



BY ANONYMOUS

The Nose must admit a bit of puzzlement about the mayor's race. One option is to elect a native Washingtonian, who at every chance repeats he is a "dyed in the wool homey." He was born at Freedmen's Hospital, grew up around Sixth and L streets NE and graduated from Dunbar. It doesn't get more DC than that.

Black DC, that is.

The other option is to elect the guy who builds dog parks, pushes for streetcars and wants a whole bunch of other stuff attractive to the "newcomers." It seems easy to assume that the candidate of splash parks, bike sharing and the Wilson Aquatic Center ain't a true native son. But hold on, DC Birthers: He grew up in Mount Pleasant, went to DC public schools, and has a law degree from Howard University.

So why, given both meet the criteria of a native Washingtonian, does it seem there's a difference between the native Washingtonian-ness of Mayor BlackBerry and his electoral foe, DC Council Chairman Vince "The Undertaker" Gray?

Is this focus on DC nativism another way of getting at the old trope of DC politics: Is BlackBerry black enough?

Back in the day when Mayor-for-Life Marion S. Barry Jr. told Ward 3 to "get over it," we all knew who and what he meant. But now, as the District becomes not only whiter, but whiter in neighborhoods far afield from Upper Casasia, a whole new group of euphemisms have taken hold to describe key parts of BlackBerry's assumed base of supporters: There's "those who want dog parks" and "those who want streetcars" and "those who want bike lanes."

Translation: White people.

Of course, The Nose recognizes this is a stereotype, and stereotypes are bad, unfair, gross exaggerations. In other words, does the popular Shaw dog park look like the lawn crowd at Merriweather Post Pavilion for a Phish or Lilith Fair concert?

The Nose is not a dog owner or walker, but from all indications this fido-lovers hub attracts all types. But, then again, The Nose would be negligent if we did not note that the push for dog parks has occurred in either predominantly white or increasingly white areas of town: Walter Pierce in Adams Morgan (Ward 1), S Street in Dupont Circle and Shaw (Ward 2), Newark Street in McLean Gardens (Ward 3), and Upshur Street in Petworth (Ward 4). You see what The Nose is getting at: No half-million dollar dog parks in Wards 5, 7, and 8.

Then there are the streetcar evangelists. Yes, Dear Readers, streetcars are like a religion. They are based in the faith that if you build it, property values will rise. Make no mistake: Streetcars are about economic development, not transportation. The Nose can cite numerous studies, but it all boils down to this: The bus sucks in the eyes of developers. There's no permanent tracks guaranteeing continued city investment, it's not cool, and poor people use it.

Now, then again, there's the core constituency opposing BlackBerry's use of overhead wires for the holy streetcars: The Committee of 100 on the Federal City. If there's a group in this city that looks more like Chris Rock's imitation of white people, The Nose does not know it. (OK, any Georgetown ANC, but The Nose digresses.)

Here's the point: BlackBerry helped bring a supermarket back to Ward 8, a white-clothed steakhouse and a state of the art Deanwood rec center to Ward 7, and built and refurbished several rec centers in Ward 5. He has staked his mayoralty on improving DC public schools. He's certainly focused on quality of life improvements for white and black Washingtonians, though his "soon as humanly possible approach" has not extended to the city's entrenched poor and unemployed, who are almost entirely black.

But instead of using his laser-like focus to conquer poverty, BlackBerry has sought to establish black DC street cred by aligning himself with two dubious characters: Sinclair "Grahamzilla Black Business Killa" Skinner and Ron "Not So Peaceful" Moten.

Both Skinner and Moten have profited considerably from their relationship with BlackBerry. The Nose has detailed his arm-linking with Skinner in a previous column — aka Why Doesn't BlackBerry Throw Skinner Under the Bus — and Moten's Peaceaholics hustle has been well chronicled in the press. The Nose does not think BlackBerry has gotten much beside scandal in return.

Does BlackBerry's biracial background make a difference? Perhaps, but certainly much less than his well known arrogance.

But DC nativism cuts both ways, and BlackBerry has hyped the idea that a vote for The Undertaker will turn back the clock to the '90s when the mayor-for-life reigned, crack was an epidemic, and the District almost went bankrupt. Nothing scares white people more than this. Of course, it scared black people, too, which is how Prince George's County became the wealthiest majority black suburb in the county.

The Undertaker does his part to contribute to this nostalgia trip: His campaign is packed with relics from the unfortunate eras of Sharon Pratt Dixon/Kelly (Lorraine Green, campaign chair); Barry (Vernon Hawkins and Marshall Brown, field operators), and Linda Cropp (Stephanie Reich, special assistant).

The question isn't whether BlackBerry is black enough. The question is whether either candidate has a vision for how to move all parts of this city forward: the last, the least, the lost, the streetcar evangelicals and the dog park lovers all. ★

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