

S.C. campaign takes on added political importance

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Clinton (D-N.Y.) and U.S. Sen. Barack Obama (D-Ill.) South Carolina, which moved its primary to Jan. 29, takes on added significance because African Americans make up a large chunk of the electorate - nearly half of all registered Democrats are black. Iowa and New Hampshire, the traditional launch points of the election season, are overwhelmingly white.

"South Carolina is not a typical Democratic state," says Ted Arrington, chairman of UNC Charlotte's political science department. "If it wasn't early (on the primary schedule) or if it didn't have a significant minority population, no one would pay it any attention."

Gilliam, a maintenance worker at a paper mill in Catawba, S.C., said he could support Obama or Clinton for president, but likes Clinton's chances against a Republican better.

"I've narrowed it to Hillary and Obama," said Gilliam,

49. "I want to go with somebody who has a chance. Although my heart is with Obama, I just don't think America is ready for a black president."

A Barrington Broadcasting/Zogby International telephone poll showed Clinton leading Obama among likely S.C. voters in next year's Democratic primary. Clinton led the field with 33 percent compared to Obama's 26 percent and John Edwards in third at 21 percent. The survey of 503 likely South Carolina primary voters was conducted April 16-17. The margin of error is 4.5 percentage points.

Much of Clinton's support comes from women, with 40 percent favoring the former first lady with Obama garnering 25 percent and 18 for Edwards. Obama leads among men at 27 percent followed by Edwards (25 percent) and Clinton (24 percent).

South Carolina has the potential to become a watershed state that can make or break campaigns. For Edwards, who was born in South Carolina and won the 2004 primary there for his only victory, running up front is critical, especially if Obama and Clinton get off to a strong start.

"Clearly, Edwards has to do well since that's where he got his only win in 2004," Arrington said.

"It's do or die for him. Third place - especially if it's a distant third - could be a disaster."

A good showing in Orangeburg on national television can boost a front-runner's chances or lift the profile of second-tier candidates like U.S. Rep. Dennis Kucinich or New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson.

"It's too early for the debate to be a deciding factor, unless somebody does something really stupid, and we know that can happen," Arrington said.

Documentary seeks closure for '79 shootout victims, participants

By Sommer Brokaw

THE TRIANGLE TRIBUNE

DURHAM - The model used to heal the wounds of apartheid in South Africa was applied a year ago in Greensboro. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was implemented after a racial incident in the city in 1979.

On Nov. 3, members of the Ku Klux Klan and American Nazis opened fire on a Communist Worker Party rally, killing five protesters and injuring several others. Despite television footage of the killings, no one involved in the massacre was ever convicted. In an attempt to discover the truth and move on, survivors shaped the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 2004.

Twenty-three years later, the commission gathered together witnesses from the Klan's imperial wizard to bereaved spouses of murdered activists, to tell their stories. Their testimonies are documented in the film "Greensboro: Closer to the Truth" by Adam Zucker.

The film was shown last Sunday at the Carolina Theatre as part of the Full Frame Documentary Film Festival. A panel discussion was held afterwards.

Survivor Nelson Johnson said the attacks wouldn't have happened without the collaboration of city government and police, who were noticeably absent at the time of the shooting.

"All of these institutional players merely utilized the Klan to do their dirty work

for them," Johnson said. "The over-focusing on the Klan is a deflection from the deeper issues."

Lisa Magarell, an advisor to the Reconciliation Commission, said there were three trials - two criminal trials that led to acquittals, and "because of one civil trial, the city of Greensboro paid \$360,000 to one of the widows of the victims, but they never apologized, they never admitted any wrongdoing," she said.

Moderator Hodding Carter III, a public policy professor, former journalist and active participant in an effort to break the hold of white supremacy in the South during the 1960s and '70s, said "the events of Nov. 3 were often dismissed as a rumble between two gangs who were intent on killing each other. This (film) goes a long way in addressing that."

The Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation report found Klan and Nazi party members planned to disrupt a Death to the Klan rally organized by members of the Communist Worker Party and assault the demonstrators.

It also found that some lesser responsibility lied with the demonstrators who were "naïve about the level of danger posed by their rhetoric and the Klan's propensity for violence."

Furthermore, the report said "the single most important element that contributed to the violent outcome of the confrontation

was the absence of police."

Carter said one of the most striking revelations of the film was that the city has yet to respond to the report's findings. He also said the panel is not unique to South Africa or Greensboro. It has been implemented in several places around the world - from Argentina to Eastern Europe.

The documentary was one of three films screened during the festival as part of its Southern Sidebar Series. They were chosen because of their common expression of a "desire to right wrongs and to repair damages," said Nancy Buirski, founder and artistic director of the festival.

FACT:
BET.com announces new research that ranks Charlotte as #1 Best City for African Americans

FACT:
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HBCU campuses affected by massacre

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Norfolk State, scene of a killing March 31 of a student outside a dormitory, also took measures to try to prevent another tragedy. Hours after the Virginia Tech shooting, access to points of entry on campus was limited. Drivers without a valid decal are to be asked for identification, and campus police are to carefully monitor vehicles, pedestrians, bicyclists and facilities. A vigil was planned.

The dramatic and tragic events began in Blacksburg when a man wearing a black leather jacket and a maroon hat walked into West Ambler Johnston Hall, according to news reports. He went on to shoot and kill two people in the building before killing 30 others and wounding an additional 15. The shooter was later identified as Seung-Hui Cho, 23, a South Korean national and a Virginia Tech senior majoring in English. He killed himself.

At the Howard vigil, Jennifer Owens, SGA president, offered words of appreciation to the members of the Howard family who were in attendance despite the weather. She said she had been in touch with student body presidents on other campuses who have been very supportive.

Michelle Wilson, a junior biology major, said: "I feel that our campus is united and right now all we can do is pray. We also need to pray for the family of the killer; they are probably wondering 'Why?'"

Burton said she wanted to be in the presence of like-minded people during the vigil.

"You realize life is a gift, you have one of those epiphanies. Things like that can happen at Howard. It just makes me think that I'm lucky to be alive; to be going to school. It just shows to never take life for granted," she said.

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