is best accomplished by electing the chairperson of the unified school board by a community-wide vote."



DR. CHARLES D. JOHNSON, a member of the medical school faculty and physician at Duke University, and president-elect of the National Medical Association, was awarded the Julian Abele Award Friday by the Black Graduate and Professional Student Association during its annual awards and recognition banquet.

At right is Dr. Martina Bryant, a finalist for the Abele Award, Ms. Rhonda Collins (left) is the scholarship recipient. Julian Abele was the African American architect who designed Duke University's West Campus.

Conclusion of Conference 'Voters Rights Act Has Not Empowered Blacks'

By Chester A. Higgins, Sr.
 (Capitol News Service)
 WASHINGTON, DC —

It has been 25 years since Congress passed the Voting Rights Act of 1965 following the bloody trampling of civil rights protesters by Alabama state troopers at Selma's Edmund Pettus bridge.

Since that time millions of blacks have been added to the voters rolls; the number of black elected officials jumped from a few hundred to 1,459 in 1970 and zoomed to 7,226 by January, 1989, according to the Joint Center For Political and Economic Studies. Among these are scores of black mayors, some in the principal cities of the nation — Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, Philadelphia, New Orleans. The legislatures of many states, principally in the Old South — in Virginia, Alabama, Mississippi, Georgia, Louisiana — have seen a precipitous rise in minority members, mostly black elected officials and women.

The Rev. Jesse Jackson has enlivened a slumbering nation with astounding showings in presidential races of 1984 and 1988. And finally, a black — Virginia's L. Douglas Wilder — has been elected governor, the first in the nation's history.

As a result of the enactment of the VRA, have minorities been empowered?

The consensus of a two-day conference (April 5-7) in

Washington, DC, of civil rights activists and scholars, is a firm "No." The conference addressed the theme: "Key To Empowerment? The Voting Rights Act of 1965." It was sponsored by American University's history department and the National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution.

Robert Moses, of legendary Mississippi Summer Project fame, said America must produce again the student activists of the 1960's who declared: "Families as usual won't do; education as usual won't do; politics as usual won't do; economics as usual won't do, and business as usual won't do." These revolutionaries (Student NonViolent Coordinating Committee and Congress of Racial Equality members, and others) were willing to give up their lives for the cause of justice and equality and empowerment.

Noted historian John Hope Franklin, of Duke University, opened the conference with a ringing keynote address, castigating conservative and reactionary administration policies that have made this nation a "third world country," fiscally and spiritually. Howard Zinn, of Boston University, said that while VRA enactment was important, it is "just a thing" like the U.S. Constitution, a piece of paper, if the people through their actions and commitments do not breathe life

into it. He cited both the Constitution which originally held Blacks to be less than full citizens and the enactment of the 15th Amendment 95 years ago which guaranteed minorities the right to vote, as examples of "things" until the people through their action made them work for all.

Ms. Anne Braden, co-chair, Southern Organizing Committee for Economic Justice, said one good thing VRA did was to permit "people to legitimately organize". Before its enactment, she pointed out, American workingmen, especially in the South, faced police harassment, arrest and terror. Election of black mayors in the South was also another positive VRA accomplishment, she said. These mayors cleaned up the police force and ended wanton killing of blacks by police. Blacks also voted for referendums; that aided museums, and public education.

Allan Lichtman a professor at American University, said VRA enactment, however, is not the cure-all, just as the passage of affirmative action regulation does not mean that after three hundred years of brutal oppression, black people now start out even. Work must be done to achieve equality and empowerment.

Other outstanding panelists included: Ed Brown, who has succeeded John Lewis, now a congressman from Georgia, as
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News Briefs

DE KLERK REJECTS BLACK RULE, MANDELA SAYS KEEP UP PRESSURE
 JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA — South Africa's reformist President F.W. de Klerk recently firmly rejected the possibility of majority rule saying by blacks were "unacceptable" to the country's white minority. Although long assumed, this marked the first time de Klerk has detailed his views.

Fundamentally, de Klerk's views do not differ from those of previous white rulers of the nation which is 70% black. The only concession offered by de Klerk was a "power sharing" arrangement under which blacks would finally be granted political rights but whites would maintain veto power.

Meanwhile, attending a concert in his honor in London, England, African National Congress leader Nelson Mandela called upon the world to "keep up the pressure" on the racist white government. He added, "It won't be long now before apartheid is dead and buried." Apartheid is the system used by the white minority to deny political and basic human rights to the black majority.

RALPH ABERNATHY, KING AIDE, LEFT PROUD LEGACY

ATLANTA, GA. — "The grandson of a slave who helped lead the fight for civil rights." Those were the words used by one friend to describe the legacy of civil rights pioneer Dr. Ralph David Abernathy. Abernathy died of a heart attack in an Atlanta hospital recently.

Abernathy was generally considered the number two man of the modern civil rights movement. He was second in command of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference — the organization he helped Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. build and lead.

However, in recent years, Abernathy had come under attack. In 1980, he angered many blacks by endorsing the presidential bid of Ronald Reagan. And most recently, he was criticized for his autobiography in which he detailed alleged extra-marital affairs by Dr. King.

BLACK MAY EMERGE TO CHALLENGE CONSERVATIVE HELMS

RALEIGH — Whether arch-conservative U.S. Senator Jesse Helms can be defeated this year may be determined in large part by a black, former Charlotte mayor, Harvey Gantt.

Observers believe that Gantt has a good chance of winning the Democratic party primary on May 8, because of his strong base of support among the state's blacks. None of the white candidates in the primary is generating much voter enthusiasm.

If Gantt does become the Democratic challenger to the Republican Helms he will face a tremendous battle. Helms is well funded and has a powerful organization. Blacks and liberals would like to see Helms defeated. He has used his powerful position in the Senate to oppose civil rights legislation, tried to block the national holiday in honor of slain civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and has generally opposed social legislation beneficial to minorities.

BLACK COLLEGE ENROLLMENT UP, MOSTLY FOR FEMALES

WASHINGTON, D.C.— Figures released recently by the U.S. Department of Education show black college enrollment increased in the late 1980's after nearly a 10-year period of decline. However, the bulk of the increase was among black females able and willing to go to college. The increase for black males was slight.

Overall, there are over 200,000 more black women attending college than black men.

During the 1986 to 1988 period, the number of black females in college rose by 41,000 to 687,000. By contrast the number of black men in college rose by only 7,000 to 443,000.

PRINCE SUPPORTS BOSCHWITZ

MINNEAPOLIS — Black pop music star Prince apparently gave \$2,000 to the re-election campaign of Republican Senator Rudy Boschwitz. Boschwitz's record on black-related issues is considered weak. It is unclear why Prince donated to his campaign.

BLACK NATIONAL ANTHEM RECORDED TO MARK 90TH ANNIVERSARY

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The Black National Anthem was recorded recently as a pop-gospel hit by songstress Melba Moore. The recording was done to mark the 90th anniversary of the writing of the anthem "Lift Every Voice And Sing" by James Weldon Johnson. Proceeds from song sales will benefit the NAACP, United Negro College Fund and the National Association for Sickle Cell Disease.



BEIRUT — The eight Americans held by the Islamic Jihad. Robert Polhill, third from left on top row, has been released leaving seven Americans in the hostage. Polhill has been deemed well despite being malnourished and slightly dehydrated. The other

hostages are from left, top row: Joseph Cicippio, Terry Anderson, Polhill, Alan Steen; bottom row from left are: Edward Austin Tracy, Frank Reed, Thomas Sutherland and Jesse Turner. (UPI Photo)