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AND

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Section

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Obituaries

Blacks turn out in Alabama

ATLANTA (AP) — Black voter turnout exceeded 60 percent in Georgia and Alabama in the Nov. 6 election, and Alabama was the only Southern state where black turnout did not trail that of white voters, according to an analysis by the Voter Education Project.

The Atlanta-based organization estimated that 64 percent of the registered blacks in Georgia cast ballots in the presidential election, and 61.6 percent of Alabama's registered blacks voted. White voter turnout was estimated at 69 percent in Georgia and 61.3 percent in Alabama.

"It is noteworthy that Alabama is the

only state in the South in which black voter turnout was not less than white voter turnout," said a report released Saturday by VEP research director Brian Sherman.

Sherman said he has not yet determined why Alabama was different from other Southern states in that statistic. "It's certainly something that needs to be studied," he said.

The VEP's figures were based on an analysis of election returns from 132 predominantly black precincts and 220 predominantly white precincts in Georgia, and 66 predominantly black precincts and 60 predominantly white precincts in Alabama, Sherman said.

In an earlier analysis, the VEP estimated that 63 percent of registered blacks when to the polls across the South, about the same as the 64 percent Southern black turnout in 1980.

IN GEORGIA, THE black turnout was up significantly this year, from 55 percent in 1980, the VEP said. Sherman said Alabama's black turnout was down from about 75 percent four years ago.

While President Reagan swept both states this fall, he won only 5 percent of the black vote in Georgia and only 7 percent of the black vote in Alabama, the VEP reported. Democratic challenger Walter Mondale won 95 percent of Georgia's black

vote and 92 percent of Alabama's black vote.

Among white voters, Reagan won by a margin of 74 percent to 26 percent in Georgia and 61 percent to 39 percent in Alabama.

The VEP's study of Georgia's vote also examined the rate of wasted ballots, or ballots which could not be counted because they did not contain a properly recorded vote. The rate was 6 percent among Georgia blacks and 4 percent among Georgia whites, and it was higher in larger cities than in other areas of the state, the report said.

Atlanta Journal & Constitution

Sun. Dec. 30, 1984

More Georgia blacks voted in '84 than '80

By Renee D. Turner

Staff Writer

Significantly more registered black voters cast ballots in Georgia during the 1984 presidential election than did in 1980, according to a Voter Education Project study.

However, significantly fewer registered black Alabamans cast votes, according to the results of the study, which were released Saturday.

More than 60 percent of registered black voters in Georgia and Alabama cast ballots in the Nov. 6 election, says the study by the Atlanta-based organization.

The study reported that black voter turnout rose from 55 percent in Georgia for the 1980 to 64 percent in 1984.

"We suspect that this may very well be the best increase of any state in the South," Brian Sherman, VEP research director, said of Georgia.

The organization estimated that 61.6 percent of Alabama's registered black voters cast ballots in 1984, while 75 percent cast ballots in 1980.

White voter turnout was estimated at 69 percent in Georgia and 61.3 percent in Alabama.

"It is significant that Alabama is the only state in the South we

studied where white turnout was not greater than black turnout," Sherman said. "It's something we'll have to study further."

The organization's figures were based on a study of election returns from 132 predominantly black and 220 predominantly white Georgia precincts.

Sherman said the vote for president in Georgia followed the same pattern of "racial polarity" seen in other Southern states, although incumbent President Ronald Reagan swept both states during the election.

Among white voters, 74 percent voted for Republican candidate Reagan, and 26 percent for Democratic nominee Walter Mondale, according to the study.

Five percent of black voters cast ballots for Reagan and 95 percent for Mondale.

The VEP earlier estimated that 63 percent of registered blacks in the South voted — 1 percent less than the 1980 black turnout.

The study released Saturday notes that 6 percent of ballots cast by blacks and 4 percent cast by whites were wasted as far as the presidential contest was concerned. Those ballots could not be counted because they did not contain a properly recorded vote.

The Selma Times-

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Donnie

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Drums of Africa

Ten-year-old Antonio Evans of Selma, left, joins in three-day African Culture Workshop sponsored by the music-making as King Farouk Brimah, center, the Blackbelt Arts and Cultural Center and Mothers of Many. See story, Page 2. (Photo by Jeanette Berryman) and C.K. Ganyo drum a traditional Ghanaian beat for local dancers. Brimah and Ganyo, both natives of Africa, are teaching dance and drum during a

Youngsters learn African dances

By JEANETTE BERRYMAN
Times-Journal Writer

Local children and teen-agers are learning the traditional dances of Ghana this week from two men who grew up in that west African nation.

C.K. Ganyo, artistic director for National Dance Company of Ghana, and King Farouk Brimah began putting the youngsters through their paces Wednesday in a three-day African Culture Workshop sponsored by Blackbelt Arts and Cultural Center and Mothers of Many.

As Brimah set the pace with his handcrafted drum, Ganyo demonstrated a "welcome dance" to some two dozen youngsters gathered in the MOMs Learning Center at Martin Luther King Street and Philpot Avenue.

After walking the group through the steps, Ganyo turned to watch their progress, smiling encouragement.

During a break, Brimah explained what the dance means. The wide outward arm movements indicate east, west, north and south, the points from which a visitor has traveled, he said, while arms pointing downward mimic planting a crop.

The two men, who now live in Atlanta, have been teaching traditional African dance, drumming and costume design around the Southeast since 1968,

said Jackie Walker, director of MOMs.

"Bringing in professionals to teach is something we like to do all during the year," Mrs. Walker said. "But we thought this week would be an especially good time, because the kids are out of school."

The workshop began Wednesday. It continues today and Friday from 10 a.m. until 5 p.m. in the Learning Center.

The workshop concludes Friday night with a 7 p.m. Kwanza celebration at the EOB building, 713 Jeff Davis Ave.

Both Ganyo and Brimah will perform during the Kwanza festivities, she said, and the BBACC Dancers will also perform.

Most workshop participants are members of the BBACC dance troupe, but the workshop is open to anyone who is interested, she said.

"We feel that, especially down South, the contributions of Africans are not widely known," Mrs. Walker said.

"Yet African history and culture is part of the history of all blacks," she said. "This is just a beginning, to learn something about their culture and their significance in the world, and to feel a sense of community."

The BBACC dancers will incorporate the Ghanaian dances into their repertoire, Mrs. Walker said.

Dennis

Kwanzaa: winter holiday without the commercials

by Brenda Crayton-Pitches

The "season to be jolly" arrives earlier and earlier each year. This year, stores were shelled with Christmas gift ideas and decorations long before Halloween.

Millions of Black Americans have sought to diminish the commercialism of Christmas and to reinforce values of their African heritage through the celebration of Kwanzaa. Created in 1966 by Dr. Maulana Karenga, Kwanzaa is a celebration with historical ties to the harvest festival or Yam Festival of West Africa.

Kwanzaa ("first fruits") is observed the week of December 26 through January 1. Although the ritual ties in with Christmas, traditionally a religious observance, it is a cultural holiday for people of various religious beliefs.

Michael and Nancy Harris, from East Point, celebrate Kwanzaa each year with their two children, friends and members in their community. "Kwanzaa is a holiday Afro-Americans celebrate that takes us away from the commercialism of this season and links us with Africa historically," says Nancy. "It provides something upon which we can build a value system and lifestyle here in America, while keeping our own culture intact," she said.

Michael added that like any ritual, Kwanzaa is a reaffirmation to "turn our consciousness back to a positive source."

Each day of Kwanzaa, those familiar with the ritual greet each other with "Habari gani?" The response to this Kiswahili question, "What's happening?", is one of the seven principles upon which Kwanzaa is based. Rich in symbolism and purpose, each principle provides a spriritual focus, "setting up a kind of expectation that is meaningful not only during the week, but also for the entire year," said Nancy.

One responds to "Habari gani," on December 26 with "Umoja," the principle for unity. Michael explained that as umoja is reflected upon, "we realize that we are part of a collective existence, instead of existing just for self." He noted an irony in the American society which, he says, emphasizes a sense of individuality, "but the sys-



The African Dance Ensemble

tem is prepared to crush any individual who goes against the system. While at the same time, it celebrates the rugged individual who survives their persecution."

The second principle, "kujichagulia," means self-determination. Nancy feels that it is difficult to be different in America, "and when you begin to accept and live by your own heritage, you need self-determination." Kujichagulia helps "you to define yourself instead of allowing yourself to be defined by someone else," she explained.

Michael illustrates the point by looking at an image of Black Americans as portrayed by the media. "You see a tradition of dependency, instead of taking control of our own situations and making them what we wish them to be," he said. His advice to Black people who want the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. to be a holiday is, "just don't go to work that day . . . it's as simple as that. But instead, there has been this asking, asking, marching and asking," he said.

"Ujima" means collective work and responsibility and, according to Nancy, is the primary action principle. Michael paraphrased a Biblical quote, "You are your

brother's keeper." In the African story-telling tradition, he related an example of ujima from an experience told to him by Atlanta author, Toni Cade Bambara. Once when she was in China, she was to participate in a symbolic ceremony held in a field the next day. The activity was to "turn the dirt over," he said. "Bambara said she was not really up to a lot of physical labor, but she got out there along with several thousand other people. They were all given shovels and someone said, 'Ready, begin.' Bambara said that everybody turned over a shovelful of dirt and went home. The work was all done."

On December 29, the theme is "Ujamaa" or cooperative economics. "We must pull together resources needed to get things done," explained Nancy, "doing for ourselves, supporting each other, creating Black businesses, supporting Black businesses and making them accountable to us." Michael added, ". . . instead of asking the President to create jobs for us."

"Nia," the fifth principle, provides an open-ended question, "for what purpose?" For Black Americans there are different answers, perceived by different people with their myriad opinions and political viewpoints.

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Kwanzaa cont'd.

Nancy points out that the atmosphere of Kwanzaa promotes a comfortable and hearty discussion, and a place and time for learning from one another, as Kwanzaa participants discuss their purpose.

A visual artist and art instructor at Morehouse College, Michael says, "In one respect, the sixth day — 'Kuumba' — is my day." The principle is creativity, which he defines as "adaptability, a little bit of flexibility, and imagination." For Blacks, Michael says, "We had to adjust to having everything that was us, denied. Having kuumba has allowed us to survive and grow in America, rather than suffer the genocide that Native Americans experienced."

Nancy, a school psychologist and assistant professor of psychology, agrees that kuumba must be acknowledged and encouraged. She points to another way Kwanzaa is used to inspire confidence within the Black individual and community. Gifts are placed on the Kwanzaa table for each member of the family and are opened on the last day. "These small, inexpensive and preferably hand-made gifts help us to develop our creative spirits. For the children, particularly, it gives confidence in their ability to produce something that someone else can appreciate," she said.

Parallels between Kwanzaa and the traditional holiday activities observed by many people occur in the giving of gifts, as well as the Kuumba Feast. Last year, the Association of Black Psychologists, Atlanta chapter, sponsored a Kwanzaa week. Nancy, a member of the organization described the Kuumba Feast as a covered dish supper "which sometimes includes a party afterwards, depending on the hosts." The feast can be an alternative to traditional New Year's Eve parties.

On the seventh day of faith or "Imani," family members celebrate in their homes. "We focus on that spiritual belief that everything we have been doing over the last six days is real and valuable. We are saying that we have faith in our people, our ancestors and in God," she explained.

Michael added that for African peoples the seven principles are a continuous practice. "There is always an

awareness of the spiritual beliefs in whatever they do, with no separation between their daily lives, religious lives or social lives. It is all connected."

The ritual includes a Kwanzaa table decorated in the basic Afro-American colors: red, black and green. Nancy explained, "Red represents the struggle and our blood ties, black is for peoplehood and green is for life, the land."

Covering the table is the "mkeka," a straw mat. Other symbolic items are placed atop the mkeka: the "kinara," candleholder which holds seven "mushumaa;" the continuity of life; and the "zawadi" or gifts. Symbolic foods such as tropical fruits, vegetables and nuts may be used to represent the "places where we lived," said Nancy. Yams or sweet potatoes symbolize the West African harvest celebration.

Family members of all ages are important to Kwanzaa rituals. The eldest in an observance is asked "to pour libation in the 'kikombe,' Unity Cup, to invite and include those who are not here (our ancestors) and for those who are yet to come (the unborn)," Michael explained. This important element shows respect for the older ones in our culture. The cup is then passed to each member of the group.

Following the lighting of the mushumaa, explaining the day's principle and passing the kikombe, participants may read poetry, tell stories, sing songs and discuss ways that particular principle relates to their lives, Atlanta and the world.

The Harrises and millions of other Black Americans use Kwanzaa as a way to teach and enhance their culture. The symbolism and tradition promote a sense of responsibility within the family unit and in the community. Also, in our age where distance can separate loved ones, it brings families and strangers together at a time that can be, otherwise, lonely and desolate.

"Christmas is o.k.," Michael concluded, "if we could have it in its original sense. But it has changed and become something else." And for the Harrises, Kwanzaa is a time for renewing something within that is spiritual, cultural, social and political. Kwanzaa is a celebration of their life!! □