

The Charlotte Post

VOLUME 22 NO. 8

THE WEEK OF NOVEMBER 7, 1996

75 CENTS

THE VOICE OF THE BLACK COMMUNITY

ALSO SERVING CABARRUS, CHESTER ROWAN AND YORK COUNTIES

Exhibit touches 'souls of ancestors'

By John Minter
THE CHARLOTTE POST

Speak her name and gently touch the souls of our ancestors.

So reads a commemorative tablet placed on the site of the sunken remains of the Henrietta Marie slave ship.

Friday, nearly 300 years after the vessel sank near Key West, Fla., the Henrietta Marie begins to speak to Charlotte about enslaved Africans and the people who chained and shackled them.

The opening coincides with a

gallery crawl and could attract hundreds of visitors on its first day.

Those viewing the exhibit "A Slave Ship Speaks: The Wreck of the Henrietta Marie," will see the common items used by men at sea in the 16th century, pewter and iron wares, a ship's bell. But also present are those items peculiar to the slave ships, which followed the triangular trade route from Europe to Africa to the Americas and back.

Africans were borne on the Middle Passage, kept in the ship's holds, confined to a space

barely large enough to turn over for the voyage to America, which took as long as 12 weeks.

The artifacts of the Henrietta Marie, the only slave ship recovered in the Western Hemisphere, shed more direct light on the darkness that was the Middle Passage, one of the most obscure segments of American history. The wreckage was discovered in 1972 by divers working for ocean salvager Mel Fisher. The exhibit's home base is the Mel Fisher Maritime Museum in Key West.

"For anybody who lives, if you

want to get in touch with history, you must have artifacts," said Oswald Sykes, a member of the team of black scuba divers that placed the plaque.

"For those of us who are black, it introduces you in a dramatic way to our history. It helps you feel it. When you look at a piece over 300 years old and you know that piece was used to chain your ancestors...you cry. You get in touch with your ancestors. You get in touch with your history."

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PHOTO/CALVIN FERGUSON

A replica of the cargo hold of the Henrietta Marie recaptures the cramped space captured Africans had to endure.

Gantt comes up short



PHOTO/SUE ANN JOHNSON

Harvey Gantt smiles at his wife Cindy during his concession speech Tuesday. For the second time in six years, Gantt lost to Republican Jesse Helms for a seat in the U.S. Senate. To the left is Gantt's mother, Wilhemina.

Former mayor loses; Leake falls short for commissioner

By John Minter
THE CHARLOTTE POST

The rematch produced the same result.

Harvey Gantt failed a second time to oust U.S. Sen. Jesse Helms, falling by a similar margin to his 1990 loss.

Despite a determined effort, including aggressive attacks on Helms in radio and television ads, Gantt, 53, could not overcome the incumbent

Republican's popularity in rural and small towns. Gantt won 47 percent of the vote, while Helms won 53.

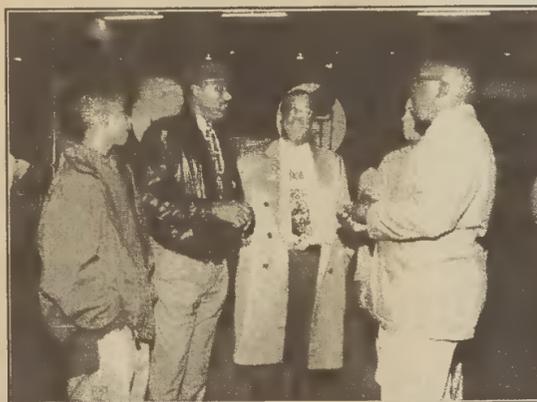
The result disappointed African Americans and soured elation about the reelection of President Bill Clinton to a second term, the first Democrat to do so since Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

"I was grateful that the president won," said Bob Davis, president of the Black

Political Caucus. "But I'm disappointed that a fine, outstanding young man like Harvey did not send Jesse home as we had hoped."

"That says something about America that Helms in North Carolina and (six-term Sen. Strom) Thurmond in South Carolina won. That says people prefer old-time ignorance to forthright opportunity to operate for a

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PHOTO/SUE ANN JOHNSON

Mecklenburg commissioner Darrel Williams (center) chats with Lawrence Tolliver as returns roll in Tuesday.

Urban Scouting popular

By John Minter
THE CHARLOTTE POST

Tony Harris got up early last Saturday. Not to watch cartoons, though. He was camping out with more than 200 other Boy Scouts in eastern Mecklenburg County.

"We cooked in the woods and went on some sled races," Tony said of the Scouts' traditional competition combining many of the skills they learn in troop activities.

They also rappelled down a 50-foot tower and rode horses and bikes. Friday night they



PHOTO/PAUL WILLIAMS III

Tony Harris (left) is among the growing number of youngsters getting involved in scouting. Patrick Fields is campfire chief.

roasted marshmallows over an open fire. Saturday morning breakfast was chicken and dumplings. Hey, there was no microwave nearby.

He's a member of Troop 221, one of the new troops the local

Boy Scout Council is working to develop in the city's public housing complexes as part of its Urban Scouting initiative.

Tony, a Sedgefield Middle

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African Americans are trying to get their 40 acres and a mule

TRI-STATE DEFENDER

Some African Americans are trying to get the 40 acres and a mule promised to them more than 100 years ago.

More than 20,000 people filed slavery reparation claims with the Internal Revenue Service in 1994, and claims are picking up again, according to the agency. The surge came after Essence magazine ran a commentary two years ago that argued racial discrimination functions as a hidden tax. The article urged readers to fill out their form 1040s as if they had paid \$43,209 in "black taxes" and could thereby collect a delinquent tax rebate. Now, thousands around the country have recently been asking for what they believe is a rebate form and between 500 and 600 people have filed for the modern equivalent of 40-acres-and-a-mule or \$43,209, said IRS spokesman Steven Pyrek. He said inquiries were coming from places like Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland and Dallas.

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Alexander resigns NAACP

By John Minter
THE CHARLOTTE POST

Kelly Alexander Jr., suspended president of the N.C. NAACP, reportedly has resigned effective immediately.

Alexander could not be reached for comment, but sources said they had been told Alexander would step down.

Television news shows carried the story Wednesday night, quoting Alexander's brother, Alfred.

The NAACP's national board had given Alexander 30 days to respond to an audit report made in closed session to the board of directors on Oct. 19.

The board delayed a long-awaited decision on whether to reinstate or take further action against Alexander, who was suspended in May from the position he'd held since 1989, pending an audit of the N.C. state conference's finances.

After his suspension, an audit was ordered, but could not be conducted because some records were not available. Auditors had focused on a cash management account at Merrill Lynch into which Alexander said he had deposited about half of NAACP funds for the past seven years - as much as \$700,000.

Alfred, president of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg NAACP branch, confirmed the resignation to local television reporters, distributing a resignation letter supposedly sent to NAACP director of branches William Penn.

Alfred Alexander repeated his brother's charge that the allegations are "false."

"These are a lot of false accusations," Alfred Alexander said. "Kelly is just sick and

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