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## Valdosta Project Change

January 1998

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**Included Articles:**

1/24- Florida's Democrats facing race rebellion- Associated Press

1/27- Columnist speaks on racism at VSU- Dean Polling

January 1998- Events honoring King start today- Staff Reports

6 Saturday, January 24, 1998

# Florida's Democrats facing race rebellion

## The Associated Press

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. — Florida's Democratic Party is facing a rebellion in its ranks for removing a black man as its next state House leader in favor of a white woman.

Blacks said they felt betrayed over the ouster of Rep. Willie Logan two weeks ago, and black lawmakers plan to meet Saturday with the NAACP to discuss their future in the party.

"The problem was blatant racism," said Rep. Cynthia Chestnut, who called the ouster a "turning point in Florida history for the African-American voter."

At least one union, representing about 70,000 teachers and staff, has threatened to withhold cash contributions to the party and candidates because of Logan's removal.

Logan had been designated last April to be the next Democratic leader in the GOP-controlled chamber after the 1998 elections. But the Democrats changed their mind Jan. 7 and replaced him with Rep. Anne Mackenzie, saying he wasn't raising enough money to help elect Democrats and regain control of the House.

Rep. Buzz Ritchie, the current House Democratic leader, denied the racism charge. "I don't think anyone really believes that's the issue," he said. "There were things that needed to be done that weren't getting done."

Black lawmakers accuse Logan's opponents of sabotaging

him by telling lobbyists not to give him donations and then criticizing him for not raising enough cash.

"Maybe we need a Montgomery boycott," Chestnut said. "Just as Dr. King boycotted the bus system in Montgomery, Ala., maybe we need to boycott those businesses that are now contributing in making Willie Logan's ouster a self-fulfilling prophesy."

Chestnut said she will remain a Democrat but may vote with the Republicans on some issues.

Logan, who called his ouster "a slap in the face to the African-American community," also spoke of making common cause with the GOP.

"I think it will take all the constituencies of the Democratic party at this time to hold the Democratic Party in place," he said. "There are some Republicans that I think we can forge a relationship with."

Blacks hold 15 seats in the 120-member House and five seats in the 40-member Senate, or 12.5 percent of the seats. Blacks make up about 15 percent of the state's 14 million residents.

Pat Tornillo, president of the Florida Education Association-United teachers union, said he will stop the flow of FEA-United money to Democrats until party officials give core groups such as blacks and unions more of a say.

"We need to reassess what the Democratic Party stands for, how it functions and how it operates," Tornillo said.

# Columnist speaks on racism at VSU

By DEAN POLING  
Times Staff Writer

VALDOSTA — To combat racism in America, an atmosphere must be created where people can openly discuss race relations, syndicated newspaper columnist Bill Maxwell said as part of Valdosta State University's Diversity Lecture Series Monday night.

The end of racism will not occur through legislation, he said, but by interested citizens finding a safe place, such as a college campus, to candidly discuss views between blacks and whites, where they've been, where they are and where they're going.

"One thing I find wrong is no one is postulating about race," Maxwell said. "No one is trying to define what it is."

While Maxwell spoke of a continuing dialogue, neither he nor many audience members were optimistic of a true reconciliation of racism. As one audience member said, racism will probably always be part of America, barring "nothing short of a spiritual awakening."

Maxwell noted if white Americans could find some way to experience racism, it would be a step in the right direction.

"You cannot vicariously expe-

rience racism," he said. An example of white people better understanding racism, Maxwell explained, are the white grand-



MAXWELL

parents of an interracial child, whose attitudes he's seen change because they suddenly see how the world is treating their grandchild. Maxwell advocated getting "the perpetrators to realize the plight of the victims." The "perpetrators" are whites perpetrating racism while blacks are the victims of racism.

Maxwell subscribes to the view that blacks cannot be racists because they have little influence or control over the white power structure. Black people can be angry about, hate or be prejudiced against whites without being racist. Anger, hate and prejudice accompanied by power is racism, he said.

The columnist also discussed his idea of "collateral responsibility." Many white people write see MAXWELL, page 3-A

Tuesday, January 27, 1998 3

## Maxwell

from page 1-A

him, he said, saying their families never owned slaves, and they have personally never owned slaves, so how can they be responsible?

Maxwell said "collateral responsibility" in racism is knowing a bank has a policy not to loan to black people, and "if you know, and do nothing, you are responsible."

Maxwell closed his lecture by urging black people to transcend what writer James Baldwin called "the trap of being inferior." He said folks should stop trying to change the way people think, and instead consider changing the way they relate to those people.

"Don't believe that you're infe-

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rior," he said.

Maxwell, 52, holds a master's degree from the University of Chicago, and taught at the college level for 20 years before pursuing a career in journalism. Maxwell is currently an editorial writer with *The St. Petersburg Times*. His syndicated column appears Thursdays in *The Valdosta Daily Times*.

# The Valdosta Daily

Jan

1998

Valdosta, Georgia

## Events honoring King start today

■ Community pays respects to late civil rights leader

### Staff reports

VALDOSTA — A variety of community activities honoring the late civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. begin today. This weekend's events are the 13th annual King Celebration sponsored by the local Martin Luther King Jr. Commemorative Committee.

Opening ceremonies begin at 3 p.m. today, at Mathis Auditorium. Keynote speaker will be the Rev. Mark Pierson of St. Paul AME Church.

The program will include performances by local church choirs and choruses from Lowndes County and Valdosta City Schools. Personnel from Moody

Air Force Base will present the colors.

At 7 p.m., Sunday, the 1998 Martin Luther King Jr. Commemorative Program will be held in Whitehead Auditorium of the Valdosta State University Fine Arts Building.

The program is sponsored by the VSU Office of Equal Opportunity Programs and the Black Student League. The speaker will be Dr. Joseph Silver, vice president for academic affairs at Savannah State University.

No classes are scheduled Monday at VSU, which will be closed in observance of the King holiday.

Monday, activities begin with a

scholarship breakfast sponsored by Alpha Psi Alpha fraternity at J.L. Newbern Middle School. The Rev. Kenneth Emmanuel of Jacksonville, Fla. will be the speaker.

At 11 a.m., local youth will gather at the church to honor the leader with a talent show. The speaker at the youth program is student Marquise Hardrick.

Directly following the youth program, a memorial service will be held at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial at the corner of Martin Luther King Drive and Ashley Street. A fellowship dinner will follow at Mathis Auditorium.

All of the activities are free to the public.



MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.