

Charlotte needs real leadership to halt crime rate

Congratulations Charlotte! In addition to duping citizens in the name of building the apparently oh-so-necessary light rail system, successfully wrangling the NASCAR Hall of Fame from other suitable locations, and now the proposal to squeeze a baseball stadium into Uptown,



ANGELA
LINDSAY

Charlotte has yet another shiny big-city ornament to pin on its puffed out chest.

According to a national crime report by the Morgan Quitno Press, which used FBI figures from 2005, the city of Charlotte is currently ranked the eighth most dangerous city in the United States among cities with a population of at least 500,000. Just eighth, you say? Well, cut the city some slack. After all, we did manage to move up two whole notches from being ranked the tenth most dangerous city last year. That's an accomplishment for us, right?

Police Chief Darrel Stephens has already denounced the results of the survey as being "pretty meaningless". Well, this is what it does mean: a hike in robberies and homicides — 66 homicides already this year to be exact, though given recent trends, I suspect by the time this piece is published that number will have risen. In 2005, the number of violent crimes (homicides, rapes, robberies and aggravated assaults) rose 9 percent while nationwide, violent crime was up only 2.3 percent.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg also set a 10-year record for homicides, ending 2005 with 85 killings. Not since 1995 have more people been slain in a single year.

Our so-called city leaders may not be impressed with these numbers, but regular citizens who are forced to deal with their affects everyday certainly are. As with any survey, critics have denounced the survey's findings for a variety of reasons, but the truth of the matter really is that those of us who bother to pay attention are aware of the escalating violence and surge in gang-related activity. High school football players gunned down; neighborhoods tagged with graffiti; homes invaded and residents assaulted; child predators on the loose. Sugar-coating these issues will not make them go away. In fact, it will continue to grow, aided in large part by those bent on maintaining our "tidy town" image and a grossly under-funded, under staffed prosecutor's office.

According to a study released in 2003 by the National Center for State Courts Currently, the state of North Carolina has the highest felony dismissal rate, 35 percent, among the 21 states that keep searchable records. Indeed, at 50 percent, the Mecklenburg County court system now has the highest charge dismissal rate of any court system in the state. When repeat offenders are routinely ushered through the revolving door of the criminal "injustice" system, they are all but given free pass to go back out and commit another offense against innocent citizens.

Take the case of Olivia Cook Sigmon, a 52-year-old mother who was senselessly gunned down in front of her daughter during an attempted carjacking on the Fourth of July weekend while driving home from watching fireworks earlier that evening. The assailant was later captured and arrested, but just two months earlier, he walked out of jail with a plea bargain agreement: probation and credit for the three months he had already spent in jail awaiting sentencing.

The judge suspended his 8- to 10-month prison sentence for stealing Charlotte City Council member Patrick Cannon's car out of his driveway in January 2004. At the time this repeat offender was sentenced for stealing Cannon's car, he had several charges and convictions on his record including larceny and several cases of larceny of a motor vehicle and breaking and entering in Pender and New Hanover counties. Another felony auto theft charge was dismissed by the Mecklenburg County District Attorney's Office in 2000.

The same weekend this crime occurred, several arrests were made during yet another melee during the fireworks display Uptown. Many of those arrested were also repeat offenders. These cases reflect just a portion of the growing number thugs who have invaded the Queen City, threatening our civilized way of life, such as the one Ms. Sigmon and her family were trying to live, when many of them should never have seen the light of day after their first offense.

If you're not sufficiently concerned by now, you should be. And so should our so-called city leaders, particularly with recent elections completed. These newly elected officials will only be doing a disservice to the residents of this community if they do not begin to take the issue of crime Charlotte seriously and instigate get tough measures to keep the people they have pledged to serve safe. But for now, I suppose we could look on the bright side—at least Charlotte is not ranked number one for violence...yet.

ANGELA LINDSAY is a Charlotte attorney. E-mail her at lind-saylaw00@yahoo.com.

Government has all the checks and no balances whatsoever

By the time you read this article the election of 2006 will be over. I wanted to write it anyway in anticipation of the change I hope and pray will take place in the Congress. I am trusting that we will kick those good-for-nothing perpetrators (or is it just "traitors?") out of office and finally let the world know that the



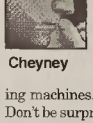
JAMES
CLINGMAN

"American people" are not as stupid as we appear to be, having selected and supposedly elected a dunce for our president and a Congress that rubber stamps everything he proposes—even if it's illegal.

I was taught in my early years in school that the three branches of government were instituted to assure a system of checks and balances. In our current administration, the only checks are those being handed to Halliburton and Kellogg, Brown, and Root, and all the other war profiteers, such as Exxon oil receiving tax incentives despite profiting to the tune of \$10 billion per quarter.

Billions of dollars in checks are being passed among the corporate insiders that Bush has brought in to perform jobs for which they have no experience. In Iraq, where they are building the largest U.S. Embassy in the world, at least \$9 billion is still unaccounted for, and Congress is not checking on it.

Checks and balances? I think not. What have we gotten from this corrupt government we live under is a direct contradiction of the principles upon which the U.S. was founded. Read the Declaration of Independence's list of complaints against King George and you will find an eerie similarity to our complaints about our "King" George. This administration is all about the money and power, and they will do anything to get it and keep it.



Cheyney

Heaven only knows what awaits us after the election, depending upon which way it goes. I know change in the make up and control of Congress is not a done deal yet; Debold will work hard to maintain status quo with his corrupt and corruptible voting machines. So, don't be surprised if your vote does not count. Don't be surprised if the exit polls say one thing and the results say the opposite. And don't be surprised if those candidates who were behind by double digits win their contests. Computers can work wonders, you know.

The way to check this gang of thieves is to kick them out of office, if we can figure out how to get fair elections, especially in 2008. I don't know if that is possible, but I am not giving up on those of us who want to bring back the original system of checks and balances. I pray we will follow through, because right now the only checks we have are those flowing through world banks, and the only balances that count are found in those huge bank accounts of corrupt politicians and corporations.

That said, I trust we are angry enough to turn out in droves and change this system. We talk a good game; will we follow it up with the necessary action? By the time you read this, we will all know, that is, unless Marshall law is declared or something else drastic takes place. One never knows with the gang we have in charge now. Power corrupts absolutely, right?

Tricky Dick Cheney and his wife are ranting and raving about how great things are, and actually lying about things she has written. The level of their temerity is mind-boggling. Condi is who knows where, suddenly quiet and out of the picture as the election draws near. "Rum-filled" is still interviewing himself, asking and answering his own questions before an embarrassing press corps that cannot get a word in edgewise.

And then we have the "Decider" and his henchmen, Karl Rove, Speedy Gonzalez, and Michael Chertoff (does his Russian surname really mean "son of the devil"?). These guys and their minions around the country, some of whom have already been convicted and sentenced for corruption, some of whom are awaiting sentencing, some of whom are perverts of the highest order, and some of whom are wealthier beyond their wildest dreams because Bush is president, they have given us the worst corruption in history. (Is Ken Lay still dead? Did he really die?)

I trust we have the will to change this government before it's too late. Too many lies have been told, too many lives have been lost, and too much money is missing. I trust our votes will reflect those realities.

Let's get back to real checks and balances. And may we never again get ourselves into a situation like the one we are in now. We must have a Congress that really does check the president when he or she is out of order; and we can only have that kind of system through a balanced approach to how we vote and for whom we vote. All the negative advertisements we saw were a stark indication of how low some of these candidates would stoop to get elected. They also illustrated how stupid they think we are. Doesn't that just make you sick?

JAMES E. CLINGMAN, an adjunct professor at the University of Cincinnati's African American Studies department, is former editor of the Cincinnati Herald newspaper and founder of the Greater Cincinnati African American Chamber of Commerce. He hosts the radio program, "Blackonomics," and has written several books. You can contact him at www.blackonomics.com or call (513) 489-4132.

Remembering a noble man for his art, humanity

By Melissa Powers
SPECIAL TO THE POST

David Chisholm was recently hit and killed by a drunk driver; he re-defined the word 'community,' drawing peoples of all kinds to understand his vision, blending ideas to create his definition of family in his art.

As you walk by the many buildings that inspired his work, one captures the pure beauty of the Queen City. His art reflects his passion for bold inventions, but yet, subtle cleverness. He remained conscious of his surroundings incorporating himself in each of his work of art. I am writing to encourage our communities to come together and promote self-involvement in order to spark a change in our own community.

One way is re-educating ourselves on living art. This brilliant, yet humble man achieved many of his goals in life! If one only knew about his remote workshop that transported his materials for his building projects; some refer to it as 'an orange shopping cart.' He even customized some of his tools used for special carvings projects. A well-organized and detailed idealist a man we will miss so dearly.

My brother Ray was more than just a gifted man that enjoyed creative art, this visual artists understood the science of art and its' history. In the summer of 2004, I had the pleasure to meet "Brother Ray," and our paths continued to meet. Then I realized this distinguished gentleman was really my brother, a teacher, a mentor, an educator, one who is true to his way of life. He was sent to cross my path for a real reason. That reason was to teach me to refine my appreciation and respect for life/creation through art and truly understand the formation of light in its' true existence.

Then take what he taught me to help others. Brother Ray has inspired me throughout my journey to keep searching for answers of the truth and be patient for them when they return. This gentle soul was such a patient and good listener; he even took time to listen to my problems and offered the best solutions. I will always remember my brother as one that didn't complain, kept a mental blueprint of his life's journey and always shared knowledge.

But for those that got to know Ray, this well traveled man had a mere elegance with his style, he chose his words very carefully as he spoke, sincerely desired love, peace and happiness towards all mankind, a true humanitarian. His desire was to help other disabled individuals to recapture their passion in life. He wanted to open a recreational learning center dedicated to other disabled individuals, whether physically or mentally challenged, instructing them how to craft, draw and paint, opening their minds to explore a different way to vision light. He was very passionate about helping others and inspired so many to keep their minds busy with things that reflects the Creator.

What an incredible extraordinary man! Thank you Brother Ray for being a true friend and teaching me in order to refine myself, I must know SELF!

For family, friends and others that are interested in networking to create an art gallery dedicated to inspiring artists on behalf of David Ray Chisholm, and/or have stories you'd like to share, please contact me: KWU @ JazzUndaGround@aol.com.

MELISSA POWERS lives in Charlotte.

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Race issues can be felt in fallout at the midterm elections

There have been several incidents where race has played a part in the mid-term elections and there has been some attempt to discern how it would affect the fortunes of various candidates. Here is my take.



RON
WALTERS

First I think that the TV ad by Bob Corker's campaign showing Rep. Harold Ford Jr. being solicited by a White female using a comethier approach (with the inference that it was a sexual invitation), found Corker playing to racism in the South where

the traditional taboo of White women with Black men had long been the source of raw emotions. If he had not meant to arouse that emotion, he could have used a Black woman and the inference would have simply been that Ford was a "playa."

Second, the highly-publicized incident in Virginia where U. S. Sen. George Allen was vying for re-election against James Webb, saw Allen in a campaign speech using a term "Macaca," which means monkey, to characterize one of Webb's political operatives. It was subsequently alleged that Allen, son of pro football coach George Allen, had also regularly used the n- word as

a college student, all of which sent his negatives into the stratosphere.

The effect of these incidents, both in Southern states, did not have the same negative impact on candidates in a region where race is so much of its public history. Even in Tennessee and Virginia, racial issues in the campaigns played against the backdrop of issues that had far more punch, such as the war in Iraq, the state of the economy and immigration.

It is difficult to clearly determine whether racial issues changed the outcome of some elections. Undoubtedly, the intensity of focus on Allen's behavior

made Webb a more viable candidate. Moreover, the race between Harold Ford and Bob Corker also featured the issue of race, with some voters stating they opposed Ford simply because of his race.

It has been amusing to witness some reporters dancing around the fact that the attempt to create a negative attitude among voters utilizing race as the instrument was the motivation in each of these incidents. Most reporters, especially in the rarified air of the dominance of conservatism as the main orthodox ideology of the day, have difficulty admitting that racism is still a force in American politics.

The reticence of reporters

was also the case initially in the famous incident in 1988 where Michael Dukakis faced the Willie Horton add in Massachusetts that sought to prove that he was weak on crime. And it was the same problem in the 1991 Senate campaign in North Carolina when incumbent Jesse Helms used the black hand covering the white hand add to illustrate the negative impact that affirmative action was purportedly taking on white jobs, a direct slap at Harvey Gantt, his African-American opponent.

To be accurate, some reporters, such as the Washington Post columnist, E. J. Dionne, has come right out and called the ad aimed

at Harold Ford, Jr. racist. But for the rest of his colleagues, the issue is how blatant does the use of race have to be before they, too, recognize and interpret its true intent.

In any case, it will be interesting to see in days to come whether such tactics had the effect of stimulating black turnout or repressing it. Already, a study by the Pew Center on Politics and the Press, has found that blacks have the least confidence in the integrity of the election process and whether their votes will be fairly counted.

RON WALTERS is professor of Government and Politics at the University of Maryland College Park.