No Lie can Live Forever!!! Newly Formed “People for A Stronger Cleveland County” Hold Candidates Forum in the Democrat Commissioner Primary Election race!!! “Massa Eddie” Holbrook Leaves Early! H.O.T Candidates Prevail—Report, Commentary and fact checking by Robert A. Williams

All you have to do is scroll back through my articles in the last several weeks to understand there is a big divide in the “Black Community” leadership. There is the Eddie Holbrook faction of black leaders who Holbrook and a few others have elevated to various appointed positions on Boards and groups as a payoff for their efforts to hold down the “Temperature” in the black community. Some would call this a group of “Uncle Toms.” Then, there is the NAACP which now appears to be mostly aligned with the Uncle Toms. Now, there is a new group of critical thinkers among the leadership in the black community that realize the Uncle Toms have pretty much neutered the NAACP as well as sold out the best interest of the black community for their own gain. This group calls themselves “People for a Stronger Cleveland County.” The “People” quickly organized a Candidates Forum for the Democrat Commissioner

candidates (Massa Edie Holbrook, Chris Gash and Todd McIntosh) for April 10, 2018 at 6:00 PM in the School Board Chambers.

I attended this forum and this is my report and commentary.

First of all, in regard to my previous report on this upcoming forum, I noted a report to me that Mike Philbeck was trying to quash a question that the black community wanted answered regarding the Cleveland County Commissioners refusal to respond to a proposition by Willie Green to build a "Sports Complex" in partnership with the Commissioners and perhaps the Schools. I attended the Commissioner's Meeting where Mr. Green presented his proposition and found the proposal, in my opinion, fair, needed and equitable. As this would be the first equitable partnership between Cleveland County and a "black" entrepreneur that I know of, and knowing how Cleveland County operates my silent prediction was the Commissioners would refuse to participate although they would not actually refuse. Just do nothing as that is their MO. And not explain what was obvious: their racial prejudices would not allow them to make any equitable arrangements with a black man. And, besides, They have pretty much bankrupted Cleveland County with all their other giveaway programs and projects to groups headed by white people but occasionally including an Uncle Tom.

As it turned out the question regarding the Sports Complex was not asked. Mike Philbeck had been asked to co-moderate the forum and refused to participate if that question was going to be asked. Philbeck allegedly stated to the forum organizers that such a question was "too Controversial." I say "NO" to Philbeck's logic. The question is not controversial at all. Willie Green had made an official proposal to the County Commissioners and they owed him a response. What would be controversial would be their truthful answer (that they won't give for political reasons-Massa Eddie wants to lie and still get the black vote) that they don't want to do equitable business with a black man. Hey, they never do. Isn't that

proof enough?

This “Sports Complex” question was a valid question for the group to ask and what I would have recommended them to do was to tell Mike Philbeck “thanks, but No thanks” and found another co-moderator. Mike Philbeck is known to be a big Massa Eddie Holbrook supporter anyway and it was probably a mistake to ask him to co-moderate the forum to start with. Read on for more along this line.

The forum itself was well attended by both the white and black community. I got there early and got way up front for better seeing and hearing. I always do that for School Board meetings too.

The Forum format was there were two moderators. Charles Webber, a black Democrat and Mike Philbeck, a white Republican. I didn’t understand why a Republican Moderator was needed for a Democrat Primary Election Forum, but that was the choice of the forum sponsors. The moderators would take turns asking prepared questions to the candidates who had two minutes to respond. A two minute opening statement and a two minute closing statement was allowed for each candidate. Massa Eddie Holbrook announced that he would have to leave early as he had a previously planned commitment. The exact timing of Massa’s exit was telling.

Just past midway (question #7) in the questioning Mike Philbeck asked the candidates a “loaded question” that was clearly intended to benefit the incumbent, Massa Eddie. That question was “List the greatest achievements of the present county government in recent years?” I quickly wondered why Philbeck did not ask the candidates to list the greatest problems in county government?

Massa Eddie, apparently ready for such a question went into his usual diatribe, talking points, about how he brought 5,000 jobs and $6.5 BILLION in tax base into the county and the

unemployment rate was 4.1%. 5% unemployment is usually figured as full employment. Massa Eddie never mentions the FACT that the big Duke Power Plant construction at Cliffside brought $$$Billions of tax base and much employment (during construction) into the county with absolutely ZERO influence by Massa Eddie Holbrook and his Economic Development program. Same with that new Natural Gas Plant just South of Kings Mountain. Of course Massa Eddie never acknowledges that there are over 20,000 citizens in Cleveland County on food stamps because of unemployment or underemployment. It is virtually impossible to have a 4.1% unemployment rate in Cleveland County with over 20,000 on food stamps. It is also of note that Massa Eddie in his response to the Shelby Star stated he brought 8,000 jobs into the county and was working on 1,200 more. Leaving out the fact that if the 4.1% unemployment figure was close to right, there were NOT another 1,200 Cleveland County workers for those jobs. And if Cleveland County is at full employment, why recruit more businesses spending millions on "incentives.?" If Massa Eddie was Pinocchio his wooden nose would be two feet long by now. Maybe three feet long.

Holbrook took his leave after this question to go to his big fundraising event. As I recall Massa Eddie's Country Club buddies raised $42,000 (or thereabouts) for Holbrook's first run as county commissioner. An office that paid about $6,500 at that time.

Chris Gash answered that question naively acknowledging the 4.1% unemployment rate, but also rightly stating that there were many others needing employment. After the forum I informed Gash about the over 20,000 on Food stamps, a number I received from DSS through Tim Moore as DSS usually tries to hide such information.

Todd McIntosh added that bringing in business was good but rightly stated workforce development was an issue to be dealt with.

Before I get to the list of other questions that were asked and the responses, I noticed a common approach to the candidates approach to running the County Commissioner's office. Both candidates Chris Gash and Todd McIntosh repeatedly stated during the questioning and in different ways that they would be Honest, Open and Transparent. I decided to call Gash and McIntosh the H.O.T. Candidates for Honesty, Openness and Transparency. They mentioned Integrity many times too. Massa Eddie never once used the words honesty, openness, transparency and integrity. I suspect Massa Eddie didn't use those words because they are not in his MO as a commissioner. I mentioned this only because I thought that amongst Massa's other tall tales and misrepresentations he would lie about that too.

List of questions:
1. Explain how Commissioners fit in with Cleveland County's County Manager form of government works:
McIntosh-Commissioners work with the Community and advise County Manager
Holbrook-County Manager runs the day by day operation of the county. Not the responsibility of the Commissioners to hire employees except County Manager. Be the eyes and ears of County Manager.
Gash-Commissioners provide the "vision" to the County Manager and the CM carries out that vision

2. Explain the appropriate relationship between industry and county utilities:
Holbrook-Shelby and Kings Mountain compliment each other.
Gash- Such "partnerships should include Cleveland County utilities too.
McIntosh- We are Cleveland County. We need to support all.
Editor's note: Just about all (maybe all) of Massa Eddie's Economic Development plans leave out Cleveland County Water and County Fire Protection.

3. Explain the relationship between the County and the other

13 municipalities.
Gash-Help other municipalities with equitable opportunities, allow them to work together.
McIntosh-The County needs to communicate with all municipalities,, not just Shelby and Kings Mountain. Upper Cleveland County feels totally left out.
Holbrook-There would have been no $6.5 Billion increase in property tax valuation or the 5,000 jobs without the commissioners. Agriculture needs to grow and more recreation and park facilities need to be built.
Editor's note: Apparently Holbrook wants to keep everybody outside KM and Shelby picking cotton and milking cows. Just shows the "Massa Eddie" nickname was appropriate. Also little to no money provided by Massa's Eddie's commissioners for building county parks and a Sports Complex.

4. Regardless of laws, how should county award diversity in business contracts?
Gash- Be intentional with diversity contracts. Research opportunities.
McIntosh- Look local first.
Holbrook- Mandated by state to go to low bidder. Make awarding diversity contracts difficult. Need diversity on Boards.
Editor's Notes: Believe this low bidder being mandated is wrong. Otherwise Massa Eddie's buddy Roger Holland would not get all the county architect work. Also, if Holbrook supported diversity on Boards he would have already appointed them. Diversity on County Boards appear to be reserved for Uncle Toms.

5. Taxes. Cleveland County raised taxes in the County Fire District.
McIntosh- Would have to study hard before raising any taxes.
Holbrook- Says fire tax lower than surrounding counties. We have to be competitive or we will lose fire fighters.
Gash- Look hard at waste before raising taxes. Be open with Citizens if a tax increase is necessary.

Editor’s Note: Massa Eddie raised the fire tax 75% for no good reason. Especially after the 1/4 cent sales tax referendum was voted down by the citizens by a wide margin. The Massa thinks he knows best, even when the citizens say NO.

6. Raising sales tax 1/4 cent and other taxes and fees.
Holbrook- The 1/4 cent sales tax would have generated $2 Million for the county. Also could have collected from people passing through.
Gash- Nothing would be off the table but have to study hard before raising taxes. Would do what was right and fair.
McIntosh- Would not raise taxes without great study on the greater good for the county. Be Honest, Open and Transparent with citizens.
Editor’s note: Massa never mentioned a word about the pawnshop sale of the Hospital for $100 million. All of which is spent or spoken for without a dime going back to the Citizens who actually owned it.

7. List the Greatest accomplishments of the Commissioners in recent years.
Editor’s note: This question was a set up to make Massa Eddie Holbrook look good. This was covered in the introductory part of this article. Holbrook left the premises after this loaded question.

8. What are the other needs of Cleveland County?
Holbrook-Missing in action.
McIntosh- Low income housing, agriculture and a host of other things.
Gash- Community well being, A living wage, too much under employment and unemployment-need Jobs, need an educational system that works, close gaps between CCC and industry.

9. Graduates leave Cleveland County and never come back.
Holbrook-MIA
McIntosh- Would support scholarships like College Promise in Gaston County. Jobs pay substandard wages.

Gash- Need Jobs, Jobs, Jobs. Need workforce development that provides certificates. Would diversify recreation and tourism.
Editor’s Note: Willie Green proposed a College Promise Program for Cleveland County several years ago but Commissioners, Shannon Kennedy and Steve Thornburg at CCC required all scholarships go to CCC, which killed deal.

10. How would you balance county services with people asking for more services?
Holbrook-MIA
McIntosh- Through Continuance Improvement programs that lead to better decisions on funding.
Gash-Through innovative partnerships. Be creative and work together.

11. Relationship between Cleveland County Schools and Commissioners?
Holbrook- MIA
Gash- Through partnerships where Commissioners provide leadership And the Economic Development Partnership matches CCS education and training with jobs.
McIntosh- Support vocational training to meet the specific needs of jobs. Provide opportunities, Initiate Promise Program, help education leadership provide proper training for jobs.
Editor’s Note: Commissioners presently do none of this. They send $Millions to CCS with no leadership strings attached. Resulting in a broken system at CCS.

12. Top Three Priorities?
Holbrook- MIA
McIntosh- Public safety, education, transparency. Be able to communicate.
Gash- Education (Foundation of our society), Community Well Being (socioeconomics-support agencies to serve better), Quality of Life (youth development)

Closing:

McIntosh- Goal is to give back, kids need sense of purpose to do right instead of wrong.
Gash- Serve with integrity and transparency. Take what we have and build better opportunities. Government is to serve people.

So folks, there you have it. As Thomas Carlyle stated and later quoted by Martin Luther King, Jr, “No lie can live forever.” The old lies that swirl around Massa Eddie Holbrook’s campaign that the flawed, misguided and secret Economic Development Program has brought prosperity and well being to everybody, black and white, has been dispelled. We are where we are but we can do better with new leadership. Much better.

As I attended this Forum and found it, for the most part, totally informative and needed the Democrat winners are Chris Gash and Todd McIntosh. Massa Eddie has had his 12 years and it is now time for a change to Honesty, Openness and Transparency in County Government. New ideas instead of the old prejudices. Truth instead of deceptions.

I recommend voting for Chris Gash and Todd McIntosh in the Democrat Primary Election for Commissioner. Early Voting Starts Today. The Primary Election is May 8, 2018. See you at the polls.