

The Charlotte Post

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EDITORIALS

Voting A Civic Responsibility

By HOYLE H. MARTIN
Editorial Writer

Once again we are approaching the time when responsible, concerned, involved citizens should and hopefully will be prepared to cast their votes for the candidates of their choice for mayor, council members at-large, and for district council seats.

As we look forward to Primary Election Day, Tuesday, September 26, we need to pause and look back over our shoulders for a reminder of the historically and embarrassingly low voter turnout our city has had in past primaries and general elections. It is because of such historic trends that the board of elections is justifiably predicting another very low primary voter turnout this coming Tuesday.

It is ironic that in America where we have the privilege and right guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution, and civil rights laws that Martin Luther King Jr. and others have died for, so we can be free to study the issues and cast an intelligent vote, there are literally millions of people nationwide who do not vote. Many of these non-voters are residing here in Charlotte. Hopefully, we understand how fragile our freedoms are. Hopefully, too, we understand that the strength of a democratic free society is in how effectively the voters use their voting rights.

Many voters, particularly black voters, have complained bitterly about some aspects of our electoral process, especially when the process appears to work to the disadvantage of black candidates. This has too often resulted in a "what's the use attitude" and caused many to simply not go to the polls and vote. Yes, the American electoral system is not yet perfect, but it is the nearest to the lofty status than any other nation in the world. In fact, it will probably take the act of voting itself to correct the system.

The New Miss America

In the Sunday morning newspapers this past weekend, the Associated Press began a story with this paragraph, "Miss Missouri Debbye Turner, a marimba-playing veterinary student, was crowned Miss America 1990 Saturday night." Not once in this initial 10-paragraph news story was any reference made to the fact that the new Miss America is a black woman, a likely first in absence of a reference to the winners' minority racial classification. Miss Turner is, of course, the third black woman to win the coveted Miss America crown.

Another, and possibly more important first, is that pageant officials this time have asked Miss America to express a viewpoint on an issue of her choice. Pageant Director Leonard Horn said the idea of giving Miss America the right to express opinions on topics of her choice is designed to gain more national respect for the pageant. He said, "This is not just a beauty pageant." We are glad to see the Miss America Pageant reaching beyond the "dumb blond mentality" to something of more substance than young women parading around in swimsuits like sides of beef on a conveyor belt assembly line.

The lovely Miss Turner wasted little time

We have observed the struggles of the peoples of Communist-run Poland in their quest to have free and independent trade unions. Likewise, we have read reports emerging from Russia of growing numbers of people demanding the right to establish a new political party; that is, an alternate to the bureaucratic dictatorial Communist Party. Earlier this year, we witnessed Chinese college students being beaten, imprisoned and even killed because they dared to protest against a lack of freedom in their own country.

Therefore, the fight for freedom, justice and equality continues on and in this fight we must never abandon our privilege to vote, and to vote our convictions on this coming Primary Election Day and on all election days.

Finally, it is long past time for both major political parties at the local, state and national levels to reevaluate their beliefs, ideas, policies and programs to assure that their ideologies, whatever they may be, don't isolate or exclude any group of people. Some in the black community likewise need to end their long-standing apathy toward the political process. We need instead to force the political parties to show us as black people more respect by first beginning to respect ourselves through the intelligent use of the ballot box. The hard fact is that in the absence of the application of our civic responsibility to vote, and to vote intelligently, neither of the major political parties will show any respect to us or our interests.

Yes, it's your city, your neighborhood, your home, and your tax dollars, so you decide what's best for your future and the future of your children by voting your convictions on Primary Election Day - Tuesday, September 26. VOTE, VOTE and VOTE, it's your right, your duty and your freedom.

in speaking out as on her first public appearance when she sang a religious rap song to stress her born-again Christian commitment. On another theme, Debbye Turner said her mission is "motivating the youth of this country to excellence." She noted, too, that she "grew up in a middle-class home (where she) was given love and taught how to work hard for goals and not give up, not be discouraged by obstacles." Miss Turner added that she is "politically moderate - I vote my conscience."

It is indeed refreshing to see a young woman, 23 years of age, in a high profile position who at least initially sees beyond her own physical beauty and has some ideas on issues of substance and reality. If this beginning is an example of things to come, the causes of women's and minority rights, equality, and respect will take a giant step forward from a traditionally unlikely source.

We trust and pray that God Almighty will forever post an angel at Miss Debbye Turner's side in her quest to motivate the nation's youth to excellence and to be a role model truly befitting the title of Miss America.

To Break Free Politically, Black Votes Can't Be Taken For Granted By Parties

By THOMAS "FESS" BRADLEY
Special To The Post

It is important to understand the roles that the major political parties have played in the development of the politics of symbolism.

Fact: America's ruling class is not a monolithic structure; it allows room for some ideological and pragmatic differences. The Democratic Party and the Republican Party are the highest expression of these differences.

Fact: both parties as components of the power structure seek the containment of oppressed people. They may choose different methods for pursuing containment, i.e., one may choose appeasement, while the other chooses aggression, but both parties are designed to develop ways of preventing oppressed people from disrupting the status quo.

Fact: history proves that the approach to containment may be reversed based on political expediency.

For example, in 1867 the Republicans were the party of molification and they enacted so-

cial programs such as the Freedmen's Bureau, while the Democratic Party chose aggressive tactics such as the enforcement of the Black Codes.

In 1989 the roles are completely reversed and who is to say what the situation will be 50 years from now.

Fact: oppressed or powerless people are pawns in this game of power relations between the parties. One party beckons support from the oppressed by promoting its alleged good will, i.e. social programs, candidates from the oppressed community, while the other uses such promotions to appeal to subjective or racist support.

African-American politicians who may be frustrated by their inability to "deliver" for those they represent need to recognize the framework in which they are operating and develop strategies accordingly.

The black politician must decide how can he/she from a position "within" best serve the struggle against race oppression and exploitation.

The politics of substance is an

analysis of the power relationships between the parties, and declares positive neutrality is the best course of action for the masses of black people. Positive neutrality is not political isolation; it requires participation in the political process based on intelligent decisions.

It clearly seeks to cut the umbilical cord that has allowed the Democratic Party to freely feed on the African American community, i.e. a guaranteed 90 percent of the black vote in every election, but it recognizes the chicanery of the Atwater era Republicans.

Positive neutrality says to African-Americans that their vote is a valuable resource; that the parties should equally compete for that vote the way the superpowers compete for spheres of influence or strategic positions around the world. Positive neutrality teaches the African American to recognize the true intentions of the major parties; that neither party as a collective group is not remotely interested in the real needs of our commu-

District II Race

The Suave Versus The Savvy

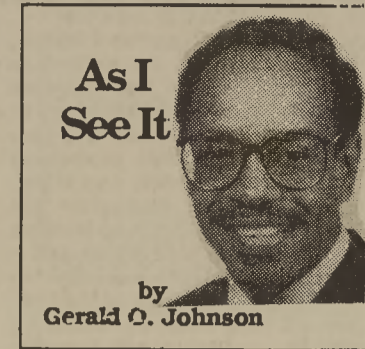
The District 2 race for a city council seat has been relatively boring considering it is the first time a true contender has opted to unseat long term incumbent Charlie Dannelly. The true contender of course is Hoyle Martin, first time candidate for political office. Steve Barker, a white police officer, has thrown his hat in the ring as well. But Barker has to be considered a spoiler, rather than a winner.

The race basically boils down to the suave versus the savvy. Dannelly, the suave, is most comfortable and most effective away from the public's eye. He is very politically aware and astute. He willingly spends time with groups helping them understand how to deal effectively with the city.

His biggest political problem in the past has been his general aloofness. This aloofness has at times caused him to misjudge the overall needs of his constituency. Moreover, his constituents have complained that Dannelly has not taken the leadership position on representing the district.

Martin, the savvy, on the other hand spends a great deal of time attempting to stay on top of issues facing the community. He shows no reluctance in confronting issues head on.

Though Martin has no political track record to measure, he has been a community activist for many years. Martin has been labeled "as naive on some political issues, but he can usually overcome this through hard and dedicated work. Moreover, Mar-



As I See It

by Gerald O. Johnson

tin has a knack for pulling diverse groups together for dialogue.

The question of who to vote for isn't as much a question of qualifications as it is leadership styles. Both men bring strengths and weaknesses to the table.

But in my opinion Martin's style is better suited for the district needs of the 1990s. I think His leadership style is more adept at leading District II into the 1990s. What he lacks in experience, he can more than make up for by providing some new and fresh ideas.

In spite of ourselves growth is headed for District 2. It is the only area in the city left untouched by bulldozers. It will be necessary for this future growth to be controlled and planned. It will have to be coupled with economic development to guarantee the quality of growth. This means that the District II leadership of the 1990s has to be progressive and proactive. It has to be participative and inclusive.

Even though Martin has no po-

litical track record, he has demonstrated an ability to get actively involved with issues facing the community. Moreover, he has demonstrated an ability to be proactive with community concerns.

Dannelly's style is better suited for maintaining the status quo. It has been reactive and exclusive.

Consequently, the white westsiders feel that he has been a candidate for West Charlotte, instead of the westside. Even some of the West Charlotte constituents have complained about Dannelly not showing an interest with their concerns.

Steve Barker's candidacy will guarantee that Martin does not benefit from the frustrated white voters. He will get most of that support.

Martin's only hope for victory is a high District 2 voter turnout. Dannelly's support will come from hard core West Charlotte voters. They will come out to vote. Martin must convince those individuals who are issue voters. They have to be given a reason to come out and vote. I am not sure if Martin has given them enough of a reason. But we will know by this time next week.

Finally, it is worth mentioning again that political competition makes political incumbents accountable. Dannelly's active involvement in the District and on the political scenes has made him a worthy incumbent. If nothing else, Martin's challenge has made Dannelly a better councilman.

Pages And Pages Of Southern Culture



D.G. Martin

One-On-One

"Another new book about the South!"

I can hear you now. "My shelf is full of them." But you are still interested, aren't you? What is it about us southerners that makes us love books about our region? Is it because we know we are different from folks in other regions, but don't know just why?

You won't get the answer from me today. But, yes, there is a new book about the South -- *The Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*.

It is a big, fat book. In fact, although the *Encyclopedia* is packed into a single one volume, it is, like the *Bible*, many books. The *Encyclopedia* has 24 book-length sections about different aspects of southern culture. Each of these sections is a compilation of many short articles on related topics.

Honestly, I did not like the book at first. It is big and bulky. More than 1,500 pages and weighing more than 10 pounds, it is too big to carry around or to rest on your lap when you read in bed. The *Encyclopedia's* thousand different articles made me ask, "Where do I begin? Where do I end?"

But my initial reaction got turned around quickly. I took the *Encyclopedia* to a librarian friend to get an expert's opinion

about how the thousand articles were organized and indexed. He had no time to help, but as I was leaving, his mother asked, "Does it say anything about okra? Any big book about the South ought to have something about okra."

Sure enough, the *Encyclopedia* had a long article about okra--and other articles about grits, gumbo, Goo Goo clusters, mint juleps, moonshine, Moon Pies, and other such treats that have a special place in southern culture. My friend and I wanted to read about our favorite food and drinks. But his mom wouldn't give up the book until she had written down notes about okra to share with her friends at the retirement home.

By the way, did you know that the word "okra" comes from the word "nkra" in a West African language, and that Accara, the capitol of Ghana gets its name from the same root word? I didn't either until my friend's mom read the entire article on okra--out loud--three times.

Her excitement was contagious. When I found the same type of interesting details about the other southern foods, I decided that the *Encyclopedia* deserved more consideration--and a more extensive test. I took it to the kids on the corner. "Think of something southern," I said, "and we'll see if the *Encyclopedia* says anything about it."

"Try wrestling," said one of them. "I bet they don't have anything about Ivan Koloff and the Junk Yard Dog."

The *Encyclopedia* does not mention those particular performers, but it has a great article on the professional wrestling. Did you know that there are more than 3,000 professional wrestlers in the United States? Or that a wrestler who does preliminary bouts every night can earn about \$40,000 a year? Do

you know whether it is fake--for sure? The kids found the answers.

The kids also read articles about stock car racing and football. I found ones about gambling, hunting, cockfighting, and cheerleading and twirling--all of which have southern roots of southern connections. I had to drag the book away from them.

The final test for the *Encyclopedia* was a visit to a scholar. She wanted to know what it said about the southern dialect. I looked in the index and found nothing under "dialect" or "accent" or "southern accent."

Well, of course, the *Encyclopedia* cannot cover everything. But our southern way of speaking is such an important distinction. How could it be left out? So I flipped through the pages and found an entire section on language. It had more articles about southern ways of speaking than I could ever read--Gullah, mountain speech, Indian languages, and even one on the dialect of the Outer Banks. Maybe its index needs a little work, but the *Encyclopedia* passed the scholar's "southern dialect" test easily. She tried to persuade me to leave the *Encyclopedia* with her.

But I am not going to give up my copy to anybody. The *Encyclopedia* proved that it can answer our crazy questions about ourselves and our regional home--on hundreds of topics from agriculture and architecture to violence and women's life. And it proved something even more important: It is fun.

If you are curious, and if you love where you live, I bet you will want to own the *Encyclopedia*, too. Most book stores have it in stock, but if you have trouble finding a copy, write me at Box 2088, Chapel Hill, NC 27515.

achieve liberation, each representing 20 percent of the solution; politics, economics, education, social responsibility and culture.

The current mode of activism is overwhelmingly balanced toward politics. We can generate plenty of enthusiasm for black candidates at election time, but we cannot generate any enthusiasm to correct the appalling educational scores of our children.

Our political leaders rally us to march every time a racist nut kills one of us. But black-on-black drug killings are just an every day occurrence. The most effective blow against any form of racism is the development of positive self concepts. Many of those rallies and marches should be replaced with sessions where people are studying the Doctors Cheikh Anta Diop, Frantz Fanon, Na'im Akbar, Frances Cress Welsing, etc.

Our political leaders accept a Eurocentric world view without question, yet we have difficulty

understanding the low self-esteem and negative concepts that plague our community. We must embrace Afrocentricity to develop positive self concepts.

In our historical situation we must be cognizant that these disciplines are inextricably linked. No one dominates the other.

As we enter the 90's we must drive toward control and empowerment. Why engage in activities where success or failure is dependent on the political whims of others. The move from the politics of symbolism toward the politics of substance clearly enhances the drive toward empowerment.

To eventually control our destiny we must see ourselves engaged in a protracted struggle for liberation. It is for the peaceful existence of our children, our brothers, our sisters, for each other, that we must do this and we must do it now.