

HILL

From Page 2

This year, some of them reached a new level of achievement by becoming "crossover" -- minority candidates capable of reaching well beyond their racial and ethnic constituencies.

So there are really two positive messages in this year's election. The first is that, as in the case of other ethnic groups, our political system has room at the top for black activists with the willingness to work within the process, the patience to rise gradually, and the ability to learn and grow. The other optimistic signal is that white voters, far more than ever before, are prepared to vote for black candidates. And those people who doubt that we have white racism on the run should talk to the 16-year veteran of the Houston City Council who was caught uttering a vulgar anti-black slur 10 days before the election. Originally considered a shoo-in for reelection, he lost by some 10 points to a virtual unknown who spent only \$10,000 on the citywide contest.

But we must temper our satisfaction. For while white racism may be on the defensive, it is by no means dead. Late polls showed David Dinkins carrying New York City by an approximately 15-point margin, but he won by only 2 points. And although polls had Douglas Wilder holding a significant margin

over his rival, he had seemingly won by a razor-thin, fraction-of-a-point edge. Obviously, many white voters could not, when all was said and done, bring themselves to mark their ballots for a black candidate. Also, it gives us pause that Yonker, New York elected a Mayor whose claim to fame was his resistance, as a City Councilman, to court-ordered housing desegregation in that town.

In addition, this election reminds those of us in the black-labor alliance that being uncritically enthusiastic for a black candidate is a morally and politically deficient stance. We recognize that the interests of the great majority of blacks lie not only in the fight for racial equality, but also in the struggle for economic and social justice. So while we hail Doug Wilder's apparent victory over racism, we regret that he ran on a generally conservative platform that included opposition to so-called big government and big spending. Since the overwhelming majority of blacks are workers, and since workers benefit from government activism on behalf of the less powerful in our society, neither the black community nor organized labor can be entirely satisfied with Wilder's apparent victory.

We must remember that while in our era victories for black politicians still represent victories over

MASON

From Page 3

in which hotel owners agreed to let blacks patronize their establishments.

Why do blacks always have to be the unwanted and historically invisible stepchildren in the country? We almost had to fight with our American white stepbrothers in arms so that we could fight the Germans and Japanese in World War II. After distinguishing ourselves in battle after battle, once we were allowed to fight, we were greeted by lynch mobs when we returned home to our country.

Blacks should be especially honored and recognized every time any state or this country celebrates its birthday. As a people, blacks are willing to undergo any indignity or suffer any hardship just to achieve equality.

We understand that a national campaign is being waged to exclude blacks from all history books. For example, many of the history books being used by schools across this country do not even mention George

racism, in the last analysis we must look at a candidate's program -- not his color or his ethnic or religious background -- to determine how much his or her electoral triumph will benefit the black community, workers, and society at large.

Washington Carver, Booker T. Washington or W.E.B. Du Bois.

In that light it is not surprising that the R-J wrote its history of Nevada without mentioning one contribution by a black person. Newspapers have been considered historical documents, living history books; therefore, according to the R-J, blacks have not and do not exist in this state.

That is a social crime committed against blacks in general and their children in particular.

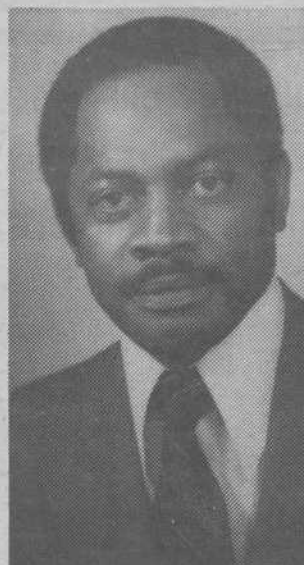
It is too bad that because of this benign neglect kids, black and white, will never know that black explorer, guide, scout and mountain man Jim Beckwourth guided and helped Capt. John C. Fremont fight his way through Nevada in 1826. The way our educational system is going, the kids may not have even heard of Fremont.

That is to say this: If you cannot or will not do something right, leave it to those who will.

From the black standpoint, it would have been better for the R-J not to have written a hatchet job that excluded them.

One hopes that sometime during Nevada's 125th year this error will be corrected.

Leonard Mason is a North Las Vegas contractor and political activist.



Leonard Mason



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