

**HE'S THE BOMB**

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# The Charlotte Post

The Voice of the Black Community



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WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 27-OCTOBER 3, 2007

## Transit tax lobbyists: It's about the bus

*Coalition of political and civic leaders push grassroots effort*

By Herbert L. White  
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African American community and political leaders have launched a campaign to keep Mecklenburg's half-cent transit tax on the books.

The African American Coalition Against Transit Tax Repeal, co-chaired by former Charlotte mayor Harvey Gantt and former Charlotte City Council member Ron Leeper, announced the campaign Monday at the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Government Center. The pro-tariff group maintains the sales tax that funds Charlotte Area Transit System benefits riders who depend on public transportation to get to work and shop.

"This discussion about the transit tax repeal has been one-sided for a while now," Leeper said. "Most of this discussion has been on the light rail. We want to put a different face on this issue today. That face is a people face."

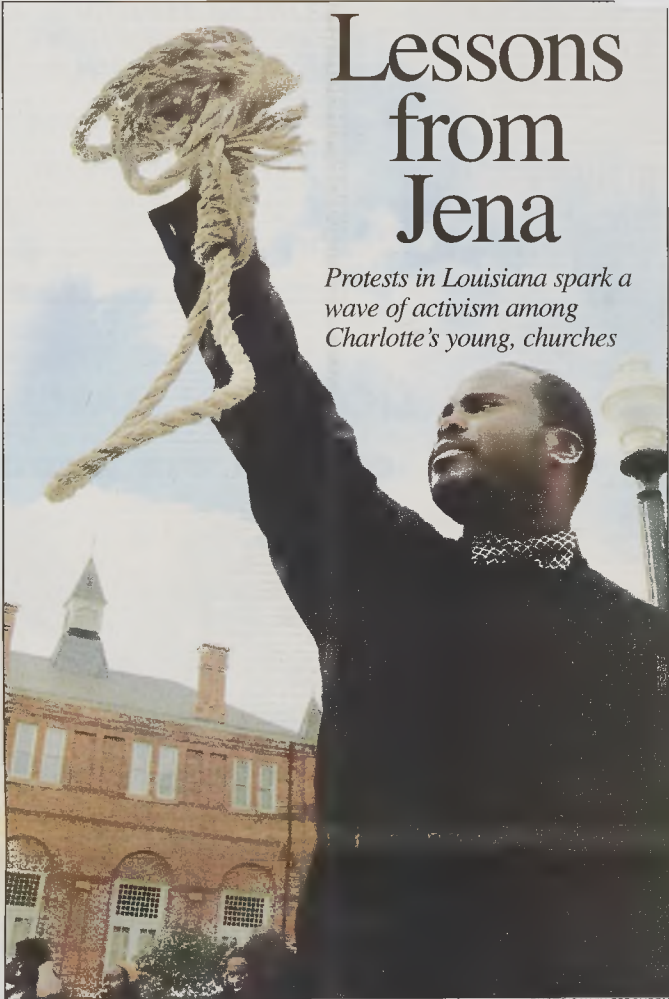
In 2006, 71 percent of revenue from the sales tax - \$77 million in 2006 according to CATS - went to buses, with 65 percent going to operation costs. Nearly three-quarters of public transit riders in Charlotte are African American, but black voters were instrumental in securing a referendum on the tax.

"If we remove this dedicated source of revenue, we will substantially hurt those who ride our buses today," Gantt said.

Tariff opponents contend there's no guarantee CATS will ultimately shift funds to light rail, which is expected to debut in November with the South Corridor line. Another argument is that Charlotte can build more roads to relieve traffic congestion. Polls show that a majority of black residents favor repeal.

"We have to let them know that voting against the repeal is only going to help us," said Virginia Keogh, president of the Southwest Charlotte Neighborhood Coalition and a community organizer for the pro-tax group. "If they vote for the repeal, they're cutting off their nose, so to speak, to spite their face. This has to be explained to the community so they understand they actually need to vote against repeal or the bus service we have now is going to be cut."

Keogh pointed to curtailment of bus Please see **COALITION/6A**



## Lessons from Jena

*Protests in Louisiana spark a wave of activism among Charlotte's young, churches*

Students at Johnson C. Smith University wore black and carried a symbolic hangman's noose to protest treatment of the Jena 6. Students and churches - the backbone of civil rights era activism in the 1950s and '60s - turned out in force to support the Jena 6 in Louisiana and Charlotte.

By Cheri F. Hodges  
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Amesia Brewton missed the March on Washington in 1963. The Charlotte resident never had to desegregate a school or lunch counter, but knows injustice when she sees it.

That's why she marched in Jena, La., last week. The small Louisiana town was the scene of one of the largest marches for civil rights since the 1990s when an estimated 1 million black men rallied in Washington, D.C.

People took to the streets of Jena to protest the treatment of six African American high

school students, dubbed the Jena 6, who face criminal charges after a fight last year at Jena High School.

"It was a lifetime experience," said Brewton, 27. "I didn't know places still looked like that."

The reverberations could be felt in Charlotte, where activism brought back memories of the 1960s civil rights era.

Churches held prayer vigils for the defendants and orga-

nized trips to Louisiana. At Johnson C. Smith University, students clad in black marched on campus in a show of solidarity.

The Jena 6 case started with a tree at Jena High School. According to reports, a black student asked an administrator if he could sit under the tree. A day later, nooses were found and the boys accused of hang-

See **LESSONS/6A**

"It was a lifetime experience. I didn't know places still looked like that."

Amesia Brewton, 27, of Charlotte on being part of a massive rally to support the Jena 6 in Louisiana.

## Caucus touts new power in Congress

*Black lawmakers at top of congressional hierarchy as conference kicks off*

NATIONAL NEWSPAPER PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION

WASHINGTON - The Congressional Black Caucus Foundation's Annual Legislative Conference this week, "Unleashing Our Power," will unabashedly challenge legislators and citizens to use their collective power to level the playing field for African-Americans and recognizes the historic number of CBC members leading congressional committees, organizers say.



Clyburn

House Majority Whip, Rep. James Clyburn (D-S.C.) will join the four major committee leaders - Reps. Charles Rangel of New York, chair of Ways and Means, John Conyers (D-Mich), chair of Judiciary, Bennie Thompson (D-Miss.), chair of Homeland Security, and Stephanie Tubbs-Jones of Ohio, chair of Standards of Official Conduct, will kick off the glitzy D. C. conference with a Welcome Ceremony.



Rangel

The stars will also come out this week.

Please see **CAUCUS/3A**

## Sit-in veterans recall a scoop of justice

By Sommer Brokaw

THE TRIANGLE TRIBUNE

DURHAM - In 1957, blacks were not allowed to eat ice cream at the Royal Ice Cream Parlor. So Durham residents, led by the Rev. Douglas Moore, staged a sit-in.

Last weekend, a 50th anniversary commemoration was held at the Durham County Library on Roxboro Street, near the former ice cream parlor.

Other panelists included Virginia Williams, one of the participants in the demonstration, and R. Kelly Bryant, an authority on Durham's history.

The seven people involved in the sit-in, dubbed the Royal Seven, were: Mary Clyburn, Moore, Claude Glenn, Jesse Gray, Vivian Jones, Melvin Willis and Williams. Durham District Court Judge William A. "Drew" Marsh III sat in the audience along

See **A SCOOP/2A**

**BOOK DRIVE:** Natalie Lowe, principal at Highland Renaissance Academy and Crystal Agurs sort through donated books at a book fair organized by Agurs son, Arthur Hairston III, at the University YMCA. Harding High School's drumline plays in the background.



PHOTO: CALVIN FERGUSON

## Education, innovation at gala

By Herbert L. White  
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Charlotte's best and brightest were honored at The Charlotte Post Best awards dinner Saturday.

Former Charlotte mayor Harvey Gantt earned the Luminary Award for professional, political and civic achievement, as well as a lifetime of firsts ranging from breaking the color barrier at Clemson University to designing award-winning buildings in Charlotte and the region. With his wife Cindy at his

side at the Hilton Charlotte Center City, Gantt thanked friends and family who helped him rise from humble beginnings in Charleston, S.C., public housing to elder statesman in Charlotte's political and civic circles.

"We stand on the shoulders of people who've been there for us, and I start with my parents, who I like to call salt of the earth, good hard-working folk who gave us important values to hold on to that are

still with us today," Gantt said. "But I also stand on the shoulders of good friends all across this community."

Gantt, who last year co-chaired a committee that looked at re-making how Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools delivers services, said society has a responsibility to help children - especially from disadvantaged backgrounds - find academic success. Charlotte, he said, has the resources and people to do better by all students. The See **HONORS/2A**



Fuel Pizza launches food drive for Second Harvest Food Bank/1C

**INSIDE**

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