

Editorials

Wanted: Housing For The Poor

The City of Charlotte is planning to host a symposium on November 20 called "The Housing Gap" at the Radisson Plaza Hotel. The symposium will bring together housing specialists from as far away as Seattle, Wash., St. Paul, Minn., Boston, Mass., and Washington, D.C., to share ideas about successful housing programs in their respective communities that may be adopted to help Charlotte solve its low income housing problem.

The "Housing Gap," the housing problem, what is it, what does it mean? It is a growing social and economic issue which shows tragically that an increasing number of Charlotteans do not have decent, safe, sanitary, AND affordable housing. Stated another way, studies by the City's Community Development Department indicated that in 1984 there were 13,919 households in need of affordable housing and that number had grown to over 15,000 by mid-1985. It means too that with the very deep cuts in federal funds for low income housing beginning in 1980, affordable housing opportunities for the poor have and will continue to diminish significantly unless Charlotte and other local governments find ways to fill the void created by the federal government.

Recent published reports about the "glut" or high vacancy rates in some rental apartment complexes may undoubtedly raise questions about housing needs for the poor. City officials have responded to such questions by noting that "the problem is clearly affordability. In 1980, for example, Charlotte owners and renters making less than \$10,000 a year paid 45 percent and 59 percent of their incomes for housing, respectively." By federal government policy, the amount spent on housing costs should not exceed 30 percent of a household's annual gross income.

Therefore, "The Housing Gap" symposium is designed to help inform, educate and create a greater sense of awareness of such facts. It also seeks to raise the consciousness of the community about this issue, an issue that if not

adequately responded to may affect the quality of life of all of us. Finally, City officials state that the symposium aims to develop a series of recommendations and continuing research approaches for consideration by City Council.

"The Housing Gap" problem is probably more evident by the 3,900 families on Housing Authority's public housing waiting list, a number limited only by a moratorium on accepting new applications. It is evident too by the hundreds who seek help at Crisis Assistance Ministry. Statistical data or numbers don't provide an upfront sense of the human suffering that the "Housing Gap" reflects.

A City publication refers to a grandmother raising three teenagers in a three-room house. Her house is over-occupied, a City code violation. Her bed is the living room sofa. She works part-time for \$3.45 per hour for a weekly income of \$69. Her landlord recently raised the rent to \$40 per week, thus she is paying approximately 58 percent of her income for housing. Then, there is the recent Charlotte Observer story about the "new homeless" that focuses on 27-year-old Chris Brown and his 22-year-old, pregnant girlfriend whose "home" is under a bridge over Independence Building, at Eastway Drive. Just think, there are thousands of Charlotte families and individuals whose living conditions are like these if not worse.

In summary, the Housing Gap symposium seeks to bring together representatives of financial institutions, developers, builders, owners of rental property, non-profit housing organizations, churches, County and City elected officials and staff, neighborhood organizations and individual citizens to hear talks and panel discussions and then to participate in at least two of four workshops to help develop recommendations designed to be an accelerated start reducing the Housing Gap problem. You can help. Simply call the City Community Development Department, 336-2491, and request registration information.

Reflection On The Election

Now that the political dust has settled, we might ask: "What happened? What did the voters really say?" In straight forward, simple language the elections did this:

- Returned the U.S. Senate to the Democrats by giving them a 55 to 45 party edge;
- Enabled the Democrats to retain control of the U.S. House of Representatives;
- Enabled the Republican Party to increase its governorship seats by eight, including neighboring South Carolina and in Alabama for the first time;
- Enabled ex-mayors seeking governorships to achieve better success than at any previous time in modern political history. One major exception was in the 61 percent to 41 percent voter margin loss by Los Angeles Democrat Mayor Tom Bradley in his second bid to unseat California's

Republican Gov. George Deukmejian; -Allowed Democrat Terry Sanford's razor thin U.S. Senate victory to nearly match a similar narrow victory by the other North Carolina Senator, Jesse Helms when he defeated Jim Hunt.

-Kept the Democrats in continuing control of the N.C. State Senate with a 112 to 12 margin and a 40 to 10 gap in the House;

-Allowed the Republican County Commissioners three to two majority under the old at-large system to enlarge to six to one under the new district system,

-Returned to the eight-year-old "bedroom commissioner" setting by electing six commissioners, all Republicans, who live in southeast Charlotte;

-In spite of serious administration problems, allowed C.W. Kidd to retain his position as Sheriff;

Miller Says:

Do Blacks Refuse To See Dignity In All Work?

By Sherman N. Miller
Special To The Post
During the zenith of the civil rights' era, it was not uncommon to hear blacks railing out, "I'm not taking no menial job," referring to jobs tainted by the connotations of servitude. Yet, today, I hear blacks lamenting the loss of those jobs to other ethnic minority groups or whites.

I gained an appreciation for the long-term deleterious impact of blacks' ego blindness through conversations with a young Charlotte, NC chap who was forced to make a living on one of these stereotyped jobs. This fellow was forced to drop out of Johnson C. Smith University for reasons he claimed were underpinned by a lack of finance. After leaving college his situation deteriorated to where he found himself without a home, clothes, and a job.

This young chap says he pulled himself up to dignity by shining shoes at the Adam's Mark Hotel in Charlotte. He displayed a good understanding of what attracts customers. His shoes were excellent and he ran over you with manners.



Miller

It was difficult for me to comprehend a young black chap readily saying "Yes, sir," and "No sir," to customers in 1986. Yet he pointed out how important manners are in being able to get customers to stop and in holding a dialogue with them.

This small businessman spoke with pride when he told me that shoe shine money paid back a significant portion of the money he borrowed to go to college. He also spoke of being able to make rent payments on time and earning \$20,000 in 1985. Nonetheless, this business-



As I See It

Black Women In Corporate America

By Gerald O. Johnson
Special To The Post

As more and more black females strive to meet career objectives and obtain the American dream, the gap continues to widen for these women to secure male companionship. I wanted to know, "To what degree does this cause conflicts in black relationships?"

Linda Spence, who was scheduled to appear on the panel but was unable to attend, gave me a personal interview. "The situation has always existed," Linda commented. "The difference now is my generation marries for companionship whereas my parents married for security." Linda went on to say that women no longer needed men for the necessities of life, hence, they could afford to play the waiting game. But, finding the right companion was indeed a problem.

"We are living in a new generation and material things dominate this generation," Linda said. "Conse-



Gerald

quently, we expect a relationship to support the material things we can't obtain on our own," she continued.

The fact that more and more black women are getting degrees and relatively lucrative careers, puts pressure on black men. Egotistically, we cannot accept women outpacing us in careers. "Black men still have the mama syndrome,"

Linda stated. "They want us to cook, clean house, have kids, and get a job for a side line. Those days are gone forever."

This relationship dilemma is leading and will continue to lead to the erosion of the black family. More and more black women will have to choose white male companions, or stay single, or opt to become a single family parent. More and more children will develop and grow up in female-dominated homes. This can lead to catch-22 situation.

Linda feels that until we as black men and women start viewing each other as individuals and get beyond the status symbols, the situation will not improve. "We must start viewing each other as to who we are and not where we are," she added. This means that we must start from a common base and build from that. Men must stop being intimidated by a woman's position and deal with her as an individual.

In the meantime we need to concentrate our efforts on stressing education to our young black males. Civic groups, churches, schools, and the media, need to structure programs centered around careers and secondary education. With the government cutting back on financing special programs it becomes a project that the community has to sponsor. Moreover, volunteering time is probably more important than the money. Optimist clubs, fraternities, Lions Clubs, and other male organizations need to devote time to projects that will promote a positive black male image. A lot of kids today do not have a male image in the household.

Our involvement in such projects may help save the black family structure. God knows it won't hurt. Our community deserves it. Our young black sisters need it. Laura, Cynthia, Evelyn, and Christy are shining examples of what awaits those who are led in the right direction from our efforts.

Consequently, former blighted areas have now become Yuppie havens.

If blacks refuse to see dignity in all work and the skill requirements for good paying jobs continues to rise, what does this portend for Black America's socio-economic future? Will re-

gentrification continue to force poor blacks out of their rental homes because they will never be able to afford to buy them? Will services in the black community further

erode because Black America's Gross National Product is stagnated by a skill chasm with mainstream American industry?

Let us hope the new board game for the late 1980s does not become, "Find the new black ghetto."

NCBST Supports Martin's Recommendations

Raleigh - The N.C. Board of Science and Technology is issuing a resolution supporting Governor Martin's recommendations to the General Assembly concerning the state's designation as the "host" for a low-level radioactive waste disposal site by the Southeast Compact Commission.

The resolution states the Board's

support for the Governor's recommendations to the General Assembly that North Carolina accept designation by the Southeast Compact Commission as the host state for a low-level radioactive waste disposal site beginning in 1992 and ending in 2012 under certain conditions.

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