

The Charlotte Post

Published weekly by the Charlotte Post Publishing Co.
1531 Camden Road Charlotte, N.C. 28203

Gerald O. Johnson
Publisher

Robert Johnson
Co-publisher/
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Herbert L. White
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Coalitions out the window in presidential race

Sherman Miller



The 1996 presidential campaign is shaping up as a contest of candidates ignoring the old rule of coalition building amongst diverse groups to one where they are now deciding what groups are safe to write off.

Pat Buchanan grabbed media attention as the pied piper of the anti-establishment. He demonizes the establishment in hopes of enchanting the downtrodden white American masses into ignoring his racist, anti-Semitic, homophobic, anti-immigrant (legal or not), and anti-feminist symbolism. Clearly, Buchananism suggests that his style Republican Party wrote off these unacceptable groups as truly un-American subversives.

The folly here is that these groups taken collectively will decide who becomes the next president of the United States. Thus, you could feel the Republican Party leadership breathing somewhat easier when Sen. Bob Dole started to win primary campaigns.

But Buchanan's racial and ethnic counterbalancing strategy is not dead; it has merely mutated to a higher form that is now palatable in the mainstream. Sen. Jesse Helms seized upon the opportunity the Cuban government afforded the Republican Party in shooting down two American planes that were purportedly looking for people at sea. Helms knew that tightening the screws on Castro's Cuba placated the highly Republican community in Florida and at the same time offered a significant counterweight to the overwhelming Democratic black vote thereby leaving the White community to decide the outcome of the presidential race.

The most intriguing aspect of the 1996 presidential campaign so far is that Pat Buchanan is juxtaposed to Louis Farrakhan, a well-known racist and anti-Semite. Just think about it: each man maintains his public stature by demonizing other groups; however, both chaps symbolize great disdain for Jews, homosexuals and feminists.

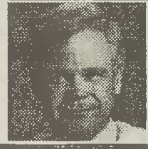
Another interesting caveat in this election is that the first Catholic President, John F. Kennedy, became a patron saint of Black America. President Kennedy radiated an aura of acceptance of other people which is the traditional teaching of the Catholic Church. But Pat Buchanan, another Catholic, sounds like the Grand Dragon of the Ku Klux Klan. Surely the Catholic Church must be quietly embarrassed that Buchanan demonstrates that their universal idea of inclusion are merely tomfoolery for clerics to discuss in their academic debates.

Will divisiveness continue to underpin the battle for the White House? Will Buchananism evolve into the modern day version of McCarthyism where now minorities, immigrants, and feminists are shunned as un-American?

SHERMAN MILLER is a columnist living in Wilmington, Del.

Now that Dole's won, what will we do for fun?

D.G. Martin



Now that Bob Dole is the Republican presidential nominee what will we do for fun the next few months between now and the convention?

Here are a few suggestions:

1. Stop pretending that the North Carolina presidential primary will mean much.

I made that mistake a few weeks ago in this column. And I still think that we could have had a good contest if Forbes and Alexander had stuck it out. But they let me down, and my prediction about the importance of our primary goes into the scrap heap of columnists' speculations. All that is left for us to do when we vote in May is to quantify the Republican discontent factor - measured by the amount of the Buchanan vote. My prediction - 28 percent.

2. Take turns saying how bad a candidate Bob Dole is.

Too old. Too dull. Too much the Washington insider. Too much talk from him about "Bob Dole." The experts are

already writing him off in a race against Bill Clinton. Not so fast. Remember this time four years ago when Bill Clinton emerged as the likely Democratic candidate. "He will never win," the insiders said. "Too much baggage. Too high negatives. And George Bush is so strong."

The negative primary campaigning took its toll on Clinton in 1992 - like it did on Dole in 1996. But by the time of the 1992 convention, without the daily negative focus from the intra-party primaries, Clinton had begun to look pretty good.

The same thing will begin to happen to Dole. Without the barrage of negative ads and statements from Gramm, Alexander, and Forbes - and with less and less attention paid to Buchanan, Dole will start to gain strength with Republican loyalists. Most of them want one thing more than anything - Bill Clinton's defeat. Watch them. They will stop talking about Dole's

weaknesses and soon be telling us what a great American hero he is. By the time fall comes, Bill Clinton will find himself in a very close race. In fact he will be lucky if it is close.

3. Try to guess who Dole will choose as his running mate. Colin Powell? I don't think so. Here is why:

• Picking a vice president is tricky business. Dole wants to pick somebody strong - but not better or more attractive than himself. Ultimately, people vote for or against the presidential candidate. So, the vice presidential candidate should be a complement and not a competitor for attention. If he is too attractive, he takes away from the strength of the presidential candidate. Remember how strong Lloyd Bentson came across as Michael Dukakis's running mate? He trounced Dan Quayle in the vice presidential debates. But he made Dukakis look weak in comparison. Powell might look too good, too.

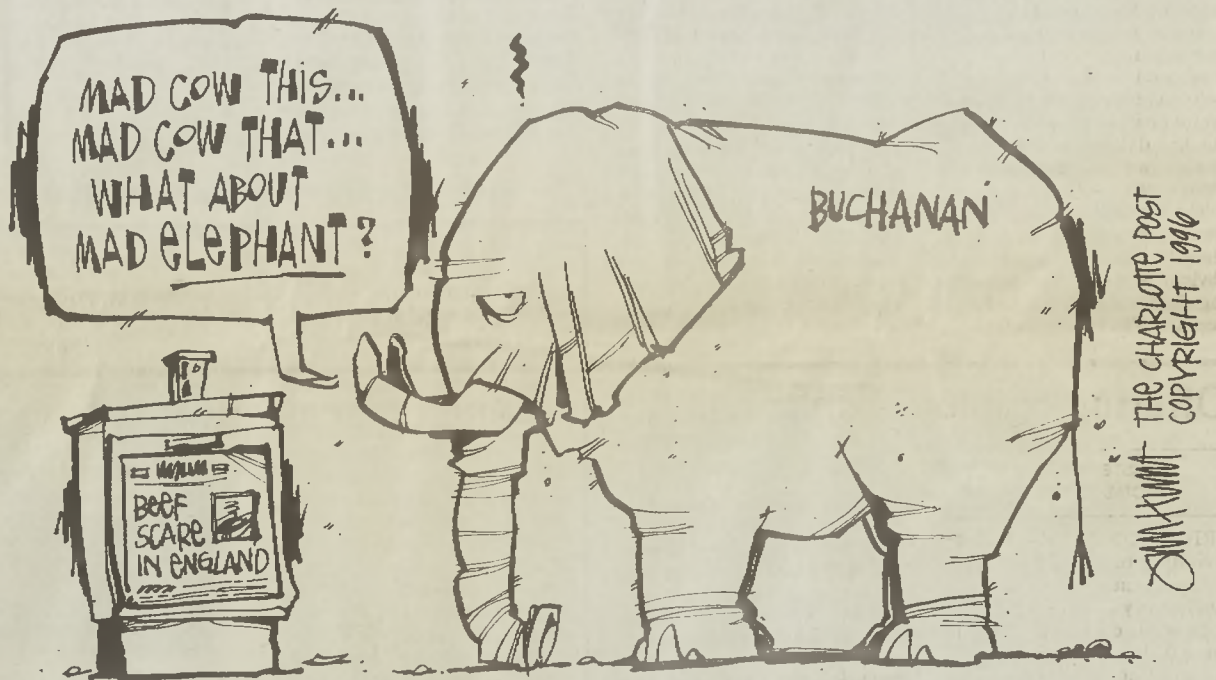
• A moderate like Powell on the Republican ticket would lose the enthusiasm of the "ultra conservative" wing of the party. That group provides essential voters and workers. They cannot be abandoned if

Dole wants a strong unified party effort. On the other hand, someone like Jack Kemp could play the vice presidential role, look good and smart and progressive - and still keep most "ultras" on board. I bet that he will be Dole's running mate.

4. Watch out for Ross Perot. Is he past his moment in history? Are you tired of him? Do his magic cures have the same appeal they did four years ago? Or has he become almost a Washington insider - just another politician not to trust? And we can always argue about whether Dole or Clinton would be hurt the most if Perot should jump into the race again.

5. Think how much fun it will be to have a North Carolinian in the White House. If Dole wins, would his wife, Salisbury native Elizabeth Dole, be the first North Carolinian to be the nation's First Lady? Answer according to historian William Powell: No. The first was Dolly Madison, wife of President James Madison.

D.G. MARTIN is vice president for public affairs of the University of North Carolina system and can be reached via e-mail at: dgmartin@ga.unc.edu



In memory of Cynthia: when ignorance costs a life

Bernice P. Jackson



I never met Cynthia Wiggins. She was a single, teenaged mother who lived in inner-city Buffalo. But unlike the stereotypes, she was not an irresponsible, welfare mother. She wanted to work to support her son, who was born last fall. So she went to work at a suburban shopping mall, the Walden Galleria Mall.

Just before Christmas Cynthia Wiggins was crushed to death by a dump truck as she tried to cross the seven lane highway separating her bus stop from the mall. It seems the Walden Galleria Mall had refused permission for the No. 6 bus from inner-city Buffalo to stop on the mall property, forcing inner city residents to cross the dangerous highway with no walkway or stop light and then walk across the large parking lot to reach the stores.

In the aftermath of Cynthia Wiggins' untimely and unnecessary death, a public outcry forced the mall owners to grant permission for the No. 6 bus to stop on the

mall property. After all, they had always allowed buses filled with Canadian tourists to stop in the mall, as did buses from nearby suburban Amherst and from other suburban malls. Indeed, according to the Niagara Frontier Transit Authority, they had applied for permission for the No. 6 bus to stop in the mall when the mall was opened in 1989. But the Transit Authority was told no; while the mall would consider suburban buses, they didn't want the No. 6 coming into the mall.

In the aftermath of the Rodney King and O.J. Simpson cases, there has been much discussion about the differing perceptions of white Americans and people of color concerning the existence of racism in contemporary America. Most whites believe that racism is a phenomenon of the past and that bigotry is

confined to only a few, uneducated extremists. Most African Americans and other people of color see racism in their lives each and every day. For some, racism provides the definitions of their lives.

The story of Cynthia Wiggins and the No. 6 bus raises several issues. It belies the mistaken notion that racism is no longer alive and well in America. For it not only shows how poor blacks are not wanted in many stores, but how they are prevented from even going into them.

The story of Cynthia Wiggins and the No. 6 bus shows that racism does impact business decisions in this nation. The mall owners allowed their racism to keep black and poor shoppers from coming to their mall, even at the expense of losing the business of these shoppers. Even wealthy and middle class

African Americans have experienced the racism of store owners who have followed them around the store, assuming they will steal something. But this mall, and others, like the Georgia mall that prohibited young African American men from shopping there, took it one step further. They didn't want the people from the inner city even to enter their mall.

Their racism had another impact as well. It also made it difficult, if not impossible, for black and poor workers to get and keep jobs at the mall. Cynthia Wiggins had wanted to work in a neighborhood McDonald's, according to her friends. When they weren't hiring, she was forced to leave her neighborhood to look for work. Upon obtaining a job, she was then forced to cross that highway to get to work.

The story of Cynthia Wiggins reminds us that racism not only discriminates against people, but that racism kills. What about your suburban malls? Do they allow inner-city buses to stop on their premises? Are they making decisions about poor people of color that are racist? Why don't you ask them and find out?

BERNICE P. JACKSON is executive director of the Commission for Racial Justice in Cleveland.

The trap of voting for the lesser of two evils

By Ken Morgan
NATIONAL NEWSPAPER
PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION

At recent session of the Seventh National Policy Institute Conference, "Strategies for 1996 and Beyond," panelists included Congressional Black Caucus Chair Donald Payne, NAACP President Kweisi Mfume, SCLC's Joseph Lowery, Bishop John Hurst, Dorothy Height and other black leaders.

The immediate central strategy for dealing with black issues was electoral politics by them and others like Jesse Jackson throughout the three-day conference. The subliminal message was: "We must vote for President Clinton and other Democrats this November to combat the 'Republican Contract on America,' even though they haven't done right by us. The Million Man March organizers have the same message - register 3 million people, but for whom? We could have started our own party last Oct. 16."

Clinton and the rest of the stable of donkeys have put their stamp of approval on the "Contract" in this bipartisan assault on black and working people. What are the reasons? The Republican and Democrat parties, as institutions, primarily represent the interest of those few controlling most

of the economic wealth. You know them, the ones who are laying us off and squeezing third world countries dry. It doesn't make any difference how well-meaning black politicians are or how many times Bill visits a black church. Both parties are doing their share to try to stabilize and to reverse the deepening economic crisis for you-know-who, by slashing social gains and entitlements through budget balancing schemes to protect bond interest rates and to decrease social contributions for the Fortune 500 corporations and the wealthy. They have attempted to redirect peoples' anger by scapegoating blacks, welfare recipients, and immigrants. Even some of us have swallowed the bait. We don't need to atone or bemoan.

Our real power is in practicing independent politics. Let's organize and start our own party. And don't let nobody tell you about wasting your vote. Are you any better off after helping to put black or white Democrats or Republicans in office?

To my well-meaning but misguided leaders, don't talk to me about the lesser of two evils. Read your history. Read Malcolm.

KEN MORGAN is a National Newspaper Publishers Association columnist.