

# Editorials

## The Charlotte Post

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### Jesse Jackson's Realism

In our editorial, "On Writing And Writers," last week we concluded by commenting on how white journalists want to make Jesse Jackson the real "Invisible Man." Ralph Ellison began his classic autobiographic-novel by the same name with these very revealing words, "I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me...When they approach me they only see my surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination - indeed, everything and anything except me."

Now, 34 years after the publication of "The Invisible Man," 24 years after the Martin Luther King led March on Washington and a few lesser years after the passage of significant civil rights legislation, black Americans continue to be "invisible" to a nation that ignores their needs, to a national government that still perpetuates policies that result in poverty and to a news media that vasolates between neglecting and stereotyping them.

Jesse Jackson is the latest nationally prominent black personality to be given the "invisible man" treatment. A case in point, as journalists who have tried to ignore Jackson, to make him invisible as a serious polit-

ical candidate. This caused The Charlotte Observer's Jerry Shinn to say candidly, "If Jesse Jackson were white, all the media focus would have turned to him when Gary Hart dropped out." Furthermore, more is written about why Jackson is ignored than about what he has to say.

Ironically, Jackson's treatment by the majority of the nation's media reflects the realism of a vital point in his message to America. Jackson states forcefully in his book, *Straight From The Heart*, that the crucial American experience was not the Revolution, or the Constitution or the New Deal, rather it was slavery with all of its evils. Thus, Jackson asserts, the crucial test of our current values and policies lies in dealing with the heritage of slavery - discrimination and racism - neither of which are limited to black people.

We had hoped to comment further on Jackson's *Straight From The Heart* view this week, however, the book, produced by a small publisher, is temporarily out of print. When available we'll say more about Jesse Jackson because his views will have a significant impact upon the next President, no matter who he may be.

### Two Ups-One Down

Last week's Post page one stories reflected the general way that the nation treats its minority citizens; that is, for every two steps of forward progress, one and sometimes two or three steps backward occur.

District 3 City Council member Ron Leeper's announcement that he will seek one of the four at-large Council seats this November is to be applauded as a progressive step forward. He said that he decided to run at-large because the time was right for him. In specific terms, Mr. Leeper said, "The choice I had were fairly limited. Either run at-large, or not run. Five terms is more than enough time to serve in one office. I now believe I have the responsibility to allow others the opportunity that has been afforded me."

Mr. Leeper's decision was timely and a breath of fresh air that should still silence critics of the district system. Such critics, be they justified or not, have alleged that district seats or "safe seats," as some have called them, tend to become the monopoly of a single candidate for an indefinite number of years as few offer to challenge the incumbents.

In the case of predominantly black districts, the potential for criticism is even greater because of the general reluctance of one black candidate to oppose another. It is past time for the black electorate to rise above this kind of now stalemated politics to encourage more black people to seek public offices.

We wish Mr. Leeper well because he has served us well in five two-year terms that has benefited not just District 3 but all areas of the city.

In another progressive step forward, the Stepping Stone Housing Program was announced. This unique program is designed to turn public housing tenants into homeowners within a five to seven year period.

Families selected for occupancy of one of the two 50 unit apartment complexes will pay rents under the Housing Authority's normal policy with one major exception. This is, there will be no rental increase as such but families will be expected to make monthly payments to an escrow account. The payment amounts will be increased yearly to assure that the tenant will have accumulated approximately \$2,700 for a down payment and related closing costs in the purchase of a new home at the end of the five to seven year period. As these tenants become homeowners others will receive similar opportunities and likewise an equal number of new public housing rental units will become available. This also means an opportunity to break the cycle of poverty with new outlooks and new hope for many families.

On a sad note, meaning one step backward, we witnessed the Republican dominated Board of County Commissioners giving themselves a healthy raise in pay while voting to eliminate the Minority Affairs Office.

While we don't view this vote by the Commissioners as racially motivated, we do consider their action irrational as has been a number of other recent decisions. The Commissioners' reason for eliminating the Minority Affairs Office was that the Office was duplicating services provided by the Community Relations Committee and other County-supported community services. If this is true, we have to ask why the Minority Affairs Office was ever established or why it had not been abolished before now?

Is there any wonder that the Post's headline read, "Blacks Ask What's Coming Down Next?"



### Black Women: Strength Of A Community

I spent this past Saturday at a presentation entitled "A Celebration of Your Participation in a Study on Mothering and Working". The affair was the culmination of Ms. Suzanne Carrouthers' Ph. D. thesis on generations of Black mothers in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg community.

Ms. Carrouthers spent the fall and winter of 1980 and the spring of 1981 interviewing 53 Black females between the ages of 11 and 86, representing 20 families. The purpose was to analyze and document the meaning of mothering and working and how this meaning got passed on from mother to daughter, from generation to generation.

With her thesis finished, and a Ph. D. under her belt, Ms. Carrouthers returned home to bestow her thanks on those who gave so fully of themselves. With the help of friends and neighbors, and Dr. Harold S. Pride providing the accommodations, Ms. Carrouthers gave the participants a dinner and other tokens of her appreciation.

The entire event was warm and touching for several reasons.

The sincerity and dedication of purpose that Suzanne Carrouthers possessed was omnipresent throughout the evening. The mere fact that she felt obligated to return home and share her completed work with those who participated says a lot about the author.

But, I guess what really made the evening for me was this paragraph from Suzanne's program: "You not only worked at home but also you were workers away from



home. Although you held a variety of jobs, you worked primarily in schools, offices, homes, and hospitals. The ordinary activities of your day-to-day lives bestows you a distinction that Alice Walker would describe as the anonymous Black mothers whose art goes unsigned and whose names are only known by their family."

As pointed out during the evening, we spend so much time talking about what's wrong with the Black family, that we rarely take the time to discover the many things that are right.

Without a doubt, the Black woman has been the backbone of our existence.

She has shown remarkable resiliency and adaptability to the changing times. She has in many cases had to carry not only her private burdens, but the burdens of an entire family. Often times she had to carry the burdens of the entire Black community.

Often times she sheds a tear under the stress of such a load. But never should we construe these tears as a sign of weakness. Instead, they should be viewed as a sign of sensitivity and understanding

to what she is up against. With a strong spiritual conviction, and deep dedication to purpose in life, the Black woman has played an instrumental part in not only in the Black community, but in our society at-large.

The social dilemma of the working mother that is plaguing our current-day society, has been with the Black mother throughout our history in this country.

The current day stress of the broken home and mothers having to raise families alone is nothing new either. Few cultures could have survived being torn away from family members to be entrapped in a life of slavery, few cultures could have stood being raped, and molested at the will of plantation owners, and still be able to hold their heads high with pride and dignity.

As I look back over the strength of my own family, the unsung heroes are my mother and my aunts who worked their fingers to the bone so that we wouldn't have to. It is with great pride that I say thank God for the Black woman. Without her strength, Where would we Black community be.

I would like to thank Ms. Carrouthers for an inspirational reminder of the value of the Black woman to our society; yesterday, today, and tomorrow. Her work has captured for posterity the richness of an important segment of our community.

Moreover, her work has endowed her as an elite member of an distinguished group - The American Black woman.

### Biden's Rejecting Jesse An Insult To Blacks

Special To The Post By Dr. Lenora Fulani

When Democratic Primary presidential candidate Senator Joseph Biden told reporters this week that he would not accept Rev. Jesse Jackson as his vice-presidential running mate, he added his name to the long list of white Democrats who are helping to prove that Blacks need an independent party.

Rev. Jackson is a presidential candidate - indeed the front-running Democratic presidential candidate - because he has mass support from Black people who identify him as an important leader of our community. Still, the Democratic Party refuses to acknowledge that. When Senator

Biden declined consideration of Rev. Jackson as a possible running mate he not only insulted Brother Jackson, he insulted all Black people by disrepresenting our right to choose our own leaders.

Senator Biden sets his own standards for what he considers to be a bona fide Black leader. He tells us that to qualify for a spot on his ticket, a Black must have held elective offices.

As Black people, we know very well how the notions of "qualified" and "unqualified" are used to weed out Blacks and another oppressed people who are too militant and too independent for the establishment. The Democratic Party has demonstrated over and over again that it hopes to weed Jesse Jack-

son out of the presidential process, in favor of a white moderate. The only Black it will consider for the vice presidential slot is a middle-of-the-roader like Congressman William Gray, whom Biden said he would accept as a running mate. This is the very danger of Rev. Jackson's run. While I completely support his candidacy in the Democratic primaries, he ends up excluded from the centers of power while his campaign opens doors for the likes of Gray - a moderate who does nothing to empower the Black masses.

That's why I'm leading a national crusade to place an independent Black candidate on the ballot in all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

