

# Blount says, 'That's enough'

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State Sen. Clarence W. Blount (D-41), who rose from history teacher to a maker of history while becoming Maryland's most revered African-American legislator during the past 32 years, is not running for another term. He made it official this week. Don't think the old warrior is scared. He's just had a good ride and feels it's now time to get off the merry-go-round.

We're talking about a combat soldier of World War II and the civil rights movement. Contrary to what you might read in the *Sun*, he told the *AFRO* he was not going to run for another term six months ago, but asked us to keep it quiet.

Now, as Maryland lawmakers scramble for new jobs following the overhaul of the General Assembly district map, the *Sun* theorizes the legendary senator is not going to run because of his fear of going up against another veteran Democrat, State Sen. Barbara Hoffman (D-42).

"That's ridiculous," the senator says, rattling off a list of accomplishments that would make most politicians blush with envy. "I can take the heat and I'm not known for running away from a fight. That's why I don't talk to the *Sun* ... they don't get things right."

Forget the propaganda. Political muscle is what's needed for anyone who would run against the state's senior senator. The fact is that no one on the horizon is capable of beating Mr. Blount had he chosen to run for a ninth term in the 41st district. Especially not Hoffman, who wouldn't be running across the county line, but in a district that's 75 percent Black. It's a district where Blacks and Whites have traditionally banded together to send their favorite son back to the State House eight times in

a row.

"Let's be pragmatic and put our cards on the table," Clarence Blount says. "The passionate argument from Black folks is that we don't want to lose a Black senator in a district that's Black. It would reduce the number of Blacks going to Congress."

Perhaps many in the news media don't believe Blacks have any political savvy, especially after what happened in the mayoral race here when Blacks split the vote and allowed Martin O'Malley to become mayor. But if Blacks don't want Ms. Hoffman, and sociologically, the thinking is that they want another Black to hold the senator's seat, then she might as well not run.

There are, however, two ways for voters to go, political observers believe, one with Ms. Hoffman, or two, with Del. Lisa A. Gladden (D-41). Del. Nathaniel T. Oaks (D-41) was going to run until they changed the map. And here's how Hoffman could pull out a victory, a la O'Malley. If two Blacks and she all run for the Senate seat in the 41st, she could win.

The only guarantee that a Black could win Blount's 41st district is if only one Black candidate ran.

Whoever the new senator is — Black or White, male or female — he or she will be able to deliver right off the bat. The Senate works on seniority, and whoever is elected will be last, while Blount was the first.

"But that's the way it works," one political observer said, "it's the pecking order. The only way a new senator gets real powerful is if there is a whole turnover of leaders and a standout is created out of the new people. That's not going to happen."

The African-American community is going to feel the void

created by the loss of the 81-year-old senator's majority leadership. Chances are that Blacks may not land a top position and will lose power. Today Pete Rawlings, Barbara Hoffman and Clarence Blount are the three chairpersons.

The Black Caucus is deciding how to go. Who they back could ultimately become an important political decision, and they only have about a week to decide.

Hoffman has to access her position quickly. Blacks have to figure out how they'll come out a winner. But no matter which way they go, everybody won't be happy.

Clarence Blount will no longer be Majority Leader.

He has "done what the Lord guided me to do" way back when he was principal of Dunbar High School. The headache of politics was taken on because he realized it was in this arena where the purse strings were controlled, and his greatest desire was to help Black children.

Now that he has secured more than a million and a half scholarships for Black students, helped every historical Black college in the state, helped to get 19 bond bills passed for Black churches, created day care projects, programs for the elderly and Head Start, Mr. Blount believes he owes the twilight of his life to his wife.

Having set the stage in a manner that he hopes will make the next generation successful, he is bowing out gracefully after a final curtain call, satisfied with his tenure.

"My reputation and good name has been built on my consistent delivery of good services," he says proudly. He has cause to hold his head high. He has been a star and shining example. He helped Black judges become appoint-

ed in Baltimore City, Howard County, Harford and Montgomery County, where there had been no Black representation.

"I am leaving with my legacy intact," he says, "and God has been good."

For certain he can put his tenure in office up against any politician in the state. He has not simply created monuments, but risen to the level of a living legend, a monument himself to integrity as a fighter demanding fair play to African-American people.

During a time when Blacks were being denied an equal education, his was a godly mission.

"If I've been faithful to that," he says, his baritone voice still strong, echoing the content of his character, "that's pleasure and reward enough."

We wish him God's speed, and I am just one of thousands who can proudly say, "I was one of his children."