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Guest Editorial

Are we paying enough attention to politics?

By EVELYN SWEET-HURD

The Democrats have had their convention in New York, and we can now anticipate the Republican convention. But all too often we slide into the malaise of "What difference does it make?"

All politicians are crooks anyway."

Or the lackadaisical, "My one vote probably won't turn the tide, anyway." And we stay home from the polls. We assume, I suppose, that

the good ol' USA will continue along pretty much the same, whether our one little vote is cast or not. What an American luxury!

But taking things for granted can be dangerous, as well. Sometimes we cannot see America because we are smacked in it. The largest and proudest flag that waves in my neighborhood on all patriotic holidays is an American flag in front of an Iranian's home. He has been in America for many years now. He had to study to become an American citizen. He knows much more about our government than most native-born Americans. And he flies our flag proudly, never taking it or what it stands for for granted. Nearly every election year we are reminded to vote. At my polling place, we even get little stickers that say, I've voted, have you?

Everyone seems eager to say that a vote counts, yet huge numbers of Americans stay away from the polls. A few years ago I was appalled by a comment from (who else?) William F. Buckley when he said he was glad that the vast majority of Americans don't vote. Let only the informed ones make the choices, he said. And that leaves out most of our citizenry. With the nonchalance that seems to overtake our populace when it comes to electing our leaders, I find myself wondering if (gasp!) Buckley may be correct.

I shudder at the apparent success of the most bizarre ways to win votes. Political analysts continue to say that the Willie Horton ads of 1988 were significantly responsible for bringing in the vote for Bush. And this year, the same strategists have launched a "Listen to Bill Clinton and Jennifer Flowers" ad campaign that has been described by some who have heard it as soft porn.

Is this how we elect our leaders? By allowing the sleaze factor to push us around? Do people bother to find out what candidates hope to achieve, or would they rather scan a tabloid? The ideal of American government is that we the people, all the people, can choose our leaders. That we have educated our populace so that we can all make informed, intelligent choices.

Bush has said he will do anything to win. This reminds me of a cocky senior I knew in high school. When he ran for student government, he said he would do anything to win; he would slander his opponents, he would even bribe the freshmen with promises of dates with senior women. His theory, he expalined to me, was that it didn't matter how a candidate wins, just that he wins. Then he could implement the good stuff: the programs the stupid voters won't understand anyway.

The success of the Willie Horton campaign suggests the validity of this strategy. But I continue to hope for more informed response. If we, as a nation, decide that George Bush and Dan Quayle are what we want as leaders, so be it. But don't insult me by suggesting that a tape of pillow talk allegedly spoken by one of their opponents will be the basis for my voting decision. If the programs backed by the Democratic ticket are what we prefer, let's vote for that. But let's not base our votes on Quayle's spelling. Clinton's choice of Al Gore as his running mate has enormous implications.

It makes no sense to complain about America and then sit home on voting day. Perhaps we should all become activists, demanding that our media give us more complete, substantive reports on the candidate's positions. We need to be shaken from our complacency. We certainly need to reject loudly the insulting ad campaigns that suggest we are idiots. And when we are informed, we need to vote.

Our opinion

It makes no sense to complain about America and then sit home on voting day.

Why can't we have clean fun?

To the Editor:

On July 6, I went to visit a very close friend. After arriving, we decided we would have a cook-out and turn on the water hose to wet the kids. My friend has been living in these apartments on the south side of town for three years and never had any problems from the landlord. It was not in the signed contract that turning on a water hose was against the rules. On this particular day, it was 90 degrees. This family lives on a fixed income with no extra money to send the kids to the pool.

As soon as the water was turned on, a policeman drove through the parking lot and asked us to turn off the hose because the landlord had asked him to come to the apartments. What I don't understand is this policeman passed prostitutes, drug dealers, and everything else to come out and tell kids they couldn't have the same clean fun that we used to have.

The reason the police gave for asking us to turn the water off was that the landlord said he was responsible for the entire water bill. So what? My friend pays \$290 monthly, so why do we have to tell our kids — that are drug free and obedient — that they can't have good clean fun?

We didn't turn the hose off. I told the policeman to let the landlord do his own job. All kids like to have the water hose turned on for them, regardless of who pays the bill.

Cynthia Caldwell



CHRONICLE MAILBAG

Our Readers Speak Out

so that we could get a team in the AAU tournament. With one day of practice we made it to the championship. I will always remember Mr. Dunlap.

James Edrington

program to parents who may be commuting their children outside of their neighborhoods to other communities seeking quality care. Quality care is at Winston Lake YMCA. I urge parents to give them a second look.

Tawanna Fisher

I want to assure you that our local United Way gives so much to the community that failure to give because of a problem on the national level will truly hurt all of our local agencies.

Girl Scouting depends on the local United Way to help fund its programs for girls. Through the Girl Scout program, girls build self-esteem, develop values, learn to relate to others, and discover the importance of community service. The Girl Scouts and the United Way need your financial support in order to continue to provide this important program for girls. At campaign time this year, I hope everyone will give generously to the United Way.

Kathryn Q. Billings
Tarheel Triad Girl Scout Council President

Quality day care

To the Editor:

I would like to bring attention to the new summer day care program at the Winston Lake Family YMCA. I say new because it is not the same program of summers past. This year's program is well staffed, organized, and planned.

James D. Segers, program director, and his staff have done an absolutely excellent job. I, as a parent, am very pleased.

I would like to recommend this

Girl Scouts say thanks

To the Editor:

I would like to express a sincere thank you to everyone who contributes to the United Way. As the president of Tarheel Triad Girl Scout Council, a United Way agency, I see first-hand how these dollars benefit girls.

Recent publicity regarding the United Way of America has many people questioning United Way

Reduce number of jailed black men: eliminate effects of slavery, racism

Now that millions of dollars and thousands of jobs have been designated for the rebuilding of Los Angeles, many questions are being asked of reconstruction chief Uberoff, Los Angeles Mayor Bradley, and California Governor Wilson.

People want to know more about details of rebuilding and plans for preventing similar upheavals in Los Angeles and other cities with similar problems. Many of these cities have black mayors whose budgets were severely crippled by cuts in federal support by the Reagan and Bush administrations.

Proposals have been made to help the unemployed black people reviving burned-out businesses and establishing new ones in distressed areas.

These would provide jobs for nearby residents and tax revenue for the cash-short city. Other proposals include work-study programs, on-the-job training programs, and various types of investment incentives and employment projects. But Los Angeles is only part of the problem.

With more young black men in prisons and jails than in colleges and universities, what can be done to redirect and restructure the lives of teenage and younger black males before they get arrested? Before prescribing remedies, however, we must understand two basic things.

First, the extent of the black male's success in America today is dependent upon 1) his rejection of the widespread, degrading culture of slavery, and 2) his discovery of himself as an equal among men.

Second, just as the self-will and independent behavior of horses and other animals disappears when these creatures are "broken" by brutality and intimidation, also "broken" by similar violence was the self-will and independent

behavior of white slaves in Europe and black slaves in America. Slaves become victims of a mindset in which complete obedience and complete dependence

teenage black males particularly is this:

1) Welfare checks and food stamps would be available to those who live in a community of

order to achieve student-parent participation and increasing interest in education.

4) Discussions or lectures on etiquette, goal setting, personal hygiene, community action, and social responsibility would be encouraged and supervised.

5) In addition to the basic reading, writing, and arithmetic, courses such as black history would be provided. Discussion would focus on the positive attainments of positive role models such as Gen. Colin Powell, Chief of Staff of the U.S. Armed Forces; Matthew Henson, who led the Peary expedition to the North Pole; Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., civil rights leader; Dr. Charles Drew, physician and scientist whose use of blood plasma saved many lives; and many others famous in scholarship, athletics, and politics.

The nation must recover the "lost assets" of these under-performing, wounded blacks by helping them recover their independence, self-confidence, social responsibility, and personal dignity.

MINORITY REPORT

By JAMES E. ALSBROOK, Ph.D.



were enforced as correct and proper.

The so-called "black underclass" in America is the "unreconstructed human wreckage" cast upon this nation following the Civil War.

What can be done to redeem these maladjusted blacks who live in the shabbiness, hopelessness, and danger of the ghetto? They need safety, proper food and housing, a new set of values, good work habits, and marketable skills enabling them to compete successfully for jobs.

One program designed to help less fortunate blacks generally and

regulated, government-sponsored housing with standard facilities and strict upkeep and performance rules.

2) Each housing unit would be supervised by a "transition specialist" or counselor. The role of the transition specialist would be to demonstrate, teach, or reinforce standard home-making procedures and values.

3) Each housing unit would contain an education counselor assigned to help students with homework and teach parents whenever possible in order to help students with homework and teach parents whenever possible in

