

# FORUM

## Of Dark Horses and of Dark People

I am a Kentuckian. The First Saturday in May — since 1954 — has always been capitalized. It marks the importance of the state's famed Derby. Although I have never been to a horse race in my life, the Day is always one of expectancy and high spirits. Derby Weekend '94 beats all I have ever seen for the convergence of high-spirited and zestful stuff.



### LIFT EVERY VOICE

By WILLIAM H. TURNER

At 10 a.m. Derby Day, I donned my kente cloth-festooned regalia to attend the 102nd Winston-Salem State University graduation. I was consumed by a family-oriented odyssey taken the previous 24 hours. I was exhausted, tired and hackneyed. Then, I became consumed by A Spirit Bomb.

The rather boring ceremonious solemnity I've come to associate with commencement exercises did not attend. Arsenio's and the Kids of BET were graduating, and they were not about to let ritual and protocol dampen their spirits. It was great! I became swept along by the convergence of events in Louisville, Johannesburg and at Joel Coliseum (Many did not want to see that name on the building.) in Winston-Salem.

Joel allowed a soulful spontaneity, that to some undoubtedly, went far beyond the limits of the rights of individuals to scream, howl, screech, shriek, shrill, call out and dog-woof — all in an escalating crescendo of joy and exhilaration. I make no excuses for them if they were not aware, that they should suppress their joy to accommodate the decorum of ritual. DuBois called it the *Souls of Black Folk*. It was the same way in Johannesburg. Same people.

There were some people at the WSSU graduation for whom going to college was not a given and or whom graduating was not an expectation.

There were families who were honored just to see one of their own go to college. Some would not contain their joy (Or was it incredulous disbelief?!) to see one of their own graduate. It was something just to witness smiles, amid the gloom and dread that is our usual canopy. Happiness abounded.

In Johannesburg, at the very same time, we witnessed people for whom voting was not a given and for whom the witness of a former prisoner installed as president was not their wildest expectation.

"Academia met the Spirit" at the WSSU 102nd graduation, noted Ben Ruffin, representing the UNC Board of Governors. Ruffin influenced his employer (RJR) to provide Nelson Mandela with the use of its aircraft when Mandela was in the United States raising funds for his campaign. Ben would be the first to tell you how far the dais was from his section of Durham. Ben was happy.

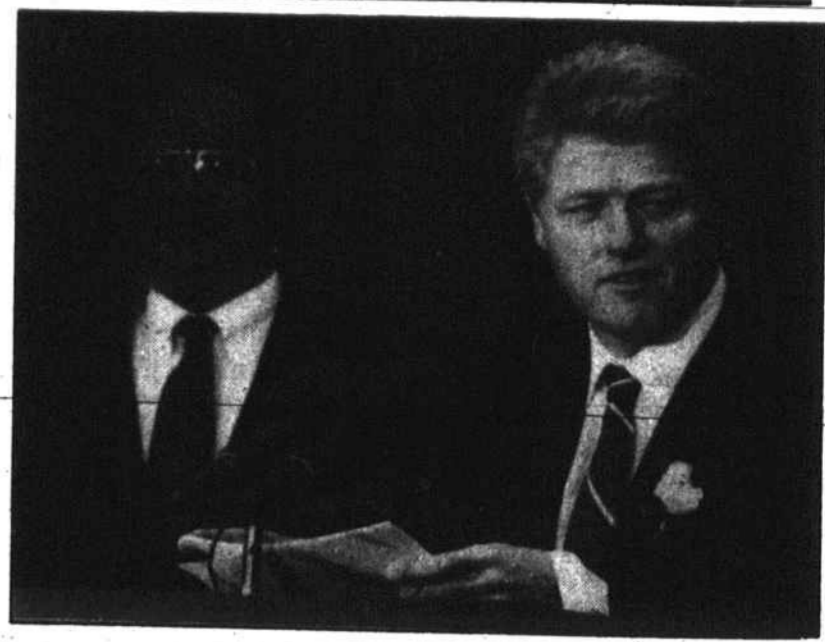
A Zulu warrior danced before the South African legislature. JoJo Gardner, a graduate, did the "Butterfly" as he pranced across the stage to greet Bob Brown. If ever there were a man in America who has seen the inside of the power elite, it is Bob Brown, chairman of the WSSU board of trustees. He was a highly placed Nixon confidant and staff member and arbiter for the release of Nelson Mandela and caretaker of his children and sponsor of Mark Mathabane, author of *Kaffir Boy*.

President-elect Mandela and Coretta Scott King did the Soweto Shuffle in Johannesburg — along with Bishop Tutu. It was strikingly reminiscent of hers and MLK's presence at Kwame Nkrumah's inauguration as president of Ghana in 1954. Party in The House!

The graduation speaker, herself a WSSU graduate in nursing, was Fannie Gaston-Johannson, a prominent nurse practitioner and internationally recognized researcher at Johns Hopkins University. Gaston-Johannson put them all on the University Interactive System and admonished the largely white group of nursing graduates at this historically black university to say yes to the opportunity. Mississippi higher education officials should take note: When strong programs are in place, people come despite the racial characteristics of the authorities. F. W. de Klerk and many whites who thought this day never possible, took the opportunity to flank Mandela.

I met de Klerk in Johannesburg in 1985 while representing WSSU and Chancellor Cleon Thompson at a State Department-sponsored initiative to link black institutions to the educational needs of South African blacks.

The boogie-down production continued. The Honorable Martha Wood, the white female mayor of Winston-Salem, singled out a black



President Clinton names Bill Gray advisor on Haiti.

male graduate, Bryan McCorkle, whom she publically acknowledged as her son. Finally, WSSU Chaplin Emeritus and Distinguished Gray Professor of Religion, the Rev. Cedric Rodney, a Guyana-born Moravian, ended the ceremony with the classical Irish prayer about the "Road moving up to meet your feet." I could almost hear the "Impressions" singing "Aye, Aye, Aye... Men!" We danced to that too during the liberation of Greensboro.

In the meantime, President Clinton moved "fast" toward the position advocated by Randall Robinson — and dramatized by the arrest of several Congressional Black Caucus members last week — on the matter of Haitian political refugees. Bill Gray, president of the United Negro College Fund, has been appointed advisor to President Clinton on Haiti-U.S. policy.

Alton Pollard, associate minister at Emmanuel Baptist and a Wake Forest University faculty member, just returned from South Africa as an elections official. I just can't wait to listen to him.

Go For Gin, the Kentucky Derby winner, was a 9-1 betting choice. Tradition and odds were turned upside down on Derby Weekend 1994 for Dark Peoples and Dark Horses.

Ah, the excitement of the Human Race. Bet on it every time.

(William Turner is a regular freelance columnist for the Chronicle.)

## 'In the Name of Jesus Christ... Stand Up Black Americans and Walk.'

Several weeks ago, the *Chronicle* published a landmark editorial that created surprisingly small comment. It stated that school choice is the appropriate strategy for our community to seize control of the education of its children. This shift of editorial policy follows what many parents in our community have felt for a long time — that we cannot depend on politicians, school bureaucrats and a failing monopoly system of government schools to decide what is best for our children.

Black elected officials in large majorities have supported the positions of the *Chronicle* and parents on this issue. Some continue to defend the disastrous policy of bussing low-income children to far-flung rural schools to be the integration experience for white kids because these politicians supported this failed policy 30 years ago. Some are closely tied to unions that in addition to opposing black youth employment and black employment in skilled trades, also oppose letting parents escape failing public schools. Some elected officials did not notice the collapse of the great socialist experiment of the east and no one understands markets or market competition.

But some elected officials are just plain hypocrites. While opposing giving tuition grants to parents so they can choose a school that teaches their children to read, does not trample on the values that the parents teach at home and that returns their child home undamaged and without bullet holes, these politicians choose private schools for their children. Let us call the role.

Jesse Jackson opposes full and fair school choice but sends his children to private schools, including the expensive Georgetown Day School. Mar-

ion Barry and the current mayor of Washington, D.C., Sharon Pratt Kelly, oppose other parents choosing schools but have theirs in private schools. Our great crusader for children, Marion Wright Edelman, opposes tuition grants to help children escape failing schools like those spending \$9,000 per child in D.C., but has chosen Sidwell Friends, an exclusive private school, for her children.

Closer to home, state Rep. Annie Brown Kennedy (D-Forsyth) is one



### GUEST COLUMN

By VERNON ROBINSON

of the most vocal opponents of empowering parents — black or white — with school choice. She even refused to support a bill targeted at troubled youths and youths reading two years behind grade level, despite the appeal for such support from County Commissioner Earline Parmon. Rep. Kennedy sent her children to private schools.

The winds of change are blowing in black communities across the state. In Greensboro, a long-operating Catholic school has been joined by

Smart Kids, a private school, and several other private schools are on the drawing board. In Winston-Salem, Ephesus School has been joined by the Carver Church of Christ Quality Education Institute. In Charlotte, Brisbane Academy has been joined by a school at Friendship Baptist; one is on the drawing board at St. Paul; and planning has begun at Nation's Ford Christian Church. In Asheville, black ministers are looking for a route to seek passage of school-choice legislation to help poor children get into better schools. Finally, Mt. Zion Christian in Durham has started a school in Burlington.

Rep. Tommy Wright (D-Wilmington), a member of the House Black Legislative Caucus, made history during the special crime session by becoming the first black legislator in North Carolina history to support a tuition grant bill targeted at troubled youths.

Black folk begging the public system for better treatment reminds some of Peter at the Temple in the 3rd Chapter of Acts. His charge to the beggar is a charge to our community: "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up black Americans and walk."

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A public forum to discuss school choice, tuition grants, why the black church should go into the school business and related topics will be held at 7 p.m. tonight (Thursday) at the Main Branch Library at Fifth and Spring streets.

(Vernon Robinson, a resident of Winston-Salem, is the president of the N.C. Education Reform Foundation.)

## 'Small Businesses is What Built this Country and is Holding it Together'

The week of May 9-14 has been designated as U.S. Small Business and Small Business Administration Week. As we observe this week as small business people, I, as the owner of a small business, have the following observations to make.

First of all, small business is what built this country, and in many cases, is what is holding it together. Today, as I look at the total picture on the sur-



### GUEST COLUMN

By FRANK E. MCKISSICK

vival of small businesses; we are at the "Cross Roads."

The downsizing of large and major corporations across these United States has caused an explosion of small businesses to spring up. People are realizing that the key to holding their on destiny is to do something for themselves, instead of relying on the large corporations to do it for them. People are searching for new ideas, new products, a decent wage, and satisfaction of

job well done. On the other side of this story, however, is that one out of every three new businesses that open up fail within a five-year period.

Why do so many businesses fail? There are a number of reasons. The main ones are the failure to have a good business plan or plan of operation. Other reasons include poor management, poor financing or no financing, and last but not least, lack of expertise in that particular field of operation and taxation.

A lot of people have good ideas on what to do, but for various reasons, cannot carry them out. Without a good, sound business plan, with something being used for collateral, the banks will not even discuss a business loan with you. As a matter of fact, small businesses are having such a hard time getting loans and a line of credit from banks that they have turned to other sources to find it. Government regulations change from time to time on small businesses with each new one bringing a mountain of headaches with it. Look at the proposed health-care plan for example small to medium sized businesses will bear the blunt end of their cost of employees.

The Small Business Administration is supposed to be there to help us when we need them. The red tape and waiting periods for any of the SBA's Programs could take a very long time if ever. They make it so difficult for any small business to become a part of the one Government System that is suppose to work for us. It is no wonder that a majority of small businesses

choose not to deal with the Small Business Administration at all.

Let us use the SBA's Loan Program for example. A small business has to be turned down by four banks for a loan before the Small Business Administration will consider if for a loan. If a small business is depending on that loan for survival, the doors could be closed before help arrives. With each new administration that comes into power, whether they be Democrat or Republican, proclaims the importance that small businesses plays in the total cog of machinery that keeps this country running. In the meantime, 60,000 small businesses may fail in 1994 alone. It has to be more than "lip service." I have had a number of small businesses who would to apply for a SBA loan, but are afraid of the "red tape" and loss of control in the future direction of their business in the American dream. On the other side of the coin, at the "Cross Roads", it is not all bad. The Entrepreneurial spirit is still alive and well.

There is not a day that goes by that I don't hear of someone opening up a new businesses on an idea that has never heard of before. Small business people is a "gusty bunch." We will find a way to survive even if our ideas and businesses flops ten times. We will find ways to finance our ideas with or without the SBA's help, even if we have to live on a shoestring budget.

(Frank E. McKissick of Winston-Salem is owner of F.M. Enterprises.)

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**How to Reach us...**  
910-728-8624 • Fax 910-723-9173

**NEWS STAFF**  
DAVID DILLARD  
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**CIRCULATION**  
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