


OP/ED



ERNEST H. PITT
ELAINE PITT
T. KEVIN WALKER

Publisher/Co-Founder
 Business Manager
 Managing Editor

MLK Day

We are celebrating the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. on Monday. In recent years, there has been a strong push to make the annual MLK Day holiday a call to social action. Americans have been urged to use their day off from work to volunteer their time to a worthy cause or nonprofit.

At the very least, folks should use the day to do something that honors King, be it attending a King-related service or reading some of his powerful speeches or prose.

Luckily, this city offers a plethora of MLK Day activities. They will be held from early morning to late evening on Monday. Some activities are even scheduled for this week and the weekend. In short, there are no legitimate excuses.



McCrory's Latest Fib

Our governor is again playing fast and loose with reality. During a recent sit-down on "NC Spin," Gov. McCrory tried to defend the indefensible: his and his Republican cronies' decision to slash and burn unemployment benefits for jobless North Carolinians.

You may recall last year's controversial move by the GOP to cut-off unemployment benefits for thousands and reduce benefits for thousands more. State lawmakers' decision also made our unemployed ineligible for the short-term federal unemployment benefits extension.

On the Sunday edition of the political chat show, McCrory said part of the reason the benefits were slashed was because folks were moving to North Carolina from out-of-state to take advantage of our bountiful unemployment benefits.

"We had the ninth most generous unemployment compensation in the country and we were having a lot of people move here, frankly, especially in urban areas, to get unemployment and then work other sectors and survive. So, people were moving here because of our very generous benefits, and then of course, we had more debt," the governor said.

It did not take long for McCrory's claim to be shot down. Raleigh station WRAL fact-checked the claim by turning to people like UNCG economist Andrew Brod for insight. He said the governor's claim "defies reason," partly because state law requires a resident to have worked for at least six months in North Carolina before receiving unemployment benefits.

The station's final verdict on the claim: "Given that McCrory can offer scant evidence for his claim, it would be hard not to rate his statement as false."

The 12th District

For the first time ever, we do agree with McCrory on something. His call to put the 12th Congressional District election in with the other midterm contests makes sense to us.

Yes, it is unfortunate that Congress will go without a strong African American voice for the 12th District for almost a year. The Republicans in Washington who held up Mel Watt's confirmation to the Federal Housing Finance Agency for months are to blame. If it all had progressed the way President Obama had planned, Watt would have been in his new position last fall. If that were the case, there would have been time to hold a special election for Watt's successor.

Holding a special election this year - with its own filing period, primary, possible second primary, etc. - on top of the midterm schedule would simply be too much for voters. It would create voter fatigue - something no one should want since voter turnout is already in the toilet.

Candidates wishing to succeed Watt should use this full election season to cover as much ground as they can in the vast district and be grateful for the added visibility the midterm schedule will give this race.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Thank You, Chronicle

To the Editor:

As we reflect back on 2013 and resolve to do better in 2014, it's important to be thankful.

I am thankful for The Chronicle. Your coverage of the news from our community is always informative, sometimes inspiring and consistently reflective of the community values that distinguishes the African American community.

The pluralistic society that we live in demands that each ethnic community record its accomplishments and self critique its direction for future generations to benefit from. The Chronicle has been that voice in our community for decades, and I hope that in 2014 more citizens will commit to supporting this needed institution in our community. Thank you, Chronicle.

Fleming El-Amin

My first term in Raleigh

To the Editor:

As 2013 ends with my first term as a state lawmaker much that I witnessed gives cause for reflection. No need to repeat the events and consequences of local, state and national elections. Most of you who follow politics already know these facts and

have formed your opinion about them. So please bear with me as I reflect and then propose a way forward.

The super majority elected by gerrymandering in NC legislative districts seized power in Raleigh and they began the great dismantling of progress made in NC after many years of struggle for justice and equality for all. Among these acts of mean-spiritedness and revenge that I view most serious are:

- Tampering with voting rights of all citizens
- Stripping long term unemployed workers' of privileges to claim unemployment benefits
- Tilting the tax code to favor the privileged at the expense of the middle class
- Demonstrating on all levels a disdain for social justice and equality by repealing the assurance for Racial Justice in capital criminal offenses
- Robbing public education of its precious few resources
- No respect for women's rights

While these listed are just a few of the changes (labeled improvements) I witnessed during a fast and furious process, my gender, race and status as a person were so obviously ignored in this environment that from time to time I questioned my own very presence there. But for the strong family and community background that I come from along with the privilege of fine educational

preparation, membership in the NC General Assembly would be next to intolerable.

Now, you may say 'why do I seek to remain there?' The time is right for each of us to step up and reconsider the importance of involvement and engagement in the political process. No time for slipping and sliding and giving in or giving up. This battle is just beginning - the fight is on. I say let's get ready to go into it suited up to fight to the bitter end. The struggle continues.

In 2014 we who love justice and believe in mercy must:

- Commit to registering new voters and ensure that every voter has proper identification and plenty of options for getting to the voting booth on election day
- Encourage activism among the unemployed, uninformed, and indifferent
- Educate yourself, analyze and question authority when you are not clear about what is being said as truth
- Become an advocate for what you believe in
- Learn all you can about the importance of public policy & politics

This train wreck has already arrived and we were not on board. Next time it comes we all had better be ready to board. Too much is at stake for our future to ignore these conditions. Get active.

State Rep. Evelyn Terry

Robeson

from page A6

McKinney was the winner of the 2001 and 2002 Civic Music Association of Milwaukee's Harold Levin scholarship competition and was awarded the Judges Choice award at the 2001 Metropolitan Opera's district competition. In 2004, he won that competition in the South Carolina District and continued on

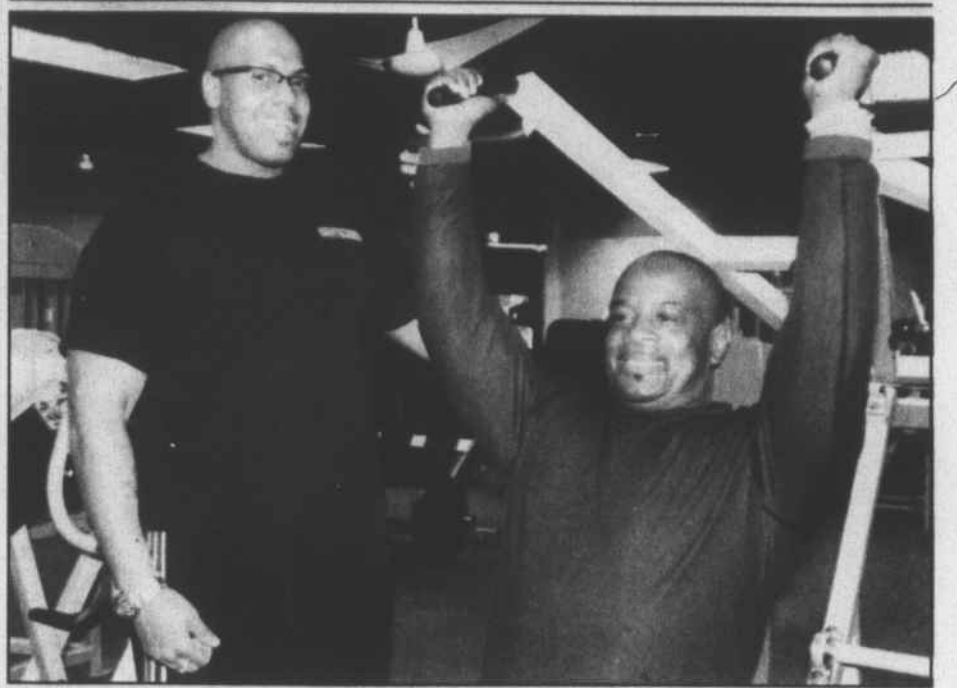
to place second in the Southeastern Regional Finals. McKinney has performed at venues around the world.

When not on the stage, McKinney sings as a section leader in the Centenary United Methodist Church Chancel Choir and serves as cantor in his synagogue in Spartanburg, S.C. He also composes Jewish liturgical music for Temple Emmanuel in Winston-

Salem.

Performances will be on Friday, Jan. 24 and Saturday, Jan. 25 at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday, Jan. 26 at 2 p.m. Tickets start at \$16.50. The public is invited to the final dress rehearsal at 7:30 on Thursday, Jan. 23. It is a "pay what you can" evening.

For tickets, go to <http://www.hanesbrand-theatre.org>.



Maurice Crocker (left) and Joe Walker Jr. are both heart attack survivors.

Walker

from page A1

told me that ... and it kept me kind of focused."

In November 2012, Walker was with a client at Showtime Physique, where he works part-time as a personal trainer, when he began to feel weak and nauseated.

"It just kept coming and going," he said of his symptoms. "I thought I had the flu or something."

His wife, Sibyl Walker, convinced him to go to the emergency room, where he learned that he had been having a heart attack for close to two days. His father had succumbed to heart disease just four months earlier.

"I was in a state of shock at the time when Joe had his heart attack, because my husband had just died," said Mattie Walker, who was married to Dr. Walker for 59 years. "...The doctors didn't give us much hope at that time, but I never felt like he was going to die."

Despite the family history, news of Walker's diagnosis came as a shock to the entire family, his mother said.

"For him to be the one to have a heart attack, I wouldn't have guessed it in a thousand years," declared the retired Joyce Brothers Company employee. "We were just shocked."

Even the medical team that treated him was surprised by the severity of his condition, Walker said.

"Everyone joked about me being in shape and being a personal trainer and what was I going to tell my clients?" he related. "...Then the room got quiet. They quit joking and got really serious and the doctor just told me, 'You know, you really shouldn't be alive - we can't believe what we're looking at.'"

Walker underwent open heart surgery to address the massive blockage that was discovered in the arteries leading to his heart and began the long, arduous road to recovery. Walker's friend Maurice Crocker, a fellow personal trainer and owner of Showtime Physique, was one of the first people that Walker told about his harrowing experience. Crocker can relate to Walker's struggle. He is also a heart attack survivor. During a powerlifting competition nearly a decade ago, Crocker experienced a sharp pain across his chest and back, but he never imagined he might be having a heart attack.



Joe Walker Jr. with his father, the late Rev. Dr. Joseph Walker Sr.

impression if you have a heart attack, it's in your arm, you grab your chest, but there's so many different symptoms - for men and women," said Crocker, who was 33 at the time. "(The pain) could be in your jaw. It could be in your back."

Crocker's unlikely experience has helped him recognize danger when it surfaces. Since his own heart attack in 2004, Crocker has recognized the symptoms of cardiac arrest in two of his clients, both of whom sought medical attention at his urging.

Walker says he is fortunate to have lived to tell his story. His doctors told him he wouldn't have survived if his body weren't in such peak condition at the time of his

attack. These days, he doesn't waste an opportunity to share what he's learned, using his own story as an example of the perils life can bring - even when you do everything right - and the rewards that exist for those who make it to the other side.

"I tell people it was the exercise (that saved me) but it was the Lord," he said. "Spiritually, I know exactly why I'm here, and I don't take that lightly. It's a blessing. I'm that miracle that people always want to hear about. I'm a walking miracle."

Contact Walker via Showtime Physique, 915 Brookstown Ave., www.showtimephysique.com or 336-761-3908.

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