

The Westside As A Colony

Guest Editorial
By Kelly Alexander

One way of looking at the problems of Charlotte's westside is to consider it as a colonial outpost of the more affluent sections of the city.

Demonstratively, the westside has been dominated in the political, social and economic development of the community by the southeast. In over 30 years no Charlotte mayor has lived on the westside. It was not until the 1977 referendum on district representation, where neighborhood activists and the black community formed a working partnership, that the westside gained identifiable representation on the City Council.



Alexander

Political decisions are made for colonies by the decision makers in the mother country. In Charlotte, the political decisions that affect the westside have been made by city councils that have been dominated by other interests. The most recent examples of this are the loss of the Charlotte Knights Stadium to York Co., South Carolina; the holding hostage of the city's bonding capacity for road construction; the attempt to locate a trash consolidation facility near the University Park neighborhood and the protracted flap over compensation for property owners impacted by over-flights from the airport. The location of the Charlotte Coliseum on the westside came in the face of determined efforts to have it sited up-

town. The affluent tend to immediately recognize common self-interest, i.e., traffic congestion where they drive to and from work; low water pressure when they want to water their lawns. The affluent resist change when confronted by demands that they view as in opposition to progress, as they define it.

They have defined development of the southeast into the premier area of the city, while paying only token attention to Wilkinson Boulevard, West Boulevard and Beatties Ford Road, as a major public policy priority. Shopping malls, retail stores, restaurants, movie theaters, banks and savings & loans are abundant throughout the southeast. The westside dims in comparison, with only occasional points of light at University City or along Freedom Drive or Sugar Creek Road.

Some of this sad state of affairs, the westside has brought upon itself. After the euphoria of the '77 referendum, westside voters failed to develop performance standards for their elected officials. Westsiders never developed a working definition of what constituted a fair share of public expenditures on infrastructure and special projects. The westside suffers from lack of partisan attention to its needs by its representatives. Those who would assume the responsibility of representing the westside must be able and willing to articulate the economic development and social equity concerns of the area. Such a posture may well be incompatible with the "good old boy" politics of the City Council and County Commission.

The westside also has failed to maximize its political clout

through vigorous voter registration and mobilization activities. Westsiders must learn the importance of participation in the political process. Turnout is the key. The potential exists for dramatic increases in westside voter participation. The westside has the potential of being the pivotal vote in deciding who will win election to the at-large Council seats. It is overshadowed in the at-large races now because of lower voter turnout relative to the southeast, and a lack of native son candidates to ally around. The westside seems to have unwisely placed all of its eggs in the district basket, while leaving the at-large races to others.

Relative to the southeast, the westside is the stronghold of the working class. It is the home of the majority of the city's black citizens. It is an area that has provided the intellectual base for both the Concerned Parents Association and the NAACP. It is the home of major industrial parks and both interstate highways and two universities. C. W. Kidd calls it home as does Rev. Joseph Chambers, Leroy "Pop" Miller and Ron Leeper.

The westside doesn't lack for talent, just coherent organization that crosses neighborhood, ethnic and philosophical lines. It is time for the westside to "get its act together" and take its place as a co-equal partner in the development of Charlotte.

The writer is executive secretary of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Branch and president of the North Carolina State NAACP.

Letters To The Post

Black Support Led To Springfest Victory

Dear Editor:
This letter is addressed to *The Charlotte Post* and the community of Charlotte.

We extend our sincerest and warmest thanks to you, Editor Jalyne Strong, and *The Charlotte Post* for the timely and professional reporting on the lack of black participation in Springfest, our city's celebration.

We also thank Charlotte's black community for its overwhelming support of Balloon-A-Grams in this issue. The flood of phone calls, letters and other inquiries made the difference. The black community's interest in this issue made it possible to open the doors at Springfest, Inc. not only for Balloon-A-Grams as a vendor for 1989, but also for

other black vendors, artists, potential committee and board members.

Springfest is one of the largest celebrations of its kind in the United States. Since its inception, we (black people) have been gracious supporters of Springfest as volunteers and, most of all, as consumers.

Our recent victory demonstrates the enormous power we have in our community.

The situation we have just gone through is also significant because it raises questions about policies of other downtown Charlotte celebrations.

We hope everyone will join us in thanking councilmember Ella Scarborough, MWBE Coordinator Liz Mills, and

Vivian Nivens, former Springfest board member, for their courageous stands and outspoken postures.

Last but certainly not least, we thank our attorney, Mr. Wayne C. Alexander, for his unrelenting support and dedication to the positive growth of Charlotte and "all" its citizens.

In closing, we would like to remind the black business community that we are responsible for providing information in order to guide our black dollars.

It is within our dollars that our power lies.

CAROLYN MASON
and the staff of
Balloon-A-Grams

Post Editorial On Athletic Propositions Was Sensible

Dear Editor:
My compliments on Gerald Johnson's editorial in the February 23, 1989 issue of *The Charlotte Post*. It was the first, well written,

sensible position I have read on the controversy concerning college athletics and the two propositions.

The current argument seems to be over how "unqualified"

can a student be and still be an athlete, rather than how qualified should they be to attend college in the first place.

HUGH DURDEN

What's On Your Mind?

Let us hear your comments, ideas and opinions. Write to:

Letters To The Post
P.O. Box 30144
Charlotte, NC 28230

Please include name, address and phone number. We edit letters for clarity and grammar.

Confusing The Messenger With The Self-Help Message

Too many of "the most visible of our black information providers" are "overstating" the "repetitive song" of self-help -- especially "articles like Tony Brown's can lie counterproductive and even damaging to the very people whom they are intended to help." Lonzie Cox Jr. wrote on the editorial page of the *New Pittsburgh Courier*.

"Here's what I mean. While I for one have always thought Tony Brown had a good grasp of our communities' goals, needs and problems nationwide, he seems to have narrowed his view to the point where he thinks self-help is the only change that Black America needs. While I agree with him that self-help is a vital compromise in our recovery to economic and social levels...self-help is not the only answer and should not be touted as such," he added.

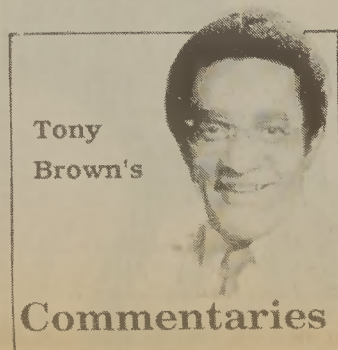
In my opinion, Cox's criticisms are very reasonable and typical -- typical in the sense that he represents the point of view of the vast majority of black people. He would have to, or how else could you explain the fact that we spend 95 percent of our

money with non-black people? I readily concede that Cox is more representative of naive mainstream black disinformation than I am.

I say naive because Cox expects "George Bush to be a President for all the American people," after he accuses Bush of winning "the election by flat out racist tactics." Think logically about what he is saying.

He deduces that the man he accuses of bigotry will be colorblind. That's a contradiction -- no, that's wishful thinking. First, George Bush is not a bigot and did not win because of racism. Second, politics is a game of quid pro quo -- you give to me and I give to you -- not a social game of Scrabble. Therefore, blacks gave Bush 12 percent of their vote and Bush gives them 12 percent of his attention.

Cox's logic consistently expects something for nothing: You spend all of your money with white people and blame them for all of your problems. You can give the Democrats all of your votes and expect the victorious Republicans to politically reward you.



Tony Brown's

Commentaries

Logically, if that were in vogue in the black community, it is Jesse Jackson from whom blacks should seek relief for their various miseries because it is to Jesse Jackson that blacks surrendered their votes. If your political choice loses, so do you. That's the way the game of quid-pro-quo politics is played.

I know that I run the risk of being run out of the club for employing logic, instead of a constant barrage of demagogic blaming of white people. Cox proves this point: "When white America sees people like Tony

Brown blaming all our problems on us, they're more than happy to jump on the bandwagon -- and blame us too."

Why should black people be concerned about white opinion at all? Only if you're dependent on them financially do you have to be. And you will be so long as you spend 95 percent of your money with them. We will be freed by the truth -- not by replacing white lies with black lies.

It seems to me that a more viable concern would be a plan to retain a larger percentage of our income, buy our freedom and let our resulting economic and political power shape white opinion (since that's so important to so many blacks).

Cox seems to suggest, however, that if I and other blacks who believe in self-help, instead of white people -- and white people's goodwill, emphasize our primary responsibility, especially in the area of economics in changing our condition, we become the enemy.

This convoluted, mainstream, demagogic logic proves that white racism is not the primary

problem. It is an ignorance of the facts. Facts such as: White people, no matter what you think they owe you for slavery, Jim Crow, segregation, etc., are not going to pay up; Black people are generally disliked and shunned; Black people are near social and economic extinction in America; and time is not on our side.

Cox says that "self-help is a vital compromise in our recovery..." What I see as our salvation, he sees as a "compromise." It is this dependency logic (not Cox personally) that has already compromised Black America.

How, I ask you, can a people expect someone else to help them when they refuse to help themselves? And how can blacks expect political and social stability with no -- I mean zilch -- economic base?

One black head of a national organization wrote that the per capita income for blacks was only \$575 for every \$1,000 for whites, which proves that blacks did not share in the Reagan "economic comeback." His conclusion is that "if blacks had

incomes comparable to white, African-Americans would have an additional \$162 billion in purchasing power."

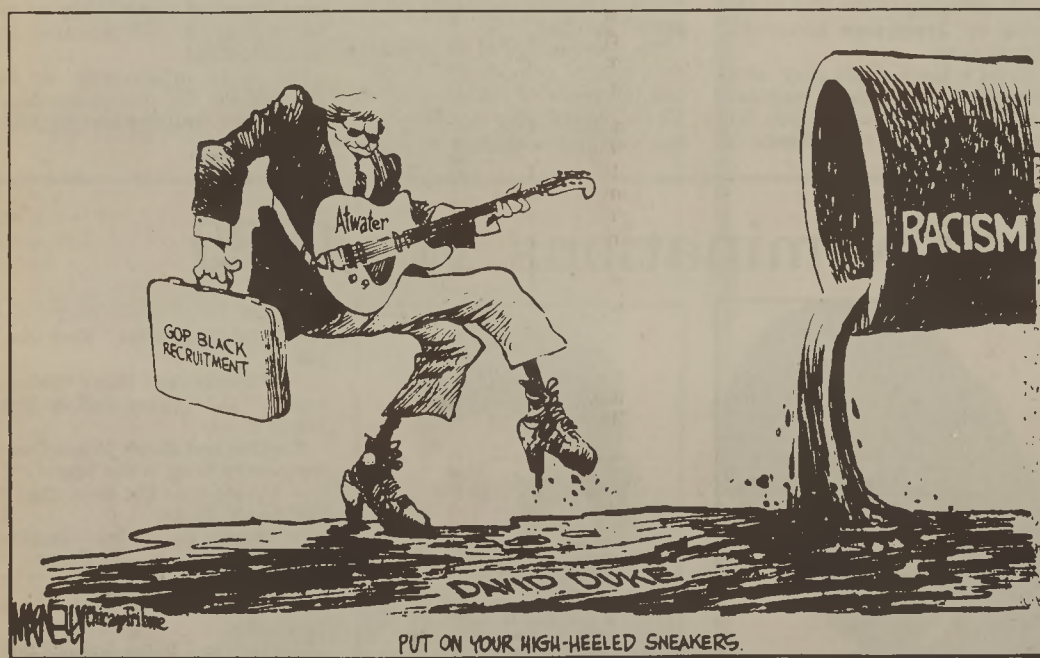
Why is the gap there in the first place? Because blacks spend 95 percent of their money with whites.

While the black condition change if blacks had \$162 billion more in purchasing power? No. Based on the current pattern of black consumer consumption, blacks would give whites 95 percent of the current \$250 billion. No relative economic growth would take place.

So I say to the Coxes of Black America, keep spending all of your money with your alleged enemy and blaming the Tony Browns for pointing it out. But blaming the messenger for the message won't change our situation.

Only self-help will.

TONY BROWN'S JOURNAL TV series can be seen on public television Sunday on Channel 42 at 5 p.m. It can also be seen on Channel 58, Saturday, 1:30 p.m. Please consult listings.



PUT ON YOUR HIGH-HEELED SNEAKERS.

Duke Signals Political Move To Right

While the election of Klansman David Duke is deplorable, it is also a reminder that the Far Right is far from dead.

George Bush and Lee Atwater are trying to clean up the image of the Republican Party as a platform for every Right Wing fanatic from Duke to Dan Quayle. But though the Republicans might be trying to appear "kinder and gentler," they are in fact a reactionary party and have succeeded in pulling the entire political spectrum -- including the Democrats -- further and further to the Right.



by
Lenora
Fulani

Black Empowerment

This is why I am so committed to building a black-led, multi-

racial independent party that can represent the majority of the American people who are disenfranchised by the domination of the Far Right.

Finally, if the Republicans are so upset about Duke and the Democrats are so upset about LaRouche, it would seem to be in their interest to support the legislation that eases ballot access restrictions for independent parties so that candidates can run for office in parties which more precisely represent their views.

Retailers Focusing On Wrong Issues?

Shopping once was a very pleasurable occasion. I felt good about buying something new because my worries were behind me. I even wanted to crow a bit. But retailers today have forgotten about their customers' emotional needs.

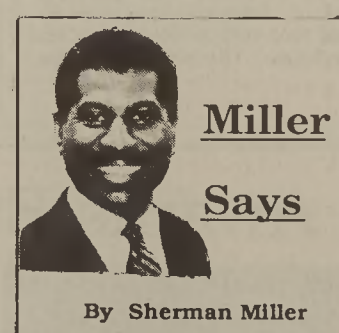
I have been a loyal Sears customer for over 25 years. I gladly paid their premium on items because their quality warranted it. Whenever something was wrong, I merely returned it without any hassle.

Yet, my faith in Sears has been shaken in recent years. I have been equipping my workshop with Sears power tools. I was taken aback at the salespersons pushing service contracts for these tools. I wondered if these contracts implied that Sears was no longer supplying high quality items.

I am only picking on Sears because they get the lion's share of my family's big ticket business. But this same service contract trend is true for all the appliance dealers I have visited. Some contracts, I vaguely recall, ran almost 50 percent of the value of the purchase item for five years coverage. This contract seems foolhardy to me because my Sears appliances never have gone down under 10 years of use.

My parents bought Frigidaire as long as I can remember. My father is a retired General Motors man so my parents bought Frigidaire products when they were a GM division. But I have had to call the office of the president of White Consolidated Industries to negotiate an extension on a warranty for a Frigidaire dishwasher.

Thus, shopping for big ticket items is a trying experience where the customers are left



Miller
Says

By Sherman Miller

wondering about the manufacturers' faith in their products. We customers shudder at the thought that our appliance salesperson is also a quasi-insurance sales person pushing peace of mind. That is, service contracts are nothing more than making the American people pay a surtax for peace of mind.

A similar shopping frustration is felt when purchasing small ticket items. I hear people speaking venomously about shopping at my neighborhood Zayre store. Shopping at this store is a nightmare.

The store has excellent merchandise. You can find your way around well. But when you try to pay for items, you usually find yourself biting your lip to stave your anger.

I can best make my point by sharing a Christmas shopping experience. My wife said she wanted a flannel gown. I decided to visit Zayre against my better judgment. A saleslady helped me pick out the perfect gown. I then got into the checkout line. There were three people in front of me. An elderly lady had bought some children's coats, so she wrote a check for over \$200 to pay for them.

The cashier called for a check approver. It took three calls and roughly 15 minutes before someone came. Once the check was finally approved, he rang it up. The computer signaled that the woman had written a prior check. The cashier was stupefied.

Everyone in line dropped their items and walked out of the store. I drove to Sears where I bought two gowns.

The anguish of the people in my neighborhood centers on the incompetence of Zayre's cashiers. I made this point to the assistant store manager.

I told this fellow that I estimate that his store could increase its business by 20 percent if they corrected the cashier problem. I suggested that they get a bar-code system so their untrained cashiers will not have to spend so much time calling to get the correct prices.

The Zayre's assistant manager shared his problem with getting people to come to work and their rapid employee turnover problem.

If my 20 percent business increase estimate is remotely on target, then Zayre's high cashier turnover rate suggests that they ought to pay their cashiers significantly higher wages. Zayre should also train these people before putting them on the checkout line.

The above incidences suggest that American retailers are ignoring the emotional needs of their customers. On the other hand, some manufacturers like Maytag are exploiting this caveat in the marketplace. Are some major U.S. retailers forsaking business by focusing on the wrong issues in the marketplace?