

Editorials

The Charlotte Post

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We Too Are Americans

A U.S. congressional delegation visiting Russia expressed shock and surprise over a remark by Soviet elder Mikhail Gorbachev last week in a lecture against U.S. interference in Soviet human rights. Specifically, Gorbachev is reported to have said that the United States could solve its racial problems by establishing separate states for blacks and other minorities.

Rep. Norman Dicks, Democrat from the State of Washington, said Gorbachev started his brief discussion on human rights by expressing dissatisfaction over the United States' too often criticism and shortcomings on the Soviet Union while failing to be self-critical. Gorbachev added that his country's system of autonomous republics was based on ethnic background and culture. This includes such small minorities as Jews, Tatars and Chukchi Indians.

Congressman Dicks then quotes Gorbachev as saying, "We have respect for our nationalities in this country. Why don't you have these autonomous areas?" Gorbachev went on to suggest that the United States could consider providing such separate states for blacks, Puerto Ricans and Polish-Americans.

Some in the congressional group apparently felt that Gorbachev's remark was kind of off the record and did not include any details. Details notwithstanding, Gorbachev's remarks reflected a lack of knowledge about U.S. history that was compounded by "mixing apples and oranges" by comparing the geographic setting of Russian minority groups with American minorities. On this point, Mr. Gorbachev overlooked the very important fact that the minorities in his country have historically been born and lived in separate national states. Minorities in the United States -- be they blacks, Puerto Ricans, Jews, Polish-Americans -- have been born and lived in anyone of the 48 continental United States or migrated to one such state from abroad and made it their home.

Hawaii and Alaska, the two newest of the 50 States of America, are the only states with a large ethnic population by birth similar to the minority states in Russia. However, even here, because of the greater freedom of travel and movement in America, Hawaii and Alaska have been inhabited by many so-called non-minority people and some of these ethnic people have freely migrated to others of the 48 states.

However, to put Mr. Gorbachev's remarks in an even more meaningful historic context, we must reflect back on a little known American history as written by eminent historians (who happen to be black) John Hope Franklin (classic textbook "From Slavery To Freedom - A History of American Negroes") and Lerone Bennett Jr. ("Before The Mayflower: A History of the Negro In America").

In the year 1714 northern "Native American" whites proposed sending "Negroes" (not called 'blacks' until 1960s when the belief arose that the name 'Negro' was invented by white people) back to Africa from which they had been forcefully brought to America in chains beginning 95 years earlier in 1619.

While nothing happened, the idea lingered, then in 1777 a Virginia legislative committee, headed by Thomas Jefferson, developed a plan for the emancipation and exportation of blacks back to Africa.

Colonization Of Negroes

Two key developments hastened the interest of white people in the colonization of "Free Negroes." First, in 1800, a black, Episcopal priest named Absalom Jones was instrumental in initiating an "abortive attempt to establish a Negro state in Virginia. Alarmed whites organized a colonization society and made frantic efforts to settle free Negroes (considered to be "a dangerous and useless element") in Liberia... Negroes perceived...colonizations (to be) anti-Negro and pro-slavery." One prominent Negro said bluntly, "The Colonizationists want us to Liberia if we will. If we won't go there, we may go to hell." Neither place excited the imagination of 19th century Negroes," Bennett writes.

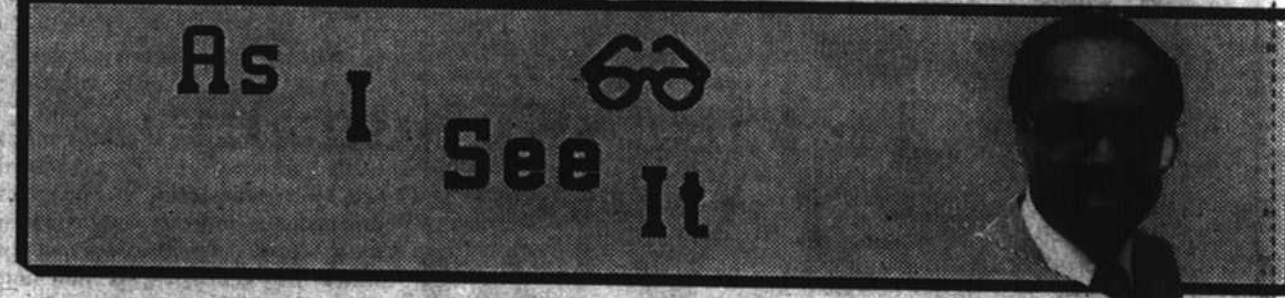
The second development is best seen in the words of Dr. Franklin, "Perhaps nothing brought colonization before the country more dramatically than the carrying of 38 Negroes to Africa in 1815 by Paul Cuffee, at his own expense...Within two years...the American Colonization Society was organized (and)...immediately plans were made to establish a Negro colony in Africa." Despite these efforts, less than 15,999 Negroes migrated. Negro and white abolitionists opposed all such exportation plans for reasons of simple economics. These were as Dr. Franklin reminds us, the high cost of transportation and the high cost of living in Liberia where colonial affairs were mismanaged.

This Is Our Country

Then, following World War I (1914-1917) and the nation continuing to not recognize Negroes as first-class citizens, a Jamaican-born black man, Marcus Garvey won wide popularity with a strong appeal to race pride. "Garvey said," Dr. Franklin writes, "that the only hope for American Negroes was to flee America and return to Africa and build up a country of their own." Many other black leaders bitterly denounced Garvey as insincere and a selfish imposter. Garvey's mismanagement of his finances involving his Black Star Steamship Line led to his imprisonment and eventual deportation in 1927.

Garvey's back to Africa movement failed because most blacks were and are today content to remain in the USA and strive to improve conditions through regular channels open to all citizens.

In more blunted terms, Mr. Gorbachev needs to understand what black people told white Americans after the 1777 colonization attempt in editorials and from their pulpits, "This (American soil by states and regions) is our home and this is our country. Beneath its soil lies the bones of our fathers; for it, some of them fought, bled, and died. Here we were born, and here we will die."



Today's Concerns, Tomorrow's Crisis

Northside Development

The final plans are being prepared to recommend the rapid development of the northern sector of Charlotte. The objective of the recommendation is to ease the growth of southeast Charlotte. The recommendation, which was developed by the Charlotte Mecklenburg Citizens Forum, will have the Charlotte Mecklenburg Utility Department (CMUD) lay water and sewer lines in the Northern sector of town near UNCC.

Water and sewer lines are a catalyst for growth. In the past developers would have to wait on CMUD before they could finish a project and recoup their investment. This recommendation, however, would circumvent that and should have developers chopping at the bit to participate. It is estimated that 1000 new single family homesites would be developed a year.

I have seen the recommendation and it is a good one. But I think the recommendation will lead to major problems for the residents of Charlotte's northern corridor.

The major problem is roads! Nowhere does this recommendation address roads. The roads in the northern sector of town can not adequately handle this type of growth.

Even if the recommendation addressed roads, it would take at least 10 years before the road projects could begin. The city has that much of a backlog on road projects.

It is essential that the northern corridor be developed. It will have a lot of positive impacts on the northsiders, as well as, all of Charlotte. But the development should be a slow phased in approach. If it isn't, then we will only repeat the mistakes that got southeast Charlotte in the mess it is in. Without a plan that addresses the road situation being contemplated with this development recommendation, northside residents should come out in numbers and vote against the Charlotte Mecklenburg Community Forum recommendation.

City's Garbage Disposal problem

In 2 years, possibly 3 years if an extension is granted, the Harrisburg landfill will be no more. The Harrisburg landfill is where your garbage goes after it is picked up from your house (when it is picked up). The landfill is full. The County is currently proposing solutions to handle this problem. The solution includes two incinerators, two landfills, and a transfer station. All of this is to work in conjunction with an aggressive recycling program. This proposed solution would put the trash problem behind us for many years.

Unfortunately, the County is running into problems trying to solve this problem. Seems once people put the garbage out, they don't want it coming back. Everybody feels garbage disposal is necessary as long as it is disposed in someone else's neighborhood.

The transfer station slated for the

Westside is running into opposition from the Westside Coalition. This group of citizens feel the westside has been the dumping ground for all Charlotte long enough. They have filed a suit against the County in hopes of getting the station moved to another site.

One of the landfills is to go on highway 51. It is running into problems with the State. The State wants the cite lined before it can be used as a landfill. This lining comes with a hefty price tag of some \$20 million.

The two incinerators are earmarked for the UNCC area, and Arrowwood. The other landfill cite is in Mathews.

County officials are up against a rock and a hardplace. It will take 18 months to two years to get the first of these projects completed. That's about the time the Harrisburg landfill runs out. Moreover, the cost of the incinerators goes up with each passing day. The two incinerators are estimated to cost 60 million, today. That is up from 48 million when this issue first came up several years ago. The taxpayers are footing the bill for this project, if you didn't know.

The county is in a lose, lose situation. They will go with the plan as proposed. At this late date, they don't have much of a choice. At this late date, I am not sure any of us do.

But it is indeed refreshing to see the Westside holding elected officials accountable. That is a victory within itself. I hope the coalition will use this issue as a springboard to remain active in local politics.



A Chance To Direct Money Into The Black Community

By Sherman N. Miller
 America's ethnic melting pot comes into full view whilst one drives along restaurant lanes looking for a place to dine. One finds Chinese, Japanese, Mexican, Traditional American, Italian, fast-food, and other ethnic restaurants. Yet it is often very difficult to find a "Soul Food" restaurant without asking local people for directions.

A couple of black dining establishment owners gave me their prospectus on soul food. A Charlotte, NC, cafeteria owner told me that he sold "Traditional American cuisine." There was always a significant white clientele in this cafeteria during my visits.

Willie Felton, owner of the Oasis Restaurant in Akron, OH, was more poignant in addressing the reaction of black people to the thought of soul food. "One has to be careful because people will back up," he replied when queried about his business being a soul food restaurant.

Felton and his partner, James Scott, left the impression that soul food carries a negative connota-



Miller

tion. They seemed to feel that it conjures up a greasy food image. Nevertheless, the excellent taste of the Oasis' food is distinctively Traditional Afro-American skewed.

Felton's and Scott's comments were disquieting, so I asked a few blacks for their impressions of soul food. One lady argued that there is only traditional American food because both Southern blacks and whites ate the same food during her youth. On the other hand, a

chap described soul food as greens, blackeyed peas, chitterlings, corn bread, and so on.

These same people were asked to tell how to locate a soul food restaurant in a strange city. Everyone said they would have to ask a local, black person. One lady pointed out that this problem was not unique to black restaurants because she had to allow the same technique to locate black hairdressers.

In recounting my gourmet experiences at black-owned restaurants across the nation, "Traditional Afro-American cuisine" is more descriptive of the meals I ate. The Freeman & Harris (Shreveport, LA) Restaurant has a superb shrimp specialty that is world class. Pascal's (Atlanta, GA) has excellent food and you also get to meet many of Atlanta's black professionals at this restaurant.

I have made a personal commitment to try to eat at least one meal per trip in a black restaurant to help turn over money in the black community. There are many other black professionals who are business travellers today. Imagine

how many new black jobs that would be generated if travelling black professionals made a small commitment to use black restaurants.

Some black professionals may be concerned for their safety going to restaurants off the main business corridor. Yet, many black restaurants cater to whites. Gloria Whatley, (Akron, OH, Black Urban Professional (Buppies)) allayed the safety issue for the Oasis restaurant and her comment is indicative of my experience across the country.

"I feel very comfortable coming by myself!" proclaimed Whatley.

Since the prestigious black magazines: "Ebony," "Essence," and "Black Enterprise" reach most of the Buppies, they should take the lead and publish special editions which contain a list of the major, black-owned food establishments. It would be very helpful if these magazines also rated these restaurants. Hopefully these lists will afford "Buppies" a greater opportunity to direct mainstream dollars into the black community.

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