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On why we should celebrate King's birthday

To The Editor:

Why should we celebrate Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday? For myself, I began to understand why when I contemplated what this nation might be like without his courageous leadership and stand for civil rights. I had forgotten what it was like in the years before he walked the road to freedom, filling streets across the nation with people who would never again be shunned in alleys of despair. Over the years, I had taken for granted the freedom he helped to ensure for all of us.

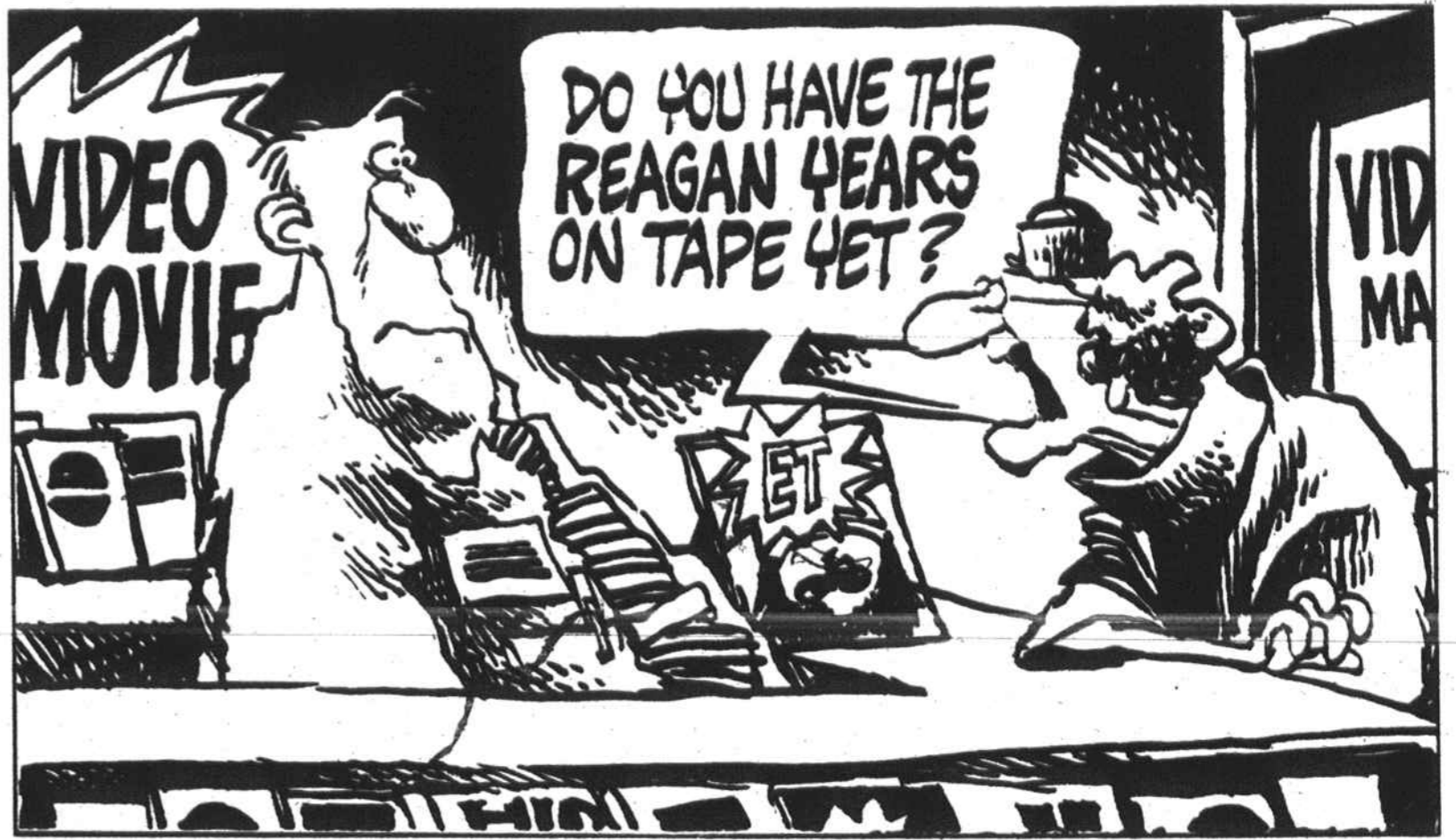
Racial inequality, religious intolerance and other civil crimes are condemnable. The few who forward or defend these crimes do so for their own selfish interests to the damnation of many.

Dr. King rose above these vested interests and a nation's complacency and ignorance to direct us all back to the inspired truths on which this nation is founded. This is commendable!

L. Ron Hubbard, internationally acclaimed and best-selling author of "Dianetics," once wrote: "The price of Freedom: constant alertness, constant willingness to fight back. There is no other price."

Ms. Editor, I hope you and all of your readers will join, as I am, in acknowledging Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. this year for his willingness to pay the price of Freedom. Thank you, Martin, thank you very much.

Sharyn Runyon
Los Angeles



CHRONICLE MAILBAG

Our Readers Speak Out

Wish-I-Could

To The Editor:

We want to tell you about Wish-I-Could of North Carolina Inc. in hopes that you will support us in our dream of fulfilling the special wishes of very special children.

Wish-I-Could of North Carolina is a locally formed non-profit, tax-exempt organization that will try to grant a wish to any child between the ages of 1 and 18 who is suffering from a chronic or terminal

illness. The child must be under the care of a North Carolina medical doctor.

We are a small group of dedicated volunteers, working together to bring special moments to children whose lives are filled with pain, fear, tears and, oftentimes, the threat of death. We cannot give to them the gift of health, but we can give to each child and his or her family ... their wish come true.

Our Executive Board will consider every wish we receive and grant as many as possible. We are

fortunate to have Dr. Barry Golembe, pediatrician at the Nalle Clinic, as our medical adviser.

How can you make a wish happen? If you know of a child who would qualify, please send for a request form or notify the family about our group. If you would like to make a contribution or to receive more information, please write to us or call us at (704) 554-9477.

With your help and support, we can continue to make dreams come true. Thank you for helping us to make miracles happen for children.

Jan L. Hargett
President

All eyes on the school board

THE comments and forewarnings issued by Dr. Barbara K. Phillips during the noonday celebration of Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday should not go unheeded.

Phillips talked about the need for parents to become more involved in the education of their children. She talked about how crucial it is for parents to know what classes their children are taking, the need for parents to get to know the people who are teaching their children.

She also cited the need for some parents to pay closer attention to their children's personal care needs and to attend school board meetings in order to know what is being decided about the welfare of our children.

We agree wholeheartedly with Phillips on these issues. But, Phillips conspicuously sidestepped the issue of her candidacy for the position of superintendent of the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools. She declined to say even if she had applied for the position.

However, sources close to the school board have confirmed that Phillips is among 14 semifinalists who have been recommended for the position. She is one of two Afro-American semifinalists, both of whom are women.

The other Afro-American semifinalist, Dr. Gerry House, superintendent of the Chapel Hill/Carrboro City Schools, has stated that she was not "actively seeking a change." In fact, House says that the school board's attorney, Doug Pungler, asked her to apply for the position.

Although House did not specifically state that she is not interested in the job, we wonder how likely it is that she would accept the job if it was offered to her. Her husband is a full-time graduate student at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill presently working on his dissertation.

We are also wondering about what motivated Pungler to solicit an application from House. We've watched the school board long enough now to know that there is cause for suspicion.

Out of 42 initial applications and 14 semifinalists, we find it odd that only two are Afro-American; one just happens to be Phillips, and the other happens to be someone who doesn't seem to be really interested in the position.

School board officials insist that they are unable to tell us how many of the initial 42 applicants were Afro-Americans. They say such information is not readily discernible on the applications.

While we have long supported Phillips for the position of superintendent, our guess is that several of the 42 applicants were well-qualified Afro-Americans who had a genuine interest in the position.

Why then would school officials reach out to someone who had not demonstrated an interest?

Ostensibly, it would give them a shield against charges of racism when they deny the position to Phillips. If they can offer the position to an Afro-American who turns it down (like they expect that she would) then they don't have to listen to charges that they just didn't want an Afro-American to head our local school system.

Is this just conjecture? Maybe. But we suggest that all interested individuals pay close attention to what goes on with the superintendent's selection over the next month.

The board plans to choose three to five finalists Feb. 6 whom they say will be presented to the public around Feb. 10. So, it seems we've got a date with the school board in February. Let's be there.

CHRONICLE CAMERA

Why participate in a march for Martin Luther King ?

Afro-Americans took to the streets in major cities and towns across the United States in the tradition of 1960s' protest marches in commemoration of what would have been the 60th birthday of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Federal and state offices, uni-

versities, public schools and many local businesses were closed Monday in honor of the slain civil rights leader.

Forty-four states now officially observe the King holiday. Arizona, Idaho, Montana, South Dakota, Wyoming and New

Hampshire do not.

King began his non-violent civil rights movement in December of 1955 when the then 26-year-old doctor of philosophy and pastor agreed to participate in a boycott of the Montgomery city bus system.

He was elected president of the Montgomery Improvement Association and helped organize a 300-car car pool to pick up former bus riders.

King took a stand to advocate Mohandas Ghandi's theories of passive resistance in the midst of

the boycott and the jailing of himself and 300 others.

The non-violent King was the victim of an assassin's bullet at 6 p.m. April 4, 1968.

Less than a week after her husband's assassination, Coretta Scott King led a memorial march

in Memphis, Tenn.

In memory of King, and in celebration of his dream daily becoming a reality, more than 300 city residents participated in a march Jan. 16. The Chronicle asked youth why they chose to participate in the march.



"It's Martin Luther King's birthday. That means love, freedom and opportunity."

Brendan Thompson



"Martin Luther King's birthday and he's the man who gave us freedom."

Brannon McCullough



"Because I feel he had a great speech."

Bernetha Chandler



"Because I feel Martin Luther King should be remembered for what he did for black people and for all people"

Denise McIwain

President Reagan 'rides off into the sunset'

NEW YORK -- Ronald Reagan rides off into the sunset, ending an extraordinary eight-year presidency that leaves a legacy we'll be struggling with for a long time to come.

The Reagan era began with the worst recession since the Great Depression of the 1930s, something a lot of people conveniently forget in the euphoria of the long economic recovery that followed.

President Reagan is one of the few presidents to have largely

TO BE EQUAL

By JOHN E. JACOB

achieved the goals he set for himself when he came to office -- lower tax rates, a big defense buildup, federal withdrawal from social programs and less government.

I suppose that says a lot for his leadership abilities, especially since public opinion polls consistently showed that most people disagreed with him on specific issues.

But the price exacted by meeting his policy goals has been awesome. The combination of lower taxes and sky-high defense spending led to the extraordinary deficits that will handcuff President Bush in the years to come.

Some people see the deficits as a flaw in President Reagan's strategy of lowering tax rates to produce higher revenues that pay for the military expansion. But the result has been to get the federal debt lev-

els so high that Congress would be unable to pass new social programs or to expand old ones.

Another legacy of the Reagan era is the deeper divisions along race and class lines. The past eight years have seen the rich get richer and the poor get poorer.

In effect, there has been a huge transfer of resources from the poor to the affluent. Inequality has always been a serious national

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Black Caucus influence reached new depths

About a month ago, I suggested that Rep. Dan Blue, D-Wake, had an opportunity to be elected Speaker of the North Carolina House of Representatives in an anti-Ramsey Democrat/Republican coalition. The response I got was that I was crazy and that Liston Ramsey was unassailable.

Well, Vernon Robinson is not crazy, and Liston Ramsey is not Speaker.

I had a hard time imagining the North Carolina Black Legislative Caucus having less influence than it had when I wrote a column about the winners and losers of 1988 several weeks ago. After all, this group showed the political foresight of a bat in backing the losing gubernatorial candidate, Bob Something-or-Other, to the last person. Well, I was wrong.

Last week, the House voted for Speaker of the House. Rep. Joe Mavretic, D-Edgecombe, beat Ramsey in the same type of bipartisan

VERNON ROBINSON

Chronicle Columnist

coalition the Black Caucus had the opportunity to put together.

With one exception, the entire Black Caucus voted for the losing candidate, Liston Ramsey. Shortly after the vote, Rep. Mickey Michaux, D-Durham, was seen running around the House floor talking about "unity," but he has no one with which to unify.

But the real deal is that 13 members of the Black Caucus have managed to put their constituents in the precarious position of double minority in the lower House. Only Rep. C.R. Edwards, D-Cumberland, refused to smartly salute and go down with the Ramsey ship. His long-time colleague, Rep. R.D. Bear, D-Cumberland, undoubtedly "read him his rights," giving Edwards an opportunity to join the winning coalition.



Robinson

Edwards is the only member of the Black Caucus likely to get a committee or subcommittee chairmanship. For all of their seniority, the Caucus might as well be freshmen, given the influence they will have. The Caucus legislative agenda is dead on arrival for this and possibly future sessions of the Legislature. The repeal of the second primary looks anemic. Without the second primary repealed, the prospects for significant victories for black legislative candidates before the crucial 1991 redistricting seems bleak indeed.

One must wonder: What has Liston Ramsey done for the black community to compel the Legislative Caucus to act like a herd of political lemmings? Is there any

clearer indication of the folly of lockstep support of the Democratic Party and subordination of the interests of the black community to those of party?

In politics, you help your friends and kill off your enemies. The Black Caucus failed to put the interests of their community over party.

Afro-American voters have some of the shortest memories of political malpractice, as long as the guilty party is Christian and Democrat. But the implications of political impotence of this Caucus are so dramatic that black voters, if not totally hopeless, will remove these "yellow dog" Democrats from office and replace them with officials who will keep a proper distance from mindless partisanship and effectively pursue a black agenda.

Vernon Robinson is a former candidate for the North Carolina Senate.