

# Contracts less likely for minorities

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refusal by some white council members to appreciate the effects of past racial discrimination outlined in detail in the consultant's report.

Council member Don Reid quipped, "I don't relate a firebombing in 1960 to discrimination today."

That drew angry remarks from many African Americans who attended Monday's work session and led District 2 council representative Hoyle Martin to remind his Republican colleagues that while other ethnic groups came to the country as immigrants, only blacks had come in chains.

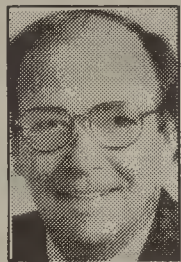
It was a Democratic-controlled council which voted 7-4 to conduct the study. Republicans Pat McCrory, Reid, Lynn Wheeler and Stan Campbell, all of whom will return to the next council, opposed the study.

A new council, to be sworn in Nov. 29, will include six Republicans and five Democrats.

McCullough, president of McHenry Associates, praised Majeed's attempt to speed the process. "I compliment Councilman Majeed for the tenacity and presence of mind to try to get council to accept this package at the next meeting," he said. "I compliment him for standing up for what is right. We can't affect change until we deal with the truth."

"The deadline for the study was supposed to be July," McCullough said. "I suspect that the study got pushed out this far, so it is now facing a new council, a Republican majority who did not want the study in the first place."

"They came to the meeting with a timeline stretching out over 90 to 100 days," he said. "All that was a part of the disparity process. All that has been done. We are basically redoing the whole



**City council member Don Reid:** "There is no way to prove discrimination" in awarding contracts.

process. I have some questions in my mind as to the real intent of council as it relates to this process." The schedule adopted by the council Monday calls for a public hearing on Dec. 13, the first meeting of the new City Council and concludes on March 14 with a vote by council on an M/WBE plan revision designed by city staffers.

"This is going to be a major test for the Republican majority on the council and for the citizens of this city," said McCullough. "They have got to decide if we are going to be a world-class city. That means dismantling procedures that discriminate or exclude people from the process. First, they must face up to the truth."

But Reid said Tuesday he does not think discrimination is a factor in the dispensing of city dollars. He discounted the report, noting that it went back to 1715.

"This company has most of this stuff on computer," Reid said. "There is no way to prove discrimination. I resent having to pay \$187,000 to this company to do this disparity study."

"There are laws on the books against discrimination," Reid said. "I thought we had a good MWBE program. This report is a condemnation of what we had been doing. How far do you go to make sure these firms get business?"

The study by D.J. Miller & Associates of Atlanta was commissioned to assess disparities in the way Charlotte dispensed millions of dollars

annually.

Last year, for example, of the \$272 million in contracts awarded by the city, only 4% or \$10.9 million, went to minority-owned firms.

Three years ago, in 1989-90, twice as much, 8.9% of city contracts went to minority firms.

Using that data, plus an historical analysis of racial discrimination in Charlotte, the consultants concluded that the city has met the U.S. Supreme Court's test for tougher rules requiring white prime contractors to do business with minority subcontractors.

The study traced racial practices in Charlotte back to slavery and included the firebombing in the early 60's of four black leaders' homes and the razing of Second Ward.

The study was to be the basis for a revision of the city's Minority and Women's Business Enterprise Program, which, as presently written, encourages but does not require white contractors to hire minorities and women subcontractors.

A revision became necessary after the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in 1989 that some historical proof of discrimination was necessary before the city could use a race as a factor in awarding city contracts.

Critics of the city's M/WBE program has long argued the city must get tougher if minorities are to get a fair share of the millions spent annually on construction projects and supply and service purchases.

D.J. Miller recommends that the city use race as a factor, based on its finding of past discrimination and list a number of changes to the M/WBE program that will help the city obtain its objectives.

The recommendations include city-sponsored efforts

to see that minority contractors get the financing and bonding from local banks that's required to do business. The city could also reassess its bond waiver program, the consultants said.

Davis, a general contractor for more than five years, said financing and bonding are critical.

"I think the necessary financing and bonding are the tools, just as much of a tool as a hammer on a job," Davis said. "Those types of tools have not been readily accessible and, in many cases, not accessible and has put minority contractors at a handicap. The consultants brought this out."

"That's a ripple effect that will always keep you from putting your best foot forward," Davis said. "It is obvious that the ability of minorities to obtain financing is very low. In this business, you need capital. You can't deliver without capital, you can't get started without capital."

Also recommended were stricter monitoring to ensure white contractors actually used the minority subcontractors for which they receive M/WBE credit.

Audits were also suggested as a way to ensure that contractor complied with the M/WBE provisions.

Also, the consultants said, the city should reorganize the procurement and contracting process, computerize the M/WBE program and centralize the entire operation to ensure all departments were complying.

D.J. Miller even suggested a mathematical method for the city to set its targets and rate annual performance.

## Dame Jocelyn Barrow

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whites, especially men.

"The problem we have is they'll hire us to do the dirty job, won't train us and won't promote us," Barrow said.

In Britain, things haven't gotten to the point where the races are equal, Barrow said. It's beginning to discourage young blacks, who face an especially difficult time moving ahead in life.

"We have the desperation and hopelessness, that feeling of helplessness," Barrow said.

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# Hysterectomy more dangerous

By Malcolm Ritter  
ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK - Black women face greater risks of long hospitalization and death when getting hysterectomies, but the reasons aren't known, according to a study by a University of Maryland researcher.

Black women were nearly three times as likely to remain hospitalized for more than 10 days, and three times as likely to die in the hospital, researchers found in analyzing more than 50,000 patients.

The reasons for those disparities and others found in the study are not known, said study coauthor Kristen Kjerulf, an assistant professor of epidemiology at the University of Maryland School of Medicine in Baltimore, presents the work in this month's issue of the journal *Obstetrics and Gynecology* with colleagues at her school, its hospital and the Maryland Hospital Association.

Hysterectomy is the removal of the uterus, and it is one of the nation's most frequent operations. It is most often done to treat noncancerous tumors in the uterus called fibroids, which can cause pain and heavy menstrual bleeding. Other reasons for hysterectomies include menstrual disorders, a condition called uterine prolapse in which the uterus moves down into the vagina, or cancer of the uterus or cervix.

The researchers studied hospital discharge records for all hysterectomies performed at nonmilitary hospitals in Maryland from 1986 to 1991, a total of 53,159. Seventy percent of the patients were white and 26 percent were black.

Researchers found that after they accounted for differ-

ences in age, hysterectomy technique, severity of other medical conditions and other factors, black women ran about 40 percent greater risk of complications than white women. The difference appeared in such complications as infection and unexplained fever.

Similar analyses found that black women were 2.7 times as likely to stay in the hospital more than 10 days, and 3.1 times as likely to die in the hospital. The overall hospital death rate was low, 19 per 10,000 hysterectomies, for blacks and whites combined.

Black women had the surgery at an average age of 42, about four years younger than white women did. Blacks got hysterectomies at younger ages for each of a wide variety of diagnoses. That suggests the age disparity is due to something in the decision-making process that leads to hysterectomy rather than to an earlier appearance of the medical conditions, researchers said.

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# Bernard Harris describes space shuttle experience

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sion specialist you can come in as a pilot or as a mission specialist.

"The pilots require several thousands hours of jet time. The mission specialist requires a background in those hard sciences."

Harris, one of four African Americans to go into orbit, was on the STS-55, Spacelab D-2 in August 1991 as a mission specialist. From April 26 to May 6, he flew on the shuttle Columbia. Working in space is unforgettable, he said.

"I had wonderful experiences on the space shuttle. Seeing the ground moving beneath you, the earth, stars, sunset and sunrise at 17,500 miles per hour is fantastic," he said.

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