

Mayor Bellamy, vice Mayor Davis, members of the Asheville City Council & distinguished citizens of Asheville, NC: I am Gene Hampton, founder of Asheville Citizens for Quality Government (ACQG).

Last Wednesday (2009/02/18) this editorial appeared in the Asheville Citizen-Times: “Strong leadership of education system has never been more vital.” We could not agree more. In the conclusion to our April 2008 statement to the Buncombe County Commission, we said, “When some folks tell the new comers, like Randy Hammer of the Asheville Citizen-Times, ‘you will have to put your children in private schools,’ you know we have a problem with public education.” Since our inception on 2004/12/15, our foundation & signature issue has been quality public education.

But what is more informative than the editorial on last Wednesday, is the first letter to the editor: “Feels institutional racism is still prevalent in schools.” That is very disturbing & tragic indeed in this 21st century (no wonder we saw the headlines on Sunday & Monday 2009/02/15-16 in the Citizen-Times).

The Constitution of North Carolina was rewritten in 1971 (almost 40 years ago). Article 1, Section 1, states: “We hold it to be self-evident that all *‘persons’* are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, the enjoyment of the fruits of their own labor, & the pursuit of happiness.”; & Section 15: states: “The people have a right to the privilege of education, & it is the duty of the State to guard & maintain that right.” But as we have said since our inception, no constitution can be self-enforcing. Government officials **MUST** respect their oaths to uphold the constitution; & we the people **MUST** let go of FEAR, apathy, complacency, cynicism, racism, sexism, me-ism, ‘religionism’, & materialism, & make sure they do!

As one retired professor of history, Alton Hancock, & one former student’s personal experiences indicate, the transformation of our culture & the public education system are the 2 major issues of our time. The 3rd is to assure quality government (by the people & for the people) & improve the quality of life for ALL! “All political power is vested in & derived from the people; all government of *‘right’* originates from the people, is founded upon their will only, & is instituted solely for the good of the whole.” (***We are ONE!***) Article 1, Section 2: Sovereignty of the People.

Thank you; Peace be with you; Namaste! February 24th, 2009