



Lowndes County Historical Society: Valdosta Project
Change Collection, 1997-2003
MS/181

1999-2000

Valdosta Project Change

March 1999

For this and additional works see: <https://vtext.valdosta.edu/xmlui/handle/10428/6499>

Recommended Citation:

Valdosta Project Change. "Valdosta Project Change Scrapbook, March 1999," Lowndes County Historical Society. Valdosta State University Archives and Special Collections, MS-181: Valdosta Project Change Scrapbook Collection, 1997-2003.

This item is free and open source. It is part of the *Valdosta Project Change Collection* at the [Lowndes County Historical Society](#) and was digitized by the Valdosta State University Archives and Special Collections. If you have any questions or concerns contact archives@valdosta.edu

Included Articles:

3/1- Black lawmakers gaining ground: Many see themselves becoming 'equal players'- Associated Press

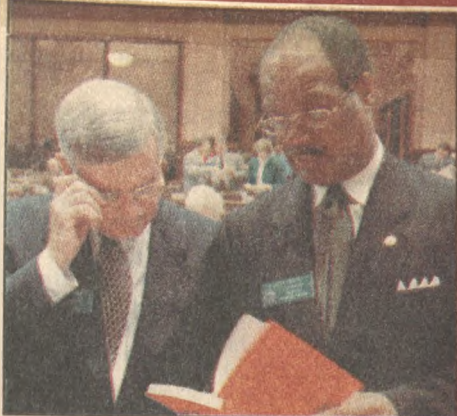
3/8- Cook resident recalls battle against racism- Laurel Hahlen

3/18- Only racism will kill King's dream- Kevin S. Cronin, Valdosta

3/26- Cal Thomas' column misleading, inaccurate- James R. Wright, Valdosta

3/30- Whites leave welfare faster than minorities- Associated Press

3/31- The Right to Vote is inked in Blood- Charles Moore



Associated Press

Rep. Calvin Smyre, D-Columbus, right, and Majority Leader, Rep. Larry Walker, D-Perry, confer Jan. 28 in Atlanta. Black legislators say being considered equal players in key issues is a sign they're continuing to gain ground in state politics.

Black lawmakers gaining ground

Many see themselves becoming 'equal players'

ATLANTA (AP) — Gone are racially divisive issues such as affirmative action and welfare reform.

Instead, Georgia's black legislators say being considered equal players in the session's key issues — education, health care, economic development and transportation — are signs they're continuing to gain ground in state politics.

"African-Americans are beginning to ... move into power where they can influence policy," said Senate Majority Leader Charles Walker, D-Augusta, who holds the highest post a black lawmaker has ever held in the Georgia Legislature.

With two blacks elected to statewide office for the first time — Attorney General Thurbert Baker and Labor Commissioner Michael Thurmond — and holding top leadership positions in the state Legislature, blacks have never been represented so strongly in state government.

Paying back black voters for turning out in record numbers to help elect him, Gov. Roy Barnes has put some issues that are priorities for blacks in his legislative agenda and hired minorities for his administration.

He's also pledged his support to the state's traditionally black colleges in light of a discrimination lawsuit that some believe threatens to close the schools.

"The issues that are very acute to us ... have a lot to do with education and esca-

lating of mobility," said Rep. Calvin Smyre, D-Columbus, who is the House' highest-ranking black lawmaker as chairman of the powerful Rules Committee. "I know that there's a lot of interest in the governor's education bill and how that's going to be played out."

Barnes has proposed \$11.7 million in next year's budget to provide space for 2,000 more students to be placed in alternative settings. About 12,500 students are in such schools now.

The Georgia Legislative Black Caucus' agenda is heavy on school discipline, alternative schools, after-school programs and school accountability.

The Rev. Gerald Durley, pastor of

See LEGISLATORS on Page 3A

Continued from Page 1A

Legislators

Monday, March 1, 1999 — 3A

Atlanta's Providence Missionary Baptist Church, where Barnes held his inaugural prayer service, said Barnes' plan to get disruptive students out of classrooms is a "step in the right direction."

But Smyre and others say it's still too soon to decide whether black Georgians can claim victory this session.

"Nothing happens overnight," said Rep. Carl Von Epps, head of the Legislative Black Caucus. "Just to be at the table, just to be on the playing field is a good feeling for us."

Barnes has been genuinely receptive to the concerns and ideas of black Georgians, said William Boone, a political scientist at Clark Atlanta University.

"Somewhat as important (as legislation) is the atmosphere that he's creating," he said. "It's very approachable, very congenial."

And lawmakers praise the governor for confronting racial division, especially in his inaugural address.

"He has removed, to some degree, the wedge issue of race," Smyre said. "It creates a common denominator that we're going to talk about quality-of-life issues and not allow race to become a wedge and to become a divider."

Boone said even Barnes' decision to sign a bill that bans Atlanta and other Georgia cities

from filing lawsuits seeking to recover the cost of treating gunshot victims hasn't hurt his popularity among blacks.

The bill became law after Atlanta Mayor Bill Campbell filed suit against the gun manufacturers.

Walker said there will be fewer racial issues this session and in the future as blacks are considered active players in the debate over economic and public policy issues, not just civil rights.

The only such issue so far this session is a bill by Rep. Tyrone Brooks, D-Atlanta, that would remove the Confederate battle emblem from the Georgia flag. It remains in a House committee.

"Because of our experience we consider ourselves the guard of the conscience of an unjust system. We don't have to be the advocates all the time," Walker said. "I don't have to be the champion of civil rights."

Many black legislators say they could see a black Georgian becoming lieutenant governor or governor in the near future, but it would have to be someone with the right issues and enormous fund-raising ability. Perhaps Baker or Thurmond.

And Walker says the prospect of a powerful black politician no longer frightens many Georgians.

"The more people see the

Calvin Smyres, the Charles Walkers, the Michael Thurmonds, the Thurbert Bakers in

action," Walker said, "it is not as fearful to them as it would be otherwise."

Cook resident recalls battle against racism

By Laurel Hahlen

THE VALDOSTA DAILY TIMES

ADEL — Bob Jones doesn't want other people to have to go through what he went through.

The 62-year-old Sparks resident has experienced many incidents of racism in his lifetime.

Jones said he's had food thrown in his face, been discriminated against by employers and unions and had frivolous lawsuits filed against him.

But none of it has stopped him from fighting for his civil rights.

Jones has been fighting for equality and participating in civil rights marches since 1962. He has marched with Ralph Abernathy, Al Sharpton and Jesse Jackson in such places as Selma and Birmingham, Ala., New York City and Brooklyn.

He recently participated in the Unity March that was organized in part by Deacon W.T. Sharpe of Bethel Baptist Missionary Church in Adel. Sharpe hoped the march would bring blacks and whites in the community together.

While it did for the few who participated, Jones said he was disappointed with the turnout of the community's black population.

"One day they'll wish they had done this," he said. "This is supposed to be about unity,

pulling people — black and white — together to work through problems. And they don't show up."

Jones said there are about 40 churches in the Adel area. Of those, only four ministers — three blacks and one white — attended the march.

He said there is a desperate need for leaders in the black community.

"We have a lot of ministers, but very few pastors. Pastors are leaders," he said. "Maybe a lot of ministers live out of town, but so did Martin Luther King."

Born in Ty Ty and raised in Lenox, Jones moved away from the area when he was 16. He moved about the country before settling in New York where he began working with the New York Times.

Before he was hired, a suit had been brought against the paper and the union for failing to hire minorities. Even after Jones was hired, he faced many discrimination issues. He and a coworker eventually formed a minority caucus because it was the only way they could get what they deserved, he said. The caucus policed the industry and fought discrimination when it came up. He worked for the company for 28 years before retiring.

It was in retirement that Jones returned home to Cook County to find many things just as they were when he left.

"It's depressing," he said. "I had eggs thrown in my face in Winston Salem, North Carolina. I didn't go through all of that to come back here and see things haven't changed."

Jones is concerned about many things he sees as unjust.

He says many employers don't hire people of color or place them in prominent positions. He pointed out most area banks don't have any minority employees, except in janitorial positions. He also said local law enforcement needs to hire more blacks and make sure all officers are properly trained.

"Cook County needs to hire more minorities and send everyone to Atlanta for training," he said. "You can't just take somebody off a John Deere tractor and stick them in the police department."

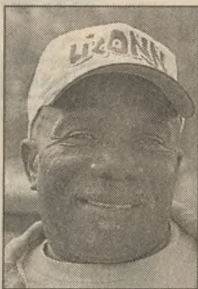
According to Jones, a group is in the process of writing up a petition with issues they feel need to be addressed in the Lenox community.

Jones stresses the issues are not about black and white, but what's wrong and right. One of the things he said he's very concerned about in the city is the road to the black cemetery has yet to be paved, while the road to the white cemetery was paved years ago.

He said most minorities are content to settle for what they get. But that contentment can be dangerous because people are missing out on their rights as U.S. citizens.

"I'm trying to get minorities to understand what they can get if they know how to go out and get it. They're scared, beat down," he said. "I've been through a lot. I don't have to be bothered with this, but I don't want to see others go through what I went through if I can help it."

To contact reporter Laurel Hahlen, please call 244-3400 ext. 237.



Bob Jones

Thousands remember 'Bloody Sunday'

SELMA, Ala. (AP) — Thousands of people Sunday made their way across Edmund Pettus Bridge in remembrance of an infamous clash between Alabama state troopers and civil

rights marchers more than 30 years ago.

Some 1,500 people, including Coretta Scott King and a congressional delegation led by Rep. John Lewis D-Ga., crossed

over the bridge to relive history.

Sunday marked the 34th anniversary of an extremely violent racial confrontation that became generally known as Bloody Sunday.

YOUR OPINION

Only racism will kill King's dream

I was saddened at the March 4 letter from Janice Hines entitled, "Where was Jerry Then?"

Saddened because of the ignorance and bigotry and by the way she and so many others have forgotten that the civil rights we all enjoy today were won because people of all races, creeds and colors fought the good fight together.

We must never forget the work done by Dr. Martin Luther King, but let us remember he didn't do it alone. Of those three men who died in Mississippi while trying to register black voters, two of them were white. They were not the only ones who stood up and were counted in those years. Hundreds of young men and women of all races, many led by ministers and other civic leaders, participated in the fight to help blacks win their civil rights.

They knew, as did my minister, that they were fighting for everyone's civil rights. I was only a child then, but I remember very clearly my minister, the Rev. Wetzel, speaking passionately on the subject of civil rights. He said that if the Constitution did not apply to all equally, then it applied to none at all. We could not have a nation which did not have just laws applied equally. He told us in no uncertain terms that God would not forgive us if we stood

by and did nothing at that crucial time. Some of the members of my congregation did get directly involved in civil rights marches and demonstrations.

Most of us contributed in other ways, such as making signs and raising money. But we did contribute; we were not silent bystanders.

It is much in fashion to ignore the other people who marched with King in Birmingham, Selma and Washington, D.C. And it is wrong to forget them. The civil rights that were won were won for all of us. Ms. Hines, are you so blinded by racism that you think a white man can't defend the rights of blacks? If so, you are no better than the klansmen who foolishly tried to stop African Americans from voting in the 60's.

Today, Louis Farrakhan preaches against Jews, saying they oppress the black man. He has forgotten that Jews, Hispanics and many white Christians were arm-in-arm with African Americans in the civil rights struggle.

I am sorry for you, Ms. Hines, and for others like you. You have allowed hate to blind you to the goodness in other people. Only people full of hate can kill King's dream of a nation "... where all men will be judged, not by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character." Each of us must decide which side we are on — to make the dream come true or to kill it through hatred.

Kevin S. Cronin
Vaidosta

THE VALDOSTA DAILY TIMES

Jeffrey L. Heard
Publisher

Stephen T. Meadows
Managing Editor

Heard and Meadows join Juana Jordan, Brian Lawson, Edith Smith, Mae Stokes and Lou Ziegler of *The Valdosta Daily Times* and Greg Lofton of Valdosta on the newspaper's editorial board. "Our Opinions" are formed by that board.

► YOUR OPINIONS

Cal Thomas' column misleading, inaccurate

This letter is in response to an article that appeared on the Feb. 23 Opinions page written by columnist Cal Thomas. He wrote false and/or misleading statements about the NAACP, W.E.B. DuBois and Booker T. Washington.

To be ignorant, according to definition, is to be unaware or uninformed. Thomas, who wrote about the NAACP, is ignorant. Fighting white supremacy is not the only purpose of the NAACP as he stated. The NAACP's purpose and aim is to improve the political, educational, social and economic status of minority groups, to eliminate racial prejudice, to keep the public aware of the adverse effects of racial discrimination and to take lawful actions to secure its elimination.

Thomas implies that Booker T. Washington had no issues with racism. Washington spoke out against lynching and in other ways, openly or silently, set his influence against racism and acts of racism. He said, "the more I consider the subject (racism), the more strongly I am convinced that the most harmful effect of the practice is not wholly in the wrong done to the black, but to the permanent injury of the white person's morals. The wrong to blacks is temporary, but to the morals of the white person the injury is permanent. I have noted time and time again that when an individual perjures himself in order to break the force of the black man's ballot, he soon learns to practice dishonesty in other relations of life, not only where blacks are concerned,

but equally so where a white person is concerned."

Washington went on to say, "All this, it seems to me, makes it important that the whole nation lend a hand in trying to lift this burden of ignorance from the world. ... In all things purely social, we can be separate as the fingers, yet as one in all things essential to mutual progress.

It became apparent after Reconstruction that some people did not ever want the civil and political status of blacks to ever improve — regardless of how hard they worked or how much character they had. They passed laws to keep blacks from voting, denied them basic human rights, stole land and made it impossible for blacks to own a business.

As a result, blacks began to believe that a more forceful, demanding approach was needed. For these reasons, the NAACP existed then and now.

No civil rights law in the world can govern self-righteous hate onto another person. The self-righteous make themselves feel like righteous winners when they look down their noses at others. The self-righteous are anything but righteous. Rather than empathize with others, they choose to stand apart. They chose to walk the safe, clean path. Thomas must think that higher spiritual realms are attained this way.

Those with real strength and integrity tend to threaten a person with delusions of righteousness. The self-righteous seek to destroy true strength and integrity in others. What we are witnessing is the powerful ignorant compulsion to "take it out" on someone else.

James R. Wright
Valdosta

Whites leave welfare faster than minorities

WASHINGTON (AP) — Across the country, whites are leaving welfare more quickly than blacks, Hispanics and American Indians, raising crucial but sensitive questions about whether America's ambitious overhaul of its welfare system is leaving minorities behind.

A strong economy and tough new rules have combined to move people of all races off welfare in unprecedented numbers. But across the country, the proportion of racial minorities on assistance has grown, in some cases dramatically, according to

a 50-state Associated Press survey. Exceptions exist, but they are rare.

The findings point to how much tougher life can be for many minorities, even compared with other poor Americans. Welfare researchers and state officials say the disparity is understandable given that minorities as a group begin poorer and live farther from many jobs. Nevertheless, the figures are alarming.

"It just leads to greater polarization between classes, between races," said Bruce Katz, who studies urban issues at the

Brookings Institution. "It just sort of eats away at the social fabric."

In 33 of 42 states, the proportion of white welfare recipients had dropped since 1994, when caseloads peaked nationally, the AP survey found. In the other eight states, either the number of minorities is too small to be meaningful or such statistics are not kept.

Of the 16 big states, home to 76 percent of people on welfare, 14 have had whites leave welfare faster than blacks or Hispanics.

Take Ohio, where blacks on welfare now outnumber whites

for the first time. In 1995, 54 percent of people on welfare were white, 42 percent black. By this year, 53 percent were black and 42 percent white.

The share of whites on Nevada's rolls has dropped since 1994 to 47 percent from 56 percent. Blacks grew to 38 percent from 30 percent, and Hispanics edged up to 13 percent from 11 percent.

And in the Dakotas, American Indians have come to dominate welfare.

In North Dakota, they grew to 56 percent from 28 percent in 1993. In South Dakota, they jumped to 77 percent from 54

percent over five years.

Even before welfare changes took hold, minorities as a group were poorer, less educated and more likely to live in strikingly poor inner cities, experts note.

And even compared with whites on welfare, blacks and Hispanics begin with a stack of disadvantages, census statistics indicate. In 1997:

■ Thirty percent of whites on welfare lacked a high school diploma, compared with 48 percent of blacks and 64 percent of Hispanics.

■ About half of whites and blacks worked at some point

during the year, but only one-third of Hispanics.

■ Just 29 percent of whites on welfare lived in a central city, or an area where at least one in five were poor. For blacks, it was about 68 percent, for Hispanics about 60 percent.

Place is a vital factor: It's much easier for someone who lives in a booming suburb to find a job and leave welfare than someone in a rundown central city.

At the same time, many schools are poor, the crime rate is higher and housing can be substandard.

The Right to Vote Is Inked in Blood

Amendment XV, Section 1, of the U.S. Constitution proclaims: The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude."



Charles Moore
Mailbox Post Columnist

Of course, this wasn't a right each individual citizen in America enjoyed 35 years ago. Not only were many Americans unconstitutionally denied the right to vote, they weren't even allowed to become registered voters.

States like as Alabama, for example, used legalized terror as a means of keeping its disenfranchised citizens from registering to vote. One such act of terror took place when Alabama State Troopers unmercifully attacked peaceful protest marchers at the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma.

The date was March 7, 1965 and has since become known in American history as "Bloody Sunday." On March 16, 1965, 34 years later, voters here in Lowndes County went to the polls.

There were no hooded thugs at the polls brutally attacking those wanting to vote. Nor were voters beaten with billy clubs, cattle prods or ax handles by state troopers.

In fact, local officials wanted 100-percent participation. That is, if they could have been granted one wish, every eligible person on the voter registration list would have voted.

Of course, officials weren't granted their wish and as a result, only 17.5-percent of those eligible to vote turned out. Why the low turnout?

Apathy? Higher priorities? It wasn't worth the effort? Your guess is as good as mine, but whatever the reason, it was inexcusable.

Too many Americans died so that each of us may have the right to vote. They gave their lives at Bunker Hill, Vicksburg, in Viet Nam, during the Persian Gulf War and at Selma, Ala.

Did they die in vain?

If voter turnout is used as the litmus test, then those of you who don't vote owe every American who ever sacrificed his or her life for the cause of freedom an apology. Because you are telling them each time you don't vote they died in vain.

Let me share what may be a secret with those of you who don't vote. Politicians don't care about your whining and complaining.

You can complain about your roads not being paved. They won't blink an eye.

You can complain about your kids receiving a second-class education, in inadequate facilities all you want. They won't pay any attention.

You can complain about low paying jobs until hell freezes over. Elected officials won't even flinch.

Why? Because they know you don't vote. Think about it.

Constituents who received little or no support from their elected officials are those people who don't vote. And forgive me for being blunt, but if you live on the southside of town, your community will never progress economically until you vote in greater numbers.

You have "do-nothing" representatives because they know that you have a "history" of staying away from the polls. Voting in the community at-large isn't that much better.

Based on the March 16 turnout, all a candidate needs in next Tuesday's election to win is nine-percent of the voter registration list. In other words, if there are ten people on the entire voter list, it will only take less than one person to win the election.

And unless a miracle happens, my nine-percent calculation may shrink to six-percent or lower. I hope not.

As the U.S. Constitution proclaims: "The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude."

In my opinion, voting is the one true "equal right" we, as individuals, have. It is a right that only we, ourselves, can deny or abridge by choosing not to vote.

State troopers can't keep us from voting. Our family and friends don't have the right to keep us from voting.

Our employers can't even keep us from voting. If fact, Georgia Law mandates that employers give their employees time off to vote.

There are provisions, however. If your work schedule is such that you arrive at work less than two hours after the polls open and get off work less than two hours before the polls close, then your employer must give you time off to vote.

Of course, you must also let your employer know of your intentions beforehand. For more detailed information, I suggest you either read the Georgia Code, Section 21-2-404, or contact local election officials.

There is no reason for anyone not to exercise their right to vote. Apathy is not a reason and there can be no higher civic responsibility.

Is voting really worth the effort? To honestly answer this question, you'll have to visit the gravesides of those who gave their lives so that we all may have the right to vote.

If you could, would you trade places with them? And if you did trade places, do you think they would forfeit the opportunity to vote in next Tuesday's election? Have a good week.