

FORUM

David or Goliath for sheriff



Nigel Alston
Motivational Moments

"In life, we have either reasons or results..."
— Peter McWilliams

Read me. Read me, it said. I complied. The headline had done its job. Like the one above, I hope. It invited me to read the column for additional information. On Tuesday, Sept. 17, on the front page of the metro section of the daily newspaper — the Winston-Salem Journal — my attention was held in custody by this headline: "Schatzman is gaining support." The story was written by Journal reporter Victoria Cherie.

The headline itself was no surprise as Schatzman was the leading vote-getter in the Republican primary for sheriff with 42 percent of the vote. If at first you don't succeed, try, try again. In his second attempt for the office, he now gets to move on to the general election.

It also isn't a surprise that my attention was lured into the article. I have learned that the top half of the newspaper — above the fold — is where important news is placed in a paper. "Former opponents endorse Republican candidate in his race for sheriff of Forsyth" appeared in a smaller, bold font size, large enough to

give you an indication of the momentum being gained. "The Republican candidates are rallying around their man," I thought.

That would not be a surprise either. You want to beat the opposition. I was partially right. I

don't know Schatzman personally, only through what I have read in the paper. I am sure he is a good man and qualified for the job. What surprised me was the support from three Democratic candidates. I shouldn't be surprised; however, this is politics — with strange bedfellows. It, politics, isn't fair and the best man or woman does not always win.

"Well, well, well. If I didn't know any better, I would think they are trying to gang up on John Polite," I thought to myself. Polite is the Democratic candidate for sheriff. With 45 percent of the vote, he beat out a fellow contender, former assistant sheriff, C.C. McGee, who now supports the Republican challenger. He knows both men and believes Schatzman is the better man — an opinion to which he is entitled and one I respect. I just don't agree.

I do agree that it's time for a change. Voters do too. Of the people who took the time to vote, they clearly picked two

noticeably different voices to square off against each other in November.

Now, barely a week after a much delayed primary, the Republican candidate for sheriff holds court with a news conference.

Five white men stand with him — former Republican and Democratic candidates — who lost in the recent primary, pledging their support.

"Isn't this interesting?" I thought as I saw them standing at attention, lined up behind their man on the morning news. "Surely, someone will call the 'Tom Joyner Morning Show' and report this as a hidden racism." Hmmm! It looks like David versus Goliath to me.

That alone makes me want to vote for Polite. The fact that I know him and believe he will do an excellent job should be enough. Now, however, there is some fuel on the fire — a reason to get up and go vote!

According to Journal reporter Victoria Cherie, Schatzman says he is the only candidate offering change without ties to the current sheriff, Ron Barker. I found that statement interesting. Two former assistant sheriffs and a former captain, under Barker are

now among his supporters and are on his team. Their names were listed in the paper and I saw them on television. That qualifies as a connection. Does it not?

Like most candidates, including Polite, Schatzman wants to bring about change. He is an outsider, a former FBI man who brings another perspective to the position. He'll run the department like a corporation and eliminate waste at the top, first. That's inconsistent with the opinion of the people who ran against him and Polite, and now support him. They wanted change too. That's why they were running. Now, why the change in heart?

"These are gentlemen who have been in the highest positions of authority (in the sheriff's office), and they believe I can bring change," Cherie quotes Schatzman as saying. I am trying not to let my bias show, but it still feels like a gang up to me. What do you think?

Whatever you think or feel, one thing is certain about the November election for sheriff. We will have a new face in the position. There will be change. The question remains: Will it be David or Goliath? The power of change is in your hands. Use it or continue to lose it. No excuses, we need results!

Nigel Alston is a radio talk-show host, columnist and motivational speaker. Visit his Web site at www.motivationalmoments.com.



Polite



Schatzman



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Is the big sellout a good thing?



Armstrong Williams
Guest Columnist

More than 30,000 people joined The Congressional Black Caucus last week for its 31st annual Legislative Conference. Among the events hosted by the caucus was an idea forum that considered whether the corporate takeover of several formerly black owned media entities would affect the integrity of their message. The event featured Kweisi Mfume and Rev. Al Sharpton, each of whom expressed concerns about the level of control that corporate money now exerts over an independent black media.

Recent buyouts or mergers involving minority businesses include Essence Magazine by Time Warner, Africa.com by Time Warner, and BET by media giant Viacom. The BET acquisition, in particular, elicited deeply personal feelings of anger and sadness from members of the black community. Since its inception in 1979 by Robert Johnson, BET has endeared itself to the black viewing audience as a unique expression of black popular culture. Critics equated the purchase of BET to the purchase of a uniquely black experience and accused BET founder Bob Johnson of selling out his original intent.

At bottom, critics are wondering whether companies like BET, Africa.com, etc. will continue to reflect the needs of the black viewing audience now that they are no longer black-owned. After all, large corporate entities don't



Essence officials sign papers last year that made the magazine a property of Time Warner.

take over other companies because it's so much fun. They do it to make money. And critics rightly worry whether these formerly minority owned companies will retain their voice amid the profit squeeze.

After the BET buyout, Johnson remained optimistic, saying that the deal would provide BET with the resources to better fulfill its mission. He added that he planned to stay in a high level position. Of course, Viacom had just made Johnson one of the richest men in America, so his buddy-ing up was understandable.

Most of the participants in the black caucus forum were more cynical, voicing concerns about whether this trend of media consolidation would serve the interest of the black community. And indeed, with the media giants suc-

cessfully pushing into the ethnic markets, it is worth considering whether the smaller black owned entities will even have the necessary resources to compete. Even those who wish to keep their companies minority owned may be forced to sell out. So the participants in the Congressional Black Caucus raised some very legitimate concerns, not least of which being whether media consolidation will spell the demise of an independent black media.

However, I would suggest that such critics are missing the big picture, which is that the assimilation of minority owned businesses reinforces the viability of those entities in the minds of potential investors. When Johnson sold out to Viacom, he demonstrated in no uncertain terms that minority business could command signifi-

cant value in the marketplace. That perception had a ripple effect, driving up the value, stock prices of minority owned businesses across the board. As Publilius Syrus once observed, "a reputation is more valuable than money." The moment Viacom decided to back a truck full of money up to Johnson's driveway, investor expectations regarding minority owned businesses skyrocketed. This increase in value will only create more — not less — opportunities for black entrepreneurs.

So I say kudos to all of those minority owned media outlets that achieve success, then promptly sell out. In the big picture, this level of profiteering creates more opportunities for us all.

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