

As the 2003 recall election heads into the final days, we as African Americans should not take the circus atmosphere as an excuse not to vote. In the past I and many other African American elected officials have tried to rally our communities to vote, even if the field of candidates paid superficial attention to the issues that are most important to our families and communities. The 2003 recall election provides African Americans with an opportunity to show our diversity of thought on the issue of Governor; and is an opportunity to show that we can come together and continue to make strides in creating a society where government is actively seeking equality for all Californians by voting against Proposition 54.

Many of the candidates have an interesting array of creative ideas and proposals about what is best for the World's 5th largest economy. Yet, I am still urging readers to vote **no on the recall** and support the candidate of your choice on the second part of the ballot.

Lt. Governor Cruz Bustamante's family worked hard to enter the middle class and gain their part of the American Dream. Mr. Bustamante has been a loyal Democratic Party soldier and has earned the opportunity to be the Governor. Cruz Bustamante understands that local government is the service provider for those who have not acquired the resources to compete in the competitive California economy; and has shown interest in sustaining local government's infrastructure. His upbringing and political experience as a party loyalist, yet not a party favorite leads one to believe that he will continue to advocate for equal access to opportunity if he is successful in winning the race for Governor.

The Green Party candidate, Peter Camejo clearly advocates for a change in the taxation system, which speaks to the progressive economic agenda of redistributing wealth. Peter Camejo does understand the big picture. The system is designed for those who have real power and influence to continue to prosper, a situation he is committed to change. However, the majority people following the election have not seen Mr. Camejo's insight on a variety of issues essential for providing leadership on the plethora of challenges facing our state or the steps he would take to lead us into the future.

Arianna Huffington clearly attempts to separate herself from the two major parties and can claim rightfully so that she had nothing to do with California getting into this mess. In addition, she has fresh ideas, and is not tied to the money which has led both parties astray. The question becomes how will she reach agreements with legislators from the major parties. Ms. Huffington's independent status may make it difficult for her to implement policy.

I have been highly critical of Governor Gary Davis in this column and I assume if his political career continues Mr. Davis will continue to give me reason to oppose his views. However, is this recall the right thing at this time? We can not be fooled, the motivation behind qualifying the recall was not about what is best for California, but how can the ultra-conservative right wing continue to advance their agenda. The recall is a special election, where historically low turnouts play to the advantage of conservatives. Not to mention the personal disingenuous agenda of Darrell Issa.

While none of the choices for Governor present a comprehensive solution for

steering California through the challenge of making diversity our strength, they provide African Americans with a reason to exercise the hard fought right to vote. The other major reason to exercise our right to vote is Proposition 54, today's attempt to make the dream of equality just that, a dream.

If the State of California stops collecting data documenting race, we will never know if we are close to or far from achieving the dream of a society that treats people equally. If anyone believes that knowledge does not equate to power in the fight against racism, they are clearly mistaken. Proposition 54 is bad policy plain and simple.

It is questionable if any of the candidates are willing to advocate for a program of change that addresses the complexity and the interconnected nature of the issues facing African Americans. However, I do believe that each candidate mentioned in this article provides something for black folks to hang their hat on.

Voting no on the recall and yes on Bustamante, Huffington or Camejo is a vote that tells the political arena that we as African Americans are not sheep that share one idea, concern or opinion. The fact that Mr. Davis is fighting for his political life on the October 7th ballot means that he has ignored and insulted a significant number of African Americans and other residents of California. For that reason alone, one may not want to support him. Voicing criticism also carries the responsibility of voicing your opinion as to who has the best ideas for leadership and can navigate the complex political landscape in Sacramento. This year as always is important, please cast your vote on October 7th!

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