

# OPINION

## THE CHRONICLE

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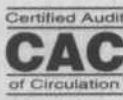
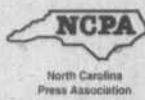
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### NAACP, Urban League educate public

In recent years, the NAACP and the National Urban League (NUL) have been returning to their origins by placing a greater emphasis on education, teachers, administrators, students, parents and governmental officials to close the gap between black and white achievement.

Spearheaded by NUL President Hugh Price, Urban League affiliates have been particularly successful at organizing programs that honor academic achievement in the same manner that high school athletic banquets honor gifted athletes. The NAACP recently held its fifth biennial Daisy Bates Education Summit in Atlanta. Bates, a former field director for the NAACP in Arkansas, led the "Little Rock Nine" past a mob to successfully desegregate Central High School in 1957.

NAACP President Kweisi Mfume announced at the Atlanta conference that just as it has sued major corporations that discriminate against African Americans, the organization will now file complaints against states that refuse to help close the gap between black and white student accomplishments.

"Twenty-eight governors have pledged to join the NAACP and our partners in the efforts to reduce racial disparity and close the achievement gap," Mfume said. "However, 22 states failed to respond by the May 20, 2002, deadline. The NAACP will file Title VI complaints with the Office of Civil Rights at the U.S. Department of Education, and the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Justice Department against those states that did not submit an equity in education plan."

Each state has been asked to submit a plan that will help reduce the racial disparity gap by 50 percent over the next five years. The NAACP is looking at five key areas: testing, graduation rates, suspensions, placement in special education and the lack of access to gifted and talented programs.

States not complying by the May 10 deadline are: Alabama, Colorado, Florida, Hawaii, Idaho, Kentucky, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, New Mexico, Nevada, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Vermont, Virginia and Wyoming.

John H. Jackson, NAACP national director of education, says the first complaints will be filed against Florida, Louisiana and Ohio. In Florida, for example, African Americans make up 25 percent of public school students, yet are 44 percent of those suspended, 35 percent of those expelled and 48 percent of students earning GEDs rather than traditional diplomas. According to the U.S. Department of Education's Office on Civil Rights, only 7 percent of blacks are enrolled in advanced placement mathematics and 6 percent in advanced science.

The NAACP in its "Call For

Action in Education," has announced a goal of reducing racial disparity in the nation's public schools by 50 percent over the next five years.

Among the recommendations made in the 42-page special report are:

- Track and publicly report on the disparate distribution of school resources.

- Federal, state and local educational agencies should aggressively recruit highly-qualified, certified teachers for high-poverty schools and provide them with multicultural teacher training, professional development, mentors and effective retention incentives.

- Increase the number of early childhood programs available to people of color and the poor.

- Curb tracking programs and redouble efforts to place students of color in advanced placement programs and classes for the gifted and talented.

- Reduce class size, especially in urban schools.

- Narrow the digital divide by at least 50 percent over the next five years.

- Declare a moratorium on high-stakes testing of children until all states can guarantee that all students have an equal opportunity to learn the tested curriculum.

- Provide more detailed information on racial and ethnic academic achievement.

- Increase efforts to involve more parents.

- Develop effective strategies for intervening before a student is labeled "mentally retarded" or placed in special education classes.

- Move away from overly harsh "zero tolerance" policies that disproportionately impact students of color.

- Increase funds to historically black colleges and universities and institutions that serve Native Americans and Hispanics.

- Encourage colleges to target people of color for enrollment and retention, maintain affirmative action programs, increase need-based grants, and increase the number of black doctoral candidates.

At his news conference in Atlanta, Mfume said, "The NAACP reaffirms its commitment to continue the legacy of Daisy Bates by working to ensure that all students, regardless of race, gender or ethnicity, have equal access to quality education."

If George W. Bush really wants to be known as the "education president," he should quickly embrace the educational strategies outlined by the NAACP and the National Urban League. That's the best way to leave no child behind.

George E. Curry, editor-in-chief of the NNPA News Service and BlackPressUSA.com, is former editor of *Emerge: Black America's Newsmagazine*.

The only human cloning Bush would allow:



SCALIA THOMAS SCALIA THOMAS SCALIA

SUPREME COURT

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### Letters to the Editor

#### Dan Blue is a people's candidate

To the Editor:

Dan Blue is immensely qualified to be our state's next U.S. senator, and he is an individual of impeccable integrity. His 22 years in the N.C. House, including four years as speaker of the House, and his leadership of the National Conference of State Legislatures far surpass the nuts-and-bolts experience of any other candidate. He is truly a people's candidate.

Given this, why are there any questions as to this Democratic candidate for U.S. Senate? After all, our Caucasian brethren and sisters place such great emphasis on qualifications. Historically, the criteria of qualifications were used to hold back many potential African-American leaders. Why, then, when an African American leads the pack in qualifications, should he or she not be supported by our Cau-

casian brethren and sisters? The answer is simpler than we think: our great state has not yet arrived, racially.

African-American voters in North Carolina should not be taken in by the sentiment expressed by many, including some misguided African-Americans: "I would support him if I thought he could win." The strength of the African American vote won the Democratic Party primaries in 1990 and 1996, and its strength returned the N.C. House to the hands of Democrats in 1998. Furthermore, registered Democrats far outnumber registered Republicans in North Carolina. Of course, Dan Blue can win.

Many have suggested that his efforts to win bipartisan support in his 1998 race for House speaker indicates that he is not a loyal Democrat. Sadly, the naysayers include some African Americans. Certainly, we cannot be so naive to think that Republicans alone kept Jesse Helms in the U.S. Senate for 30 years; we must recognize

that our own Democratic brethren and sisters aided and abetted.

(I remember that Gov. James B. Hunt Jr., who was perceived as our partner in pursuit of equality, repositioned himself mightily to gain support among Democratic supporters of Helms.)

So it is past time that our blind loyalty to the Democratic Party should cease. When everyone else enters the voting booth, they draw as many lines as they deem appropriate. We are expected to blindly follow their instructions rather than their examples.

To those who look like me, African Americans, it is time that we stopped settling for the crumbs and start enjoying the main entrees. This will be accomplished only when we exhibit a degree of political maturity and political independence, and we insist on political fairness. I submit to you that we would be better off without the crumbs, given past experience.

Let us give Blue our united support.

He has been there for all North Carolinians for 22 years with maturity, with independence, and with fairness. Secretary (Elaine) Marshall has not been. Cynthia Brown has not been. Erskine Bowles and Elizabeth Dole have not been, and will not be. Neither will any of the other candidates in this race.

That revered institution, the U.S. Senate, should reflect ethnically and racially the population of these United States of America. I do want to see someone from North Carolina in the U.S. Senate who looks like me, but more important, who will join the progressive numbers in that body who believe that every individual is somebody. It is a simple proposition. It ought to be the proposition of the entire Democratic Party.

We must not miss this opportunity. If we do, we will wait a generation or longer for another one to come.

The Rev. Hardy R. Watkins

### What would Malcolm and Martin say?



Val Atkinson  
Jones Street

Malcolm X was assassinated on Feb. 17, 1965, three years before the assassination of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and the ensuing '68 riots, and four years before Neil Armstrong's walk on the Moon.

Both Malcolm and Martin missed the re-election of Richard Milhous Nixon and his subsequent resignation over the Watergate burglary cover-up. Neither was here to witness the end of conscription or the end of the Vietnam War. They didn't witness Reagan's two terms, the surrender



Dr. King

of the former Soviet Union, the increase of drugs and unemployment in the black community.

They didn't see the deterioration of the inner city. They didn't witness the devastation and accelerated incarceration of the Ameri-

can black male. The Rodney King beating by police and the subsequent riot in South Central Los Angeles, the O.J. trial, the Million Man March and the selection of George "Dubya" Bush as president of the United States...all were missed as well.

And on another page...neither did they get a chance to see Bill Cosby's rise to prominence, Oprah, Michael Jackson, Michael Jordan, Colin Powell or Tiger Woods.

None of us knows how Malcolm or Martin would have reacted to any of the history-altering events over the past 35 years. Some of the events may have found Malcolm and Martin at odds with one another, while other events may have found them joining forces to bring greater pressure to bear.

We will never know how they would have reacted to the great events, but my guess is that they would be highly displeased at the plight of black people. And I think they would have questions about today's black leadership. I think they'd want to know what happened to the Stokely Carmichaels, the H. Rap Browns, the Huey Newtons, the Eldridge Cleavers and public officials such as Adam Clayton Powell. Even if they disagreed with the likes of Huey and Eldridge, I think they would have respected their fortitude to speak truth (as they saw it) to power.

Speaking truth to power as Malcolm and Martin did is almost "verboten" today. There are exceptions (Julian Bond, Al Sharpton and Louis Farrakhan), but for the rest of our leadership the truth is so watered down and smothered by the time it gets to the public, that it's hardly recognizable.

The reason for this editing of the truth is based in economics. You see, back in Malcolm and Martin's day most black community activists and civil rights lead-



Malcolm X

ers didn't work for IBM or the federal government. They didn't have high-paying positions at Montgomery Ward or Sears. They didn't have to worry about getting fired because of their stances on issues. Today that's not the case.

Even Jesse Jackson has to temper and alter his truth when it hits those businesses that are high on his contribution list. We just don't have leaders who're employed by our churches and civil rights organizations that are willing to go all the way and speak truth to power. Maybe we need to start employing our leaders in our own communities so they won't be afraid to speak truth to power. Then all we'd have to do is remind them who the power really is.

We could use a Malcolm or a Martin right now. Our present-day leaders seem to be thinking about paying their mortgages off early, taking longer vacations or maintaining their present posi-

tions within the organizations. They don't want the truth to get in the way of their upward mobility or preservation of their current conditions. Speaking truth to power is easy when you're not dependent on the very power you're speaking to for your very survival. Malcolm and Martin had other sources of income and therefore didn't need to have their speeches and papers preapproved by funding sources outside of the community.

Many of our leaders today just don't have that luxury. Maybe this will call for new job descriptions when we start future searches for community leaders and activists. Maybe one of the qualifications for community leadership is financial independence from those to whom we wish to speak the truth.

Contact Val Atkinson at JonesStreet@nc.rr.com

### Correction

In last week's issue, the Girl Scouts troop that appeared on A1 with a story about the Scouts' 90th anniversary was misidentified. The troop is from United Metropolitan Baptist Church. Yvette Hatcher, who was quoted in the story, heads the troop at United Metropolitan.