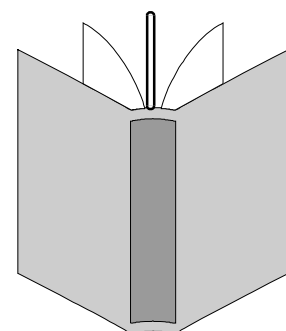




Editorial / Opinion



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An Editorial by Nat Robertson, Candidate for Mayor



Nat Robertson is a candidate for Fayetteville's Mayor. He is a graduate of EE Smith and he wants to see more "real" issues addressed and less money spent on projects where ALL of

So many people have asked me... "Nat, why would you want to get back into the political game when everything is going so well? Our current Mayor has done such a good job with our City over the past few years." My response is, first this is not a game, it's life. Then I ask, are you better off today than you were just two or three years ago? No matter the answer, ask yourself this, has the current administration done anything to address the issues that are important to you?

Let's start with how safe do you feel in your own home or neighborhood? According to the latest United Way Community Needs Assessment from the Key Informants area, their number one concern is Gang Activity and Youth Crimes in Neighborhoods. It's alarming to me that we don't have more Police patrolling the neighborhoods. We also should have the mobile sub-station moving around to the more troublesome spots. If the Police are not visible to detour crime and gang activity, the gangs and criminals will claim or re-claim that turf. Crime control never stops, we have to stay on top of the areas that are more prone to criminal activity and show our resolve to stop criminal behavior for good.

It's also alarming to me that more is not done in the community to show our youth that the Police are there to help and be a resource for our young people in need. A trust factor must be built between our youth and the Police. We as the City should take the high road and have a friendly, outgoing attitude with our youth. Our Police should be role models and set the example for what we want our youth to attain. Intimidation is not the example we want to exhibit.

Another issue that needs to be addressed is our FAST system. The lack of reliable transportation affects so many in our community. I think we should expand our bus system into a regional system. We need access points or hubs that can service routes to Spring Lake, Hope Mills, Eastover and West Fayetteville that will allow our current system to become more user friendly for more people. Fayetteville is large enough to support a bus system that could be used for convenience as well as necessity.

I hear so many people say that our bus system is for poor people. If that is true, we are doing the rest of our citizens a real disservice! We are equipped to serve our community with the best transportation system in North Carolina. We must put the pieces of the puzzle together and make this system work for those who may want to ride the bus, not just for those who need the ride for basic transportation purposes. More routes, expanded routes into neighborhoods, stopping at more convenient locations, Sunday hours and covered shelters are all issues that should be addressed.

Now let's talk about homelessness... For years the city had an attitude that if we make it uncomfortable for the homeless to stay in Fayetteville, they will leave and go somewhere else. There was even discussion about buying the homeless one-way tickets to their home town so someone else would take care of them. Well, times have changed for us all and we find more and more families becoming homeless due to economic reasons. Right now, I'm committing to you, when elected I will enact a Mayors task force to investigate, identify and enact a system that the homeless may use for help with temporary housing, food for their family and resources for work. I see this as a hand up, not a hand out and if done correctly, we can give these families a safe and secure place to stay until they can get back on their feet. I know this won't be an easy issue to solve, but by bringing the right people to the table we can address homelessness and assist those who want to better their situations. This issue should be a topic of conversation for the City, County, Churches, Cape Fear Valley, PWC and the non-profits. It will take all of us to make a difference!

My feelings on how our City services us; Fayetteville has a long way to go when it comes to perfecting customer service. Quite simply, we are all customers of the City we live in and should be treated with respect and a helping attitude. Doing business with the City should be a pleasure not a troublesome experience. No matter your business with the City, your tax money is paying the salary of those City employees and you should be treated as a valued customer. From the Police to the Public Works Commission, from the Airport to FAST and from Roads to Recreation, we as tax payers support the City and expect support in return.

OK, so if I've not lost you yet with these issues just know that we could go on and on with problems that need to be addressed. In fact, if you will check out our campaign website we address topics like the communication between city departments, DWB and racial profiling, duplication of services, transparency in our city government and how zoning affects the safety and security of our neighborhoods. These are all real issues that affect every one of us in Fayetteville. As a good friend of mine, Senator Eric Mansfield said, "If it's not about the People and it's not about the Policy, it must be about Politics". Personally, I don't think we have time for the politics; we have real People to help and real Policy to enact.

The current administration has done a good job playing politics and making us feel good about our City but has failed us in areas that really make a difference in our lives. The Mayor and City Council are on the front line every day with issues that are important to us. They need to be responsive to us and act in a responsible way to insure EVERYONE'S quality of life improves with every decision they make. If they don't represent your interest, it's time for a change!

So, I invite you... No, I challenge you to get involved. Learn the issues and do something to make a difference with what's important to you! If you're not registered to vote, get registered. If you are registered, please exercise your God given right and vote. This year, you have two chances to make a difference, one during the primary election on Tuesday, October 11th and the other during the general election on Tuesday, November 8th.

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 P.O. Box 9166
 Fayetteville * NC 28311

(910) 323-3120 - Office
 *213-3003 Fax
 www.fayettevillepress.com

*Publisher - JJ Jones

*General Manager
 Chrystal M. Thomas

*Operations Manager
 Chris Miller

*Editor - Jae McKrae

*Staff Writer - Val Jones

*Account Executives
 Dwight Brown

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WASHINGTON - Black leaders said on Friday that the rise in unemployment among Blacks revealed in the latest jobs report is nothing short of a "state of emergency" as they implore President Barack Obama to tackle the issue.

The Labor Department released the August jobs report today showing that while unemployment figures remained unchanged from July's 9.1 percent. Black unemployment climbed to 16.7 percent. This is the highest it's been since 1984. The unemployment rate for Black males rose a whole percentage point to 18.0 percent and the rate for Black youths aged 16-19 jumped from 39.2 to 46.5 percent.

The August jobs report was dismal for plenty of reasons, but perhaps most striking was the picture it painted of racial inequality in the job market, writes the Chicago Tribune.

Experts say this information strengthens the argument of Black lawmakers that there is a critical need to specifically address this problem.

"This is not necessarily President Obama's fault - but right now, this is his watch. He has to address this issue," BET founder Robert Johnson said.

Johnson called on the president to specifically mention Black unemployment in his remarks to the joint session of Congress next week.

"I think that the African-American community would welcome a phrase in his speech that says, 'I am particularly concerned about the consequences of this economic situation...for minority Americans,'" said Johnson. "I think the white community would understand that phrase, coming from the first African-American president. I don't think he should be shy at all."

The Congressional Black Caucus issued a statement Friday blaming Republicans for the poor jobs figure in the Black community.

"Republican leadership has neglected to address unemployment in any meaningful way," said Congressional Black Caucus chairman Emanuel Cleaver.

Cleaver added, "Time and again they have continued to pass cuts on the house floor which will deny our children with vital education opportunities, eliminating programs that help families most in need, job training programs, and threaten the livelihood of American families."

"This month's numbers continue to bear out that longstanding pattern that minorities have a much more challenging time getting jobs," said Bill Rodgers, chief economist with the Heldrich Center for Workforce Development at Rutgers University.

According to William Darity, an economist at Duke University, the Black unemployment rate may be in part attributed to more people feeling less discouraged about finding employment and reentering the workforce to jumpstart their job searches. Still, he says, it is also a sign of the discrimination that continues to exist in the labor market.

Georgia Tech Thomas Boston agrees that's a part of the problem, particularly given the fact that Blacks comprise just 12 percent of the labor market but 22 percent of the unemployed. He also said that the unemployment burden is shifting from whites to African-Americans whose job losses are almost equal to white job gains.

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200 Dick Street, Suite B
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910-323-0223

910-323-2998

sstokes972@aol.com



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