



BY MARK SEGRAVES

## Bamboozled

It's been a few years since Vincent Orange was on the campaign trail. Last time out, the former Ward 5 Councilmember got a District-wide pounding earning just less than 3 percent of the vote in the 2006 Democratic mayoral primary. Since then he's been working as a lobbyist for Pepco.

Now V.O. is back, and he hasn't forgotten how to politic. Since announcing his candidacy for chairman of the DC Council, Orange hasn't wasted anytime. His signs can be seen all over town, mostly on public space. V.O. has raised about the same amount of cash as his chief rival, Councilmember Kwame Brown (D-At-Large). They both have raised

about \$180,000. Brown has been campaigning longer than Orange in this race, which is one reason the Kwame yard signs are more likely to actually be in somebody's yard rather than along the side of a road or on a telephone pole.

At a recent Ward 8 Democrats debate, moderated by WTOP political analyst Mark Plotkin, Orange played to the crowd telling them, "Don't be bamboozled" and then pointing to Brown. (A reference to the speech Denzel Washington gave in the Spike Lee film "Malcolm X.") Orange used the "bamboozled" line more than once that night. But it was Brown who scored the final blow at the end of the night in his closing statement when he turned the tables on Orange and told the crowd, "Bamboozled? Don't fall for that." Then

turning to Orange he said, "You're not Malcolm X."

"It brought the house down," Plotkin recalls.

As for another early indicator as to how this race is shaping up, Brown trounced Orange in the DC Democratic party's District-wide straw poll. Brown took 585 votes to Orange's 329. And the Ward 3 Dems endorsed Brown who took more than 75 percent of the vote in that straw poll.

While straw polls and endorsements aren't always true indicators of how the primary will shake out, it does help to boost a campaign's morale. A better indicator would be the fact that Kwame has proven he can win in a District-wide election. In 2006 Orange proved he can come in fourth behind Fenty, Linda Cropp and Marie Johns.

## Don't Count Doug Out

For the first time in several years, the District's non-voting Delegate to Congress has a legitimate challenger. Doug Sloan is his name – he's well organized, bright and most importantly, he doesn't come off as a crazy person who can easily be dismissed. Just ask the Ward 3 Democrats. Sloan pulled off what can only be described as a huge upset winning the Ward 3 straw poll with 65 percent of the vote compared to Norton's 30 percent.

"Ward 3 Democrats don't like Norton," political analyst Mark Plotkin says. And while it's hard to imagine Norton losing the primary – Norton crushed Sloan in the DC Dems District-wide straw poll, and she won the endorsement of the Gertrude Stein Democrats Club winning 87 percent of the vote – Plotkin says the Ward 3 numbers "could be an early indicator that Norton's popularity is slipping."

## Can't Buy Me Love

Despite the fact that Mayor Adrian Fenty has raised eight times what his closest competitor has raised, an unprecedented \$4.2 million, Fenty can't seem to buy himself a break.

Council Chairman Vince Gray has won nearly all of the recent straw polls, including the Ward 3 Dems where Gray won by 6 votes, the Gertrude Stein Dems where Gray snagged 63 percent of the votes and the DC Democratic State Convention where Gray bested Fenty with 703 votes to Fenty's 190. Leo Alexander managed to get 75 votes. Fenty did manage to win the Ward 8 straw poll, but only when unregistered voters were allowed to vote. When the vote was limited to previously registered voters, Gray came out on top.

It's not a good trend for Fenty, who less than four years ago won every single precinct in the District and has

Chairman Vince Gray chats with supporters at the groundbreaking of the Hill Center. Photo: Andrew Lightman



a good record of accomplishments to run on. Not to mention that Fenty is a far better politician than Gray, better organized, better looking and better known.

On paper, Fenty would be the odds on favorite by a mile. But right now, with fewer than 90 days before the election, it's Grays to lose.

I have to admit, I never thought I would write those words. Six months ago when Gray was toying with the idea of running, it didn't seem like he had a chance to beat Fenty. It was a fool's errand. But Gray has proven he's nobody's fool.

And Fenty continues to prove that he is his own worst enemy. Take the recent incident surrounding the theft of two bicycles from Fenty's home. According to police and press reports, some kids walked into Fenty's garage and made off with his son's bicycles. Any other politician would have seen this as an opportunity to show the public he's just like they are, and anyone can be a victim of crime. "I feel your pain" comes to mind.

But not our mayor. No, Fenty has based his mayoral career on secrecy. Everything he does is a secret, whether it's taking trips to foreign countries paid for by governments that discriminate against minorities like China and the United Arab Emirates, or his mid-day bike rides using a police motorcycle escort, or his meetings with elected officials, Fenty thinks the public is on a need-to-know-basis only. And the public doesn't need to know.

So it was with the bike theft. The police report was marked confidential; at first Fenty would not answer questions about it, then when it was clear this was going to be a news story, he released a brief statement.

It all goes to his attitude toward the public. The public who he is sworn to serve, the public who pays

his salary, and the public who is depending on him. And on the heels of the missing bikes comes news that a Fenty campaign staffer was arrested for selling crack to an undercover police officer. Fenty just can't seem to buy a break.

But Gray has his problems as well. And like Fenty, they are self-made. Gray still refuses to admit he did anything wrong when it comes to the fence he built at his home. District officials have determined the fence is illegal and must be moved. Gray insists this is political payback from Fenty loyalists in the government.

The fact is Gray built the fence without getting permits, and no matter how screwed up the DC permitting process is, Gray is the second highest elected official in the District and should be held to higher standard than the average homeowner. His insistence that he's done nothing wrong does not play well in the church basements and living rooms across the eight wards. But Gray seems tone deaf on this issue.

#### Watch Most of the Candidates

You can see most of the candidates this summer on my weekly TV show, NewsPlus, Fridays at 7:30 a.m. and Sundays at 10 a.m. on DC 50. Or you can watch anytime at [www.dc50tv.com](http://www.dc50tv.com). I say "most of the candidates" because for the past three and a half years, despite promising to do so, Mayor Fenty has refused to appear on my radio or TV show. Luckily the other candidates are not afraid to sit down with me.

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Melissa  
**ROHAN**   
DC Board of Education Ward 6

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to succeed in life.*

*Remember to vote on*  
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*Matt Rohan, Treasurer.  
A copy of our report is filed with the Office of Campaign Finance.*