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## **Fulfilling the Drive: Dutch Morial and the 1982 New Orleans Mayoral Election**

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Fulfilling the Drive: Dutch Morial and the 1982 New Orleans Mayoral Election

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
University of New Orleans  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts  
in  
History

By

Daniel B. Braud  
B.A. University of New Orleans, 2004

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## **Abstract**

This study examines the impact of racial politics on the New Orleans mayoral election of 1982. Ernest “Dutch” Morial, the city’s first black mayor, sought re-election against a popular white candidate, Ron Faucheux, and a well-liked black candidate, William Jefferson. Race played an integral role throughout the campaign as Morial continually battled attacks from both the conservative white community and the traditional black politicians, all of whom resented the oftentimes brash mayor and his push for change. Controversy also surrounded his handling of the police strike of 1979 and the Fischer Housing Project shootings of 1980. This study argues that despite these obstacles, Ernest “Dutch” Morial was able to win a second term in 1982 by appealing to a broad racial coalition of voters who approved of his vigorous efforts to apply the ideals of the Civil Rights Movement to municipal reform in New Orleans.

**Keywords: Morial, New Orleans, Dutch, Election, 1982, Faucheux, Jefferson**

## **Introduction**

When Ernest “Dutch” Morial ran for re-election as mayor of New Orleans in 1982, racial issues permeated every aspect of the campaign. Morial had become the first black mayor of the city in 1977, defeating his white opponent in a run-off election with 95 percent of the black vote and 20 percent of the white vote. This he had done despite the hostility of entrenched politicians, both black and white, who feared his promises to reform municipal finances and to open up the political process to all, in the spirit of the Civil Rights Movement. But the people, especially newly enfranchised blacks and liberal whites, were enthusiastic about their energetic, idealistic new mayor who had gained citywide recognition for his activism, particularly in the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

For some, however, the honeymoon was over by 1982. Two incidents in particular had provoked racial antagonisms and undermined Morial’s pledge to promote equality and justice for all citizens. These were the bitter police strike of 1979 and the bloody Fischer Housing Development shootings of 1980. As the mayoral election of 1982 approached, these two incidents and their racial repercussions haunted Morial’s political dreams. They also invigorated the campaigns of his two principal challengers: Ron Faucheux, the great hope of the white elite, and Williams Jefferson, the protégé of the traditional black political leaders.

While black politicians in other cities also faced racial tensions in their campaigns, Morial’s situation was unusual because of the Creole heritage of his family and his city, as well as his rise to prominence through the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) rather than established political channels. Race played an integral role throughout the campaign as Morial continually battled attacks from both the conservative white community and the traditional black politicians, all of whom resented the oftentimes brash mayor

and his push for change. Controversy also surrounded his handling of the police strike of 1979 and the Fischer Housing Project shootings of 1980. This study argues that despite these obstacles, Ernest “Dutch” Morial was able to win a second term in 1982 by appealing to a broad racial coalition of voters who approved of his vigorous efforts to apply the ideals of the Civil Rights Movement to municipal reform in New Orleans.

### **Ernest “Dutch” Morial and the 7<sup>th</sup> Ward**

Ernest Morial, a light-skinned Creole, was born in the racially mixed 7<sup>th</sup> Ward neighborhood in New Orleans at the end of the Roaring Twenties. While many today inaccurately view Morial’s community as having been a homogeneous sanctuary for Catholic creoles of color, it was much more racially heterogeneous.<sup>1</sup> Actually, the 7<sup>th</sup> Ward was a group of neighborhoods within a neighborhood, often tied to a church and a local school. As was common in many neighborhoods, the 7<sup>th</sup> Ward had several segments. One section between the Mississippi River and North Claiborne Avenue, where Dutch grew up, was home to many of city’s poorer laborers. In another section on the Lake Pontchartrain side of Claiborne Avenue, stretching as far back as Broad Street, lived many of the city’s black self-employed skilled bricklayers, plasterers, and carpenters, as well as schoolteachers and professionals such as Dr. Joseph Hardin, a civic leader, for whom the city named a popular playground. Many African-American children played at Hardin Park, arguably the best-maintained black public playground, which for a long time was the only New Orleans Recreation Department (NORD) facility in the 7<sup>th</sup> Ward. Dutch, although not from the immediate neighborhood, played football at this playground when he was a youngster, usually against other neighborhood teams.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For more discussion on “Creoles”, see Arnold Hirsch and Joseph Logsdon, eds., *Creole New Orleans: Race and Americanization* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 1992), and Joseph G. Tregle, *Louisiana in the Age of Jackson: A Clash of Cultures and Personalities* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana University Press, 1999), Appendix.

<sup>2</sup> Everett Newman (friend of Ernest Morial) in discussion with the author, New Orleans, LA, October 9, 2007.

Morial's wife, Sybil, spent her childhood in this area. She knew the Hardins well through her father who, like Hardin, was a medical doctor.<sup>3</sup>

While the majority of Dutch's neighbors were Roman Catholics, others were Protestant Creoles, often children of Catholic-Protestant marriages or former Catholics who left the church. Although no longer Catholic in religion, they retained their "catholic" culture. Even today there are a number of 7<sup>th</sup> Ward Protestant churches with parishioners named Breaux, Chapital, DeJoie, duVernay, Jacques and Labranche.<sup>4</sup> This early contact with cultural and religious diversity served Dutch well later in life as he encountered more Protestants and Catholics, both white and black, who resided outside his own 7<sup>th</sup> Ward.

Ernest Morial was raised in a working-class family of nine, his father a cigar maker and his mother a seamstress. His father, who thought he resembled the boy on the Dutch Boy paint cans, gave him the nickname "Dutch."<sup>5</sup> Early in his life, he had a reputation of being very fiery and extremely competitive if not combative at times. He attended McDonough 35 High School, which was for a long time the city's lone black public high school, which integrated black students from across the city into one educational family. Morial naturally aspired to be the quarterback and leader of the football team. He made running back instead, but it seems that even as a teenager Morial possessed the passion and will to be a leader. As a young man, he learned the value of hard work by "running errands for shopkeepers before and after school" and

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<sup>3</sup> Adam Fairclough, *Race and Democracy in Louisiana: The Civil Rights Struggle in Louisiana 1915-1972*, (Athens: Georgia Press, 1995), 19.

<sup>4</sup> Examples of such churches include Beecher United Church of Christ, Laharpe St. Methodist, St. John Divine Baptist and St. Paul Lutheran.

<sup>5</sup> Eric Hardy, "The New Order Has Arrived: Dutch Morial, Reform, and the Sewerage and Water Board of New Orleans" (master's thesis, University of New Orleans, 2004), 10.



working other odd jobs throughout his childhood.<sup>6</sup> Morial was both proud of and defensive about his working-class upbringing and often referred to it later in his life.

After graduating from Xavier University of New Orleans, Morial became a pioneer of “firsts.” He exhibited this competitive nature when he attended law school at Louisiana State University. There he overcame numerous incidents of racial discrimination and became the school’s first black graduate, ahead of Robert Collins, later a federal judge who started law school with Dutch, but Dutch attended summer school to graduate first.

With his law degree in hand, Morial fell under the mentorship of A.P. Tureaud, at one time the state’s lone black attorney and arguably the best civil rights lawyer in Louisiana. He participated in the NAACP as a cooperating attorney for the it’s Legal Defense Fund and as president of it’s New Orleans Branch. He also served as the advisor to the New Orleans NAACP Youth Council where he helped to plan protests outside of segregated stores on Canal Street. Morial won lawsuits to desegregate Louisiana State University at New Orleans (LSUNO), NORD, City Park, and Audubon Park. Dutch stayed involved in the Civil Rights Movement and continued to push for change at all levels for the rest of his life. At the time of his death, he was a key member of the NAACP National Board of Directors.

In 1965 President Lyndon B. Johnson appointed Dutch the first black Assistant U.S. Attorney in Louisiana, the same year Congress enacted the Voting Rights Act. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 shattered the former racial hierarchies of the Jim Crow era. Its impact on the New Orleans political scene was immediate and two-fold. First, since blacks now had the right to register to vote, they could better organize and become more politically active. Second, the white leadership now had to take into account a more vocal black community and more black voters.

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

The Voting Rights Act of 1965 also gave rise to the formation of new black political organizations, where many of the city's young black leaders began their rise to power. Two of the most important new organizations were the Southern Organization for Unified Leadership (SOUL) and the Community Organization for Urban Politics (COUP). SOUL, perhaps the more militant of the two groups, was led by former mayor Vic Schiro administrative aide Sherman Copelin, and Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) activist Don Hubbard. Its stronghold was the 9<sup>th</sup> ward. COUP, which had a reputation for working with the white leadership instead of pushing for true integration, had its home base in Dutch's own backyard, the 7<sup>th</sup> ward. These and other political groups were formed in an effort to increase local black participation and representation in the political process and "most did not pretend to influence citywide constituencies, but targeted specific neighborhoods."<sup>7</sup> In essence they "[set] themselves up as intermediaries to broker the black vote; the new groups became convenient channels for white politicians who were still isolated from a black community they could no longer ignore."<sup>8</sup> Thus, even with the advent of the new black groups, the white paternalistic nature of New Orleans politics persisted.

In the meantime, however, Dutch Morial continued his political career. Two years after the Johnson appointment, Morial became the first black state legislator in Louisiana since 1900. In 1970, he became the state's first black Juvenile Court Judge and in 1974, the first black Louisiana Appeals Court Judge. Seemingly driven to accomplish all these personal firsts, he also understood that "by being first, he was not the first just for himself, but for the people he

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<sup>7</sup> Raphael Cassimere, "The State of Black Louisiana: The Political Scene at the Turn of the Twentieth Century," *The African American Experience in Louisiana, Part C, From Jim Crow to Civil Rights, vol XI, The Louisiana Purchase Bicentennial Series in Louisiana History*, ed., Charles Vincent, Lafayette: University of Louisiana, 2002, 12.

<sup>8</sup> Arnold R. Hirsch, "Simply a Matter of Black and White," *Creole New Orleans: Race and Americanization*, (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana University Press, 1992), 290.

represented.”<sup>9</sup> Morial obviously enjoyed the spotlight, but he understood that the increased exposure required him to portray a positive image of a black official. To Dutch, a positive image did not mean passivity, but his forceful personality could sometimes be perceived as arrogance.

Morial’s bold temperament attracted some and alienated others. Most of those who only knew him publicly tended to label him as arrogant, but there was a softer side that he revealed only to his closest friends. Llewelyn Soniat, former New Orleans NAACP Youth Council Advisor and friend, recalled, “Dutch was the only one to visit me every day when I was in the hospital.”<sup>10</sup> Allan Katz, echoing Soniat’s sentiment, was able to see the softer side of Dutch. In his column he announced, “finding the real Dutch Morial is no easy task” but that “in the privacy of his own home, Morial is a charming, delightful and witty host.”<sup>11</sup>

For Dutch, according to Katz, “the goal of the struggle against invidious racial distinctions remained the obliteration of caste or color privilege, not the mere manipulation of the existing racial order.”<sup>12</sup> His uniqueness showed through this philosophical position that he took. Although he could have “passed” for white, he instead chose to fight against racial and class discrimination. Some of his adversaries labeled him as being too white to be black and too black to be white. As a person of mixed heritage, he was able to see the hypocrisy of racial discrimination, which then motivated him to level the playing field. This represented the core of who Dutch was and it is what gave him the drive to effect change.

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<sup>9</sup> Raphael Cassimere, interview by Dr. Connie Atkinson, November 11, 2003, Ernest “Dutch” Morial Oral History Collection, Midlo Center for New Orleans Studies, University of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA; hereafter cited as Cassimere interview.

<sup>10</sup> Llewelyn Soniat, interview by Dr. Raphael Cassimere, June 28, 2004, Ernest “Dutch” Morial Oral History Collection, Midlo Center for New Orleans Studies, University of New Orleans; hereafter cited as Soniat interview.

<sup>11</sup> Allan Katz, “Blacks Rallied Around Dutch,” *Times-Picayune/States Item*, March 28, 1982.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

## Dutch's First Term

Dutch's first campaign for mayor in 1977 began with a seeming disadvantage. Blacks constituted only 42 percent of the city's registered voters, and generally black voter turnout was lower than that of whites.<sup>13</sup> To have any serious chance of winning, Dutch had to win virtually all the black vote, turnout had to be at least at the same level as whites, and he also had to attract about 20 percent of the white vote. Only recently two black candidates, Bob Tucker and Sidney Cates, had lost city council races. To some black leaders, these two losses signified that it was not time for a black to make a successful run for mayor. Moreover, Morial was not the ideal candidate that many wanted to run for mayor and he faced personal opposition from COUP's Henry Braden and Sidney Barthelemy. Conventional wisdom suggested that no black candidate could seriously challenge a white candidate unless the number of black voters approximated that of whites. Perhaps other black leaders who subscribed to this theory received assurances of white support when "the time was right." Even so, Morial declared, "now is the time to elect black candidates who will represent the interest of all the people."<sup>14</sup>

In the primary campaign, Dutch faced At-Large Councilman Joseph Dirosa, State Senator Nat Kiefer, and Toni Morrison, former mayor Chep Morrison's son. Surprisingly, the only major black organization to endorse Morial was COUP, but it was not a strong one. The city's oldest black newspaper, the *Louisiana Weekly*, SOUL and the Black Organization for Leadership Development (BOLD) all endorsed a white candidate, Senator Kiefer. Some black leaders strayed from Morial because of personal animosity. Others were used to working with the white leadership and did not believe Dutch could win. More importantly, some did not want Dutch to win because he might not be as generous distributing patronage. In spite of their lack of support,

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<sup>13</sup> Raphael Cassimere, "The State of Black Louisiana: The Political Scene at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century," 15.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

Morial's "campaign took on the atmosphere of a typical civil rights crusade,"<sup>15</sup> as he appealed directly to the masses of the black community, many who remembered his successful civil rights lawsuits. As such, they were now "voting for a symbol of the progress of the race,"<sup>16</sup> as much as for the man. This was more than just a mayoral campaign, it was a campaign for the advancement of black people, another chapter in the Civil Right Movement.

Beating the odds, Morial finished first and faced a run-off with Joe Dirosa, a rematch of the 1969 councilman-at-large election that Morial lost. Dutch then shocked many political pundits further when he prevailed in the run-off with 95 percent of the black vote and a surprising 20 percent of the white vote, which came mostly from liberal middle- and upper-class whites, who were attracted to his promises to stimulate economic development, to improve public education and to curtail the rise in crime.<sup>17</sup> This victory showed that black voters now had some political power.

Once in office, the fears of SOUL and COUP were realized when Morial removed many of the "black organizations' political appointees and replaced them with other blacks and whites, some from private management, the professions, and academia."<sup>18</sup> He brought in well-educated outsiders to run various city departments. These moves sent shockwaves through the political establishment because they revealed how indifferent Morial could be to his foes. Many of the replaced office holders had been former mayor Moon Landrieu's appointees with SOUL and COUP affiliations. Both groups effectively became political outsiders who would not support his re-election bid in 1982.

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> Cassimere interview.

<sup>17</sup> Arnold R. Hirsch, "Simply a Matter of Black and White," In *Creole New Orleans: Race and Americanization*, (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana University Press, 1992), 310.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 314.

Two other noteworthy incidents that directly impacted the 1982 election were the police strike of 1979 and the Algiers-Fischer shooting in 1980. Both incidents involved the New Orleans Police Department and tested the resolve of the first-term black mayor. Furthermore, they served as a platform for attacks against him during the 1982 election. Candidate Ron Faucheux, for example, used the police strike to portray the mayor as an ineffective leader of the police department.

### **The 1979 Police Strike**

The Police Association of New Orleans (PANO), supported by the Teamsters Local 253, organized the 1979 New Orleans Police strike. At issue was a “Civil Service Commission ruling reducing sick leave and vacation fringe benefits for all city employees,”<sup>19</sup> and as a result, the strikers sought better wages, hours, benefits and working conditions for the members of the New Orleans Police Department. Although the mayor had no control over the Civil Service, except to appoint members from lists provided by presidents of local universities, Morial became the union’s target.<sup>20</sup> Many believed that PANO perceived Morial, a black mayor, as weaker than his predecessor, Moon Landrieu. Both the mayor and the City Council rejected the demands of the strikers on the grounds that it was “an unacceptable abrogation of the right of constitutionally-elected officials to freely govern.”<sup>21</sup> City officials asserted that the City had the sole right to negotiate terms with the Police Department and they refused to relinquish any bargaining control to PANO. PANO timed its strike to coincide with Mardi Gras, making the annual observance a hostage to their demands. Nevertheless, the Mayor maintained his position and rode out the strike.

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<sup>19</sup> Associated Press, “New Orleans Police Strike Widens Despite Judge's Order,” *New York Times*, February 10, 1979.

<sup>20</sup> Louisiana Constitution, art. 10, sec 4.

<sup>21</sup> Ed Anderson and Paul Atkinson, “Strike Over; Tribunal Next,” *Times-Picayune/States Item*, March 5, 1979.

The whole ordeal ended after three weeks of strikes, negotiations and the cancellation of Mardi Gras. The strikers did not succeed in securing representation in city contract negotiations and as a result of the strike, some officers faced punishment for violating the Mayor's order to stay on the job. To many of PANO's supporters, Morial's refusal to give in was a sign of his arrogance and unwillingness to negotiate. On the other hand, the mayor's supporters viewed it as sign of strong leadership and concern for the welfare of city.

### **Algiers-Fischer Incident of 1980**

William Jefferson tried to use the Algiers-Fischer episode to characterize the mayor as insensitive to poor blacks, which could be seen as a jab at the lightness of Morial's skin color due to Jefferson's proclamation that he was indeed the "real" black candidate. The majority of the police force was still white and like many cities at the time, the local black community harbored a great deal of resentment against the NOPD. It is worthy to note that most of the black officers did not strike.<sup>22</sup>

On November 8, 1980, a white New Orleans Police officer was killed on the West Bank of the Mississippi River in Algiers. The murder of this policeman launched a massive manhunt for the murderer, which led police, mostly white, to the Fischer Housing Development, which was overwhelmingly black. The police ruthlessly raided apartments in search of the alleged killers and, in the process, killed four black people and injured numerous others. Residents complained of violent interrogations of Fischer tenants. These actions fueled the already abundant fear and distrust of police within the local black community.

For years black residents throughout the city felt victimized by an out-of-control police department, and now, galvanized by civil rights groups, they took the Fischer incident to the mayor's office and demanded action. They petitioned Morial to fire the officers involved in the

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<sup>22</sup> Soniat, interview.

incident and some even staged a two-day sit-in of the mayor's office in order to force him into action. Morial's response was tepid. His actions were limited because he could not outright fire officers since "he was hampered by Civil Service regulations."<sup>23</sup> On one hand, Morial knew even if he called for officers to be fired and they were not, he would lose credibility with the citizens, and the Police Department would regard him as being powerless over them. On the other hand, if he fired some policemen, he faced losing the votes of police supporters in the upcoming election. In response to the public outcries, he created the Office of Municipal Investigation (OMI) to handle further internal investigations. A police review board had been a proposal of civil rights groups for many years, but police opposition prevented its implementation. The OMI, however, proved ineffectual, especially because many victims remained reluctant to complain to an organization which was viewed as an arm of the police and which could leak the source of complaints, thereby inviting police retaliation. Overall, the Algiers-Fischer incident damaged his support in the black community and created an opening for a black candidate like William Jefferson to challenge Morial in the re-election campaign as the "real" black candidate. Jefferson's strategy was to persuade black voters that by not taking significant action against the NOPD, Morial was not "the" candidate for black people.

The Police Strike and Algiers-Fischer shootings were two of the biggest ordeals that Morial was forced to contend with. Even so, his first term had been successful. The city's economic future looked bright with looming projects like the Almonaster Industrial District and the Convention Center. He also took measures to fight crime by creating the Neighborhood Watch program. So, by the time of the 1982 campaign, the mayor had been tried and tested and was still standing tall.

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*



## The Election of 1982

At the time of the election, white voters “represented 53 percent of the city’s 253,593 registered voters while blacks represented about 47 percent.”<sup>24</sup> In November of 1981, political pollster Edward Renwick surveyed voter sentiment across the city. He found the overwhelming majority of citizens, both black and white, remained concerned with crime in the city. Crime was the number one concern expressed by 56 percent of the citizens, followed by 8 percent with unemployment, 8 percent with street repairs, 4 percent with the mayor’s administration, 4 percent with inflation and another 4 percent with shortage of funds for city services.<sup>25</sup> At the same time the city faced an increase in crime, it also suffered a decline both in revenue and decent paying jobs. This was due largely to the plummeting price of oil and gas, so critical to state’s, as well as the city’s, economic well being.

When the pollsters asked how the voters viewed Morial’s administration, two-thirds responded quite favorably: 11 percent were extremely favorable, 23 percent very favorable, 34 percent viewed it as positive, 3 percent somewhat positive, while 29 percent of the people viewed Morial’s administration not very positively. On the whole, only a few months before the February 1982 primary, the majority of citizens approved of the mayor’s first term.

On November 17, 1981, from the spacious International and Imperial Ballrooms of the Fairmont Hotel in downtown New Orleans, Ernest “Dutch” Morial announced his mayoral re-election campaign to a sea of passionate supporters representing a broad spectrum of New Orleans. The Mayor announced that he would “finish the job he began four years ago.”<sup>26</sup> He reminded the audience that four years ago he had “pledged that ours would not be a government

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<sup>24</sup> Gregory Roberts, “Mayor Morial Wins Second Term,” *Times-Picayune/States-Item*, March 21, 1982.

<sup>25</sup> Edward Renwick, *Opinions and attitudes of New Orleans voters about selected issues and personalities*, Ernest Nathan Morial Collection, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA, box 42, folder 9.

<sup>26</sup> Joe Massa, “N.O. Mayor Morial Announces Candidacy for Re-Election,” *Times-Picayune/States-Item*, November 18, 1981.

of one man, but of all men and all women. It would be neither a black administration nor a white administration.”<sup>27</sup> These commitments, he continued, were central to his political ideology of social equality. Dutch then boasted about changing the culture of city government, which in the past had been run by and for a privileged few. Now he reminded the audience, of several thousand, that he promised not to “engage in politics as usual.”<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, Morial pointed out that a few of his first-term supporters were no longer with him, proclaiming this “administration has not conducted the affairs of government on the policies of popularity or expediency – and it never will.”<sup>29</sup> This particular comment probably referred to former friend and new challenger, William Jefferson, and former financial backers like Rosa Keller. The former allegedly parted company after Morial had refused to pay a demand for legal services which Dutch believed had been performed *pro bono*; the latter, although a life-long supporter of the advancement of black people, withdrew support because Dutch appeared to an be ingrate after her support for his first election. The mayor concluded his speech by referencing the city’s rapid advancement of the last four years, his positive outlook for the future, and his anticipation of a victorious re-election campaign.

The core of Morial’s financial support came in the form of cash from fundraisers held throughout the city. This was in contrast to heavy loans that Fauchaux and Jefferson had to take out in order to be competitive. The largest contributor to Morial’s campaign was the Edward Debartolo Corporation from Ohio. Debartolo was a developer who planned to build a business/retail complex next to the Superdome in downtown New Orleans. Morial also received \$12,000 from real estate developer Joseph Canizaro and \$16,000 from Gervais F. Favrot

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<sup>27</sup> “Morial Announces For Re-Election,” *Louisiana Weekly*, November 21, 1981.

<sup>28</sup> Joe Massa, “N.O. Mayor Morial Announces Candidacy for Re-Election,” *Times-Picayune/States-Item*, November 18, 1981.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

Construction, Co. In all, Morial raised more than \$1,000,000 for his campaign, far surpassing Faucheux and Jefferson.

Dutch also enjoyed broad support from labor unions such as the Thomas Jefferson Fund and the AFL-CIO, as well as the majority of black ministers represented in the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance. Two major newspapers, the *Times-Picayune/States-Item* and *Gambit Weekly*, supported Morial. Despite the *Times-Picayune/States-Item* endorsement, there was widespread belief by many in the Morial campaign that the newspaper was biased in its coverage of him. Michael Bagneris, Dutch's campaign manager, wrote a letter to the *Times-Picayune/States-Item* claiming that during the campaign, the writers portrayed Morial unfavorably while at the same time slanting campaign coverage favorably to Faucheux. As an example, Bagneris stated that the *Picayune* ran a front-page story on the Alliance for Good Government's endorsement of Faucheux, but that the paper did not do the same thing for Morial even though he had the backing of six organizations and "the support of the majority of New Orleans' legislators."<sup>30</sup> The *Times-Picayune/States-Item* responded by sending a letter to Dutch reminding him of their endorsement of him and their continued pursuit of reporting the news fairly. Most of Bagneris' complaints stemmed from the columns of the popular political writer Iris Kelso, as she was a very vocal critic of Mayor Morial and his administration.

The remainder of Dutch's contributions came from various local organizations and firms. Throughout the community, Morial enjoyed almost universal favor with most black voters, women, and middle- and upper-class liberal whites. The New Orleans gay community openly supported Morial, stating that Faucheux alienated them by refusing to meet with gay activists

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<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*, 75.

and groups.<sup>31</sup> Dutch also received endorsements from the Regular Democratic Organization, Eastern Governmental Action League and a host of other city officials like District Attorney Harry Connick and Clerk of Court Edwin Lombard.

The two chief candidates Dutch faced were Ron Faucheux and William Jefferson. Faucheux was a young, white candidate who served as a Louisiana State Representative, having won this seat at the age of 24. His district was the predominantly white suburb of New Orleans East. Faucheux generally backed pro-business issues and voted against key labor issues, which made him an ideal choice for the conservative community that largely backed his campaign.<sup>32</sup>

The campaign strategy of Ron Faucheux differed immensely from Morial's. Faucheux's base of support was within the conservative white community. His biggest financial supporter was a wealthy oilman named Ken Martin. Martin almost completely financed Faucheux's campaign himself, first through grants, then through large loans. He contributed \$18,000 in cash and \$200,000 in loans. Martin's company, Martin Exploration, also bestowed \$14,000 upon the campaign.

One of Faucheux's most ardent supporters was State Senator Nat Kiefer. Kiefer lost to Morial in the last mayoral election and had become a very outspoken opponent of Morial, often criticizing him in the media. Many saw his baseless criticism as an example of "the fox and the sour grapes." Morial held the seat that he had sought and probably deserved. His favorite denunciation of Morial was to call him "a complete and total failure."<sup>33</sup> This comment was particularly baseless because the city's economy actually grew during the mayor's first term. Nonetheless, Kiefer continued to voice one of the most widespread criticisms of Morial, which

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<sup>31</sup> Bruce Dankser, "Gays Actively Support Morial, Accuse Faucheux of Alienation," *Times-Picayune/States Item*, March 18, 1981.

<sup>32</sup> Iris Kelso, "Faucheux: A New Vision," *New Orleans Times-Picayune/States-Item*, October 4, 1981.

<sup>33</sup> Clancy DuBos, "Sen. Kiefer bows out of race with jabs at Morial," *Times-Picayune/States-Item*, October 2, 1981.

was that “Morial’s administration is rampant with divisiveness, with an inability to comprehend what government is all about and a refusal to work with and understand people.”<sup>34</sup> (Apparently Kiefer and his supporters were the people Dutch ignored.) Supposedly, Kiefer did not run in the 1982 election to prevent unnecessary stress on his family and business, but he was very outspoken, and lavish in his support for Ron Faucheux.

Another notable Faucheux supporter was Harry McCall, Jr., who served as his Finance Chairman. During the first Morial administration, the mayor and McCall publicly clashed over control of the Sewage and Water Board (S&WB). The S&WB operated independently of the mayor’s office, but controlled a significant amount of municipal funds. Board members were appointed with no terms limits. Dutch realized the power that entities like the S&WB held, and he fought to have the right to appoint a board member. In addition to fighting over technicalities to secure a stronger voice on the board, Morial and McCall personally disliked each other and neither tried to conceal that fact. McCall was born into privilege to a wealthy uptown family and represented the conservative interest. He also belonged to the social elite of New Orleans, a member of the influential Pickwick Club and Boston Club.<sup>35</sup> Membership in these clubs was very exclusive and members were usually significant powerbrokers in the city. Dutch’s working-class background always made him uncomfortable with this group. To be fair, while some of Faucheux’s supporters cherished the old “Southern way of life,” McCall was not a racial intransigent. Indeed he had been a leader in the movement to peacefully desegregate public facilities during the early sixties, after he and his associates realized the inevitability of integration. He and Morial had both worked together in the sixties to bring about peaceful change in race relations, but now they were bitter enemies.

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<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> Eric Hardy, “The New Order Has Arrived: Dutch Morial, Reform, and the Sewerage and Water Board of New Orleans, 1980-1981,” 27.

The remainder of Faucheux's funds came from various other business people from New Orleans and the surrounding region such as Jay Engineering of Metairie (\$70,000 loan), Webb Jay and Associates of River Ridge (\$20,000 loan) and Northlake Engineering of Mandeville.<sup>36</sup> He also managed to pick up the endorsement of the Alliance for Good Government, which had a solid history of supporting Republican candidates. Morial courted the endorsement himself but lost it after he unsuccessfully tried to expose Jefferson as corrupt during a televised debate at Tulane University; consequently, the Alliance chose Faucheux. This endorsement was not a surprise to Michael Bagneris. In *A Synopsis of the Treatment of the Times-Picayune/States Item Relative to Mayor Ernest Morial and His Administration*, Bagneris stated, "the Alliance had always endorsed Faucheux, and the Alliance endorsed Kiefer [Faucheux's campaign manager] in the 1977 mayoralty campaign, endorsing the Mayor only after Kiefer was eliminated in the run-off."<sup>37</sup>

Unlike Faucheux, a native New Orleanian, William Jefferson hailed from Lake Providence, a small town in northern Louisiana. He was born the son of a sharecropper and went on to earn law degrees from both Harvard and Georgetown Universities. By 1982, Jefferson had become an ambitious young black attorney with his eyes focused on public office.

In the late 1970's, Jefferson was considered one of Morial's many protégés and vigorously supported his first mayoral election. Unfortunately, his admiration for Dutch was short lived. The two ended their cordial relationship due to disputed legal fees stemming from the *Kiefer v. Morial* court case.<sup>38</sup> Jefferson further claimed "the mayor treated him and other

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<sup>36</sup> Iris Kelso, "Contributions: Morial Cash, Faucheux Notes," *Times-Picayune/States Item*, November 13, 1981.

<sup>37</sup> Michael Bagneris, *A Synopsis of the Treatment of the Times-Picayune/States Item Relative to Mayor Ernest Morial and His Administration*, Louisiana Collection, Earl K. Long Library, University of New Orleans, 77.

<sup>38</sup> Jefferson was one of the lawyers who represented Morial when he was debating his first run for mayor while he was serving as an Appellate Judge. At the time, Dutch did not want to give up his judgeship in order to run for mayor and as a result, litigation ensued to determine whether Morial was required to give up his Judge seat. The dispute between them began afterwards when Jefferson billed Morial for his legal services. It had been customary at

legislators in an abusive way during the last legislative session.”<sup>39</sup> Jefferson cited this alleged abuse as one of the major reasons for entering the campaign.

Jefferson had one huge supporter, Rosa Keller. Keller was characterized as “a center for the white good government crowd in Uptown New Orleans,”<sup>40</sup> whose “political leadership days [went] back to former Mayor Chep Morrison.”<sup>41</sup> Keller had supported liberal candidates in previous elections. She in fact supported Morial in the first election, but like so many other wealthy whites she was either dissatisfied with the openness of Dutch’s administration and his insistence on equal access for minorities, or his unwillingness to accept her counsel. Together with her husband Charles, they contributed \$50,000 to Jefferson’s campaign. The rest of Jefferson’s campaign was financed through loans he initiated and contributions from local business people including his two law partners, Trevor Bryan and James Gray, III. His total campaign contributions, around \$300,000, never reached the levels of Faucheux or Morial and he ran third in fundraising throughout the campaign.

In addition to the support of SOUL and COUP, Jefferson had another big name endorsement from local supermarket czar, John Schwegmann.<sup>42</sup> In spite of risking his own political allies and grocery business, Schwegmann allowed Jefferson to place advertisements on his brown grocery bags and use his computers and mail equipment. His reasons for supporting Jefferson were that “he is very intelligent, very honest, very pro-free enterprise and very pro-consumer.”<sup>43</sup> Jefferson had supported Schwegmann during his previous race for Public Service

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the time for black lawyers to help each other pro bono, as a continuation of the Civil Rights Movement. Morial refused to pay, coining the nickname “Dollar Bill” for Jefferson, and the two remained enemies from that point on.

<sup>39</sup> Iris Kelso, “Jefferson’s Bootstrap Rise”, *New Orleans Times-Picayune/States Item*, October 29, 1981.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> Iris Kelso, “Mayor’s Race Chips Down,” *The Times-Picayune/States Item*, October 1, 1981.

<sup>42</sup> Schwegmann was a maverick businessman who created an empire of “giant” supermarkets. He was popular with locals for his low prices. An eccentric politician, he did not spend much money on print or electronic endorsements, but instead used his grocery bags to advertise his support for candidates and issues.

<sup>43</sup> Iris Kelso, “Mayor’s Race Chips Down,” *The Times-Picayune/States Item*, October 1, 1981.

Commission.

Morial owed his victorious first campaign to the support he received from both the black and white community. He knew that to win again, he had to retain almost the entire black vote, now made difficult by Jefferson's entry into the race, while garnering substantial support from white voters. In order to accomplish this, the mayor hired a Boston consulting firm, Martilla & Kiley. John Martilla was the chief consultant in charge of plotting Dutch's campaign strategy. Martilla actually courted Morial by touting the firm's past success in political campaigns across the nation, specifically Coleman Young's mayoral victory of 1977 as the first black mayor of Detroit. In a memo written to Morial, Martilla pointed out that, "the parallels between your current situation and that of Mayor Coleman Young's in 1977 are strikingly similar."<sup>44</sup> Like the New Orleans campaign, Coleman Young faced a well-liked black candidate, Ernie Brown, as well as two white candidates. During the Detroit campaign, Mayor Young worked to "mobilize black public opinion on behalf of himself"<sup>45</sup> instead of negatively attacking his black opponent. In essence, Martilla's strategy in Detroit had been to "cripple Ernie Brown's candidacy among black voters"<sup>46</sup> and he wanted to implement this same strategy in New Orleans.

The "get out the vote" strategy proposed by Martilla and Kiley was composed of three important goals. The first goal was to build the largest political organization in New Orleans history within the black community. Second, Morial had to maximize his percentage of votes from the black community to over 50 percent of the total voter turnout. The final aspect of the plan focused on creating a record black turnout.

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<sup>44</sup> John Martilla, memorandum to Mayor Morial, October 15, 1981, Ernest Nathan Morial Collection, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA, box 42, folder 17.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*



Morial did indeed follow the counsel of Martilla. He appointed Attorney Michael Bagneris as his campaign manager and together they developed a large network of campaign workers complete with block captains who were assigned weekly goals for recruitment and information saturation. Throughout the campaign, Morial's slogan was "keep the drive alive" which was a reference to the Civil Rights Movement.

In regard to his opponents, Morial portrayed both Faucheux and Jefferson as being too young and inexperienced to run the city. Dutch even compared Faucheux to recently ousted Cleveland Mayor Dennis Kucinich, a reference to what can happen when a young man becomes mayor prematurely.<sup>47</sup> Mostly, Dutch sought to highlight his own accomplishments while in office such as the Neighborhood Watch program, the reorganization of City Hall and the creation of economic projects like the Almonaster-Michoud Industrial District. His policies had a positive impact on the city.

To many observers Jefferson and Faucheux looked "suspiciously like 'an entry' to use the racing term, meaning two horses from the same stable."<sup>48</sup> In reality little substance, but mostly rhetoric separated them from Dutch. Their similar attacks echoed the opinion of most in the conservative white community, that Dutch was arrogant and alienating. This conservative community was upset because Morial did things his way and that included bringing blacks and women into city government. Former Director of the Office of Small and Minority Business, Nick Harris, stated, "white businessmen were not used to dealing with African Americans. They felt forced because the doors were being opened for everyone."<sup>49</sup> In many instances, these white businessmen had never interacted with blacks in a business setting. Needless to say, "the

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<sup>47</sup> Joe Massa, "Kucinich A Debate Topic," *New Orleans Times-Picayune/States Item*, March 13, 1982.

<sup>48</sup> Iris Kelso, "Mayor's Race Chips Down," *The Times-Picayune/States Item*, October 1, 1981.

<sup>49</sup> Nick Harris, interview by Dr. Connie Atkinson, George Winston, III., & Eric Hardy, May 6, 2004, Ernest "Dutch" Morial Oral History Collection, Midlo Center for New Orleans Studies, University of New Orleans.

business community did not come to Dutch with open arms,”<sup>50</sup> even though Morial’s “administration was as business oriented as any in the city’s history.”<sup>51</sup> Nevertheless, the mayor was not agitated by these accusations because he heard all of this before. His political adversaries accused him of divisiveness well before his re-election campaign started. Morial believed that their shouts of arrogance and rashness were cries from those who could not have their own way.

Since Faucheux did not have an extensive record of service to draw from, he resorted to trashing Morial and his administration. He needed to attract a large percentage of white voters with just enough black support to beat Morial outright. Faucheux’s best chance to win was to defeat Morial in the primary election and avoid a run-off altogether. If William Jefferson took away enough black votes from Morial, and Faucheux accumulated a large number of white voters, then a primary victory was very possible.

He and Jefferson both portrayed Morial as a pompous and arrogant man whose mean spirit divided the city and its leaders. Faucheux’s campaign platform focused on making municipal improvements and purging the city of crime. He placed crime and police reform at the center of his campaign and used the Police Strike and Algier-Fischer episodes to draw in white voters still bitter about Morial’s management of the police. Faucheux charged that the mayor “crushed morale [on the police force] and worsened crime.”<sup>52</sup> Seemingly, Faucheux’s best ammunition against Morial was to attack his character and to try to exploit the police problem.

William Jefferson sought most of his vote amongst blacks, although he did enjoy a small amount of support from wealthy whites, some who simply wanted Morial out of office. He championed himself as the true representative of the black community, often heavily

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<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> Allan Katz, “Blacks Rallied Around Dutch,” *Times-Picayune/States Item*, March 28, 1982.

<sup>52</sup> Gregory Roberts, “Mayor Morial Wins Second Term,” *Times-Picayune/States-Item*, March 21, 1982.

campaigning in the mostly black housing developments. He proposed that Morial did not look out for the poorer elements of the black community, a reference to continuing police brutality problems, especially the Algiers-Fischer murders.

William Jefferson's entry into the race caused bitter tension within the black community. Some of the city's black leadership, including the *Louisiana Weekly*, considered Jefferson a stalking horse for Faucheux and snubbed him for attempting to divide the black community by challenging an incumbent black mayor. Many black leaders disapproved of his candidacy because they believed that he would split votes between Morial and Jefferson possibly giving the election to Faucheux. A citizens group called Friends for Morial called a press conference to publicly question Jefferson's motives. Carlton H. Pecot, one of the first black NOPD officers to serve since the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, posed the question, "Why would he [Jefferson] consider a long and divisive campaign against the city's first black mayor?"<sup>53</sup> Pecot further suggested that Jefferson "was being used by others that sought only to defeat Morial in the February election"<sup>54</sup> and that Jefferson's decision to enter the race was hastily made. When a reporter asked Pecot the motives behind the press conference he replied, "This is a statement to alert the black community of an effort to divide us."<sup>55</sup> Many others in the black community echoed Pecot's sentiments and the issue of Jefferson versus Morial proved to be a sore topic for many people who wanted to keep a black mayor. Jefferson tried to ease the worries of the Friends of Morial by stating, "I do not ask anyone to support me merely because I am black, and neither should the incumbent mayor."<sup>56</sup>

Jefferson proposed to decrease unemployment, improve the public educational system,

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<sup>53</sup> Clancy Dubous, "Morial Backers: Jefferson Race Divisive," *Times-Picayune/States-Item*, October 27, 1981.

<sup>54</sup> *Louisiana Weekly*, "Friends Of Morial Want Jefferson Out," October 31, 1981.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> *Louisiana Weekly*, "Jefferson Officially Joins Mayoral Contest," October 31, 1981.

reform the police department, develop the economy and restore hope in the city. Like Fauchaux, Jefferson heavily criticized the mayor, calling the administration “a joyless and authoritarian administration that has made New Orleans an unhappy city.”<sup>57</sup> During debates, he harped on the fact that Morial was arrogant and that he was unwilling to work with others and as a result, hurt the city’s chances for growth. In fact, Jefferson thought “the role model for future New Orleans ought to be Moon Landrieu.”<sup>58</sup> Morial’s response to these allegations was that the people who were griping about his leadership style were angry because Morial did not provide them with the personal political favors that they expected. Throughout the campaign, Morial painted Jefferson as too inexperienced and too naïve to be a true political threat.

Dutch ran without the support of two of the major black organizations during his re-election. City Councilman Sidney Barthelemy and State Senator Hank Braden served as the leadership of COUP. Both Barthelemy and Braden were archrivals of Morial. Their political battles and public spats dated back to the first election and continued throughout Dutch’s mayoralty. COUP originally withdrew support from the mayor after he fired COUP members who held jobs at City Hall and backed COUP leader Hank Braden’s opponent in a 1978 State Senate race. Shortly after Morial took office in 1978, the police arrested many COUP members during a raid on the New Orleans Regional Service Center.<sup>59</sup> COUP blamed Morial for the raid but the mayor denied involvement. Some political pundits suggest that Barthelemy may have resented Morial’s ascendancy because it upset his own plans to become mayor. Indeed, there are those who believed that Barthelemy, a Landrieu operative, had been Landrieu’s choice to become the first black mayor “when the time was right.”

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<sup>57</sup> Allan Katz, “A Hard Look At Morial’s Achievement,” *Times-Picayune/States Item*, 27 September 1981.

<sup>58</sup> Allan Katz, “Jefferson: No Joyless Rule,” *Times-Picayune/States Item*, October 4, 1981.

<sup>59</sup> The Center among other things provided free after-school care, with homework assistance, a nutritious snack, and a safe place for working class and low income-families.

SOUL leaders Sherman Copelin and Don Hubbard joined COUP with their support of Jefferson in the primary campaign. Many critics thought that these organizations' support for Jefferson meant serious trouble for Morial, especially among their black constituents, but on the other hand, Morial had won the first election without them, so perhaps he did not need them for his re-election. More importantly, he did not owe them anything and therefore they could not exercise control over him. Since this was the case, it surprised no one that they did not support Morial.

New Orleans was hit with unusually bitter cold for the February 1982 primary election, which may have reduced overall black turnout. Morial received 75,695 votes (47 percent), Faucheux followed with 73,365 votes (45 percent) and Jefferson trailed with 11,247 votes (7 percent).<sup>60</sup> Post-election analyses showed that the citizens generally voted along racial lines. Morial received the overwhelming majority of the black votes, 85 percent, and Faucheux received the majority of white votes. Morial's supporters castigated Jefferson, who they believed caused Dutch a first primary victory. Now he had to face Faucheux in a costly and probably bitter run-off on March 20. Many wondered which candidate would William Jefferson endorse, if any? As it turned out, Jefferson endorsed neither Morial nor Faucheux, but instead, quietly sat out the run-off.

Former Mayor Moon Landrieu buoyed the Faucheux camp with an eleventh hour endorsement for Faucheux. When asked why he waited so long to endorse a candidate, Moon replied that he thought, "there would be some sort of recognition by the incumbent administration that there had been enough divisiveness in this community."<sup>61</sup> We may never know the true reason for Landrieu's late endorsement. Did he agonize over a second Morial

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<sup>60</sup> Allan Katz, "Faucheux Rode Eastern N.O. Wave," *Times-Picayune/States-Item*, February 8, 1982.

<sup>61</sup> Letter from Moon Landrieu endorsing Ron Faucheux, March 17, 1982, Ernest Nathan Morial Collection, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University, New Orleans, box 42, folder 4.

term, because he believed the first had been divisive, therefore non productive, or did Morial's ascendancy effectively lessen his own political power? The Faucheux campaign believed that in order for Landrieu's endorsement to have the greatest impact, it had to come right before the election to perhaps influence some of the former mayor's black supporters to come out for Faucheux. Landrieu had been a very popular mayor within the black community, having obtained 90 percent of the black vote in the 1970 mayoral election and Faucheux hoped that his appeal would translate into votes for him. Now, however, many in the black community saw this as an example of whites ganging up on the black candidate, their black candidate, in an all-out attempt to regain control of the city. In actuality, it probably drove more of Jefferson's supporters into Morial's camp than if Landrieu had remained neutral.

For the last leg of the race, Morial again turned to his consultant John Marttila. Marttila recommended some subtle changes in strategy. He suggested Morial run the race as an underdog. Historical voting patterns showed that in the past "black turnout would never equal white voter turnout."<sup>62</sup> Martilla predicted a close race with the vote being split along racial lines. The focus for the run-off was to develop a "moral crusade for unity"<sup>63</sup> amongst black voters and an intense program to get out the black vote. For Morial, his most important goal was to produce a high black voter turnout.

Unlike February 6, March was a balmy first day of spring, which encouraged many who had not voted in the first primary to turn out. Morial supporters who periodically checked on voter turnout in key precincts across the city observed a tidal wave of support by mid afternoon. Morial traveled by caravan across the city, speaking from sound trucks and exhorting the faithful to "keep the drive alive."

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<sup>62</sup> John Martilla, memorandum to Ernest Morial, February 9, 1982, Ernest Nathan Morial Collection, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University, New Orleans, box 42, folder 17.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

The civil rights slogan, “keep the drive alive,” brought out an unprecedented black vote, which for the first time exceeded white turnout. Dutch captured practically every black vote, 98 percent, but won an important 15 percent of the white vote, although smaller than his 20 percent total four years earlier. He increased his primary total by seven percent, practically the same percentage won by Jefferson. Faucheux barely increased his primary total by only one percent, and less than two percent of his vote came from black voters, Landrieu’s endorsement notwithstanding.

Overall nearly 75 percent of all registrants voted, up from an unusually high 67 percent in the primary.<sup>64</sup> Faucheux’s strongest support came from his district of New Orleans East and the Algiers neighborhood. Morial held on to most of his white voters, largely middle- and upper-class liberals. The white vote was crucial to Morial’s victory. In somewhat of an irony it was a reverse of his councilmanic election results in 1970. This time Dutch prevailed because he won more white votes and lost fewer black voters, the opposite for his opponent Faucheux.

Sharon Watson’s study of black mayoral re-election campaigns across the country during the seventies and eighties indicated, “voter turnout levels declined in every city except New Orleans.”<sup>65</sup> In 1982 the black voter turnout increased from a respectable 64.3 percent in the primary campaign to an unprecedented 75.3 percent in the run-off, larger than the white turnout.<sup>66</sup> The increase in black voter participation in the run-off was an anomaly of sorts. This meant that Morial’s final push to increase the black turnout worked, almost yielding a 10 percent increase. If that percentage had turned out in the general election, Dutch would have won outright, negating a run-off. Even Nat Kiefer acknowledged this feat when he said, “I’ve been

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<sup>64</sup> Gregory Roberts, “Mayor Morial Wins Second Term,” *Times-Picayune/States-Item*, March 21, 1982.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> Sharon Watson, “The Second Time Around: A Profile of Black Mayoral Reelection Campaigns,” *Phylon: The Atlanta University Review of Race and Culture*, 3rd Qtr., (1984): 169.

around New Orleans politics for 22 years, and I've never seen an effort organized like this before."<sup>67</sup>

While most winners would have been jubilant and gracious, the volatile Morial in a post-election interview embodied all of the negative traits attributed to him during the campaign. The day after the election, Morial gave a fiery and critical interview aimed directly at those who opposed him throughout the campaign. He lashed out against Moon Landrieu. According to news reporters, Morial asserted that, "the only reason he had to undertake a major re-election was that Landrieu influenced state Rep. Ron Faucheux and state Sen. William Jefferson to run against him".<sup>68</sup> He even called for Harry McCall, Jr., to resign from the Sewerage and Water Board. The most controversial part of his speech pertained to his belief that "as a black mayor I am judged by a different standard."<sup>69</sup> Reporters noted Morial's complaint that, "his critics charge him with being arrogant, but white mayors were not judged by the same standard."<sup>70</sup> His accusations about a white conspiracy against him may have been true, but this showed a darker side of him that became more prevalent during his second administration. Perhaps subconsciously he realized that as the first black mayor he had achieved the last of his "firsts." In other words, where would he go after leaving the mayor's office four years later? Like so many great leaders who sometimes confuse their own goals with the "people's," he saw himself fighting against the evil of racism, real and unreal, if personally criticized. At a time when most winners would have at least stepped back and enjoyed the moment, he could not.

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<sup>67</sup> Allan Katz and Ed Anderson, "Mayor Morial Wins Second Term," *Times-Picayune/States-Item*, March 21, 1982.

<sup>68</sup> Joe Massa and Allan Katz, "Morial starts off second term with high hopes, harsh words," *Times-Picayune/States-Item*, March 22, 1982.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*



## **Conclusion**

Ernest Morial soundly defeated Ron Faucheux, William Jefferson and their supporters. The fierceness with which his opponents tried to defeat him was questionable because Morial had been a good mayor. During his first term, Morial had undeniably spurred economic development in the city, brought in expert city managers and thus made city government more inclusive and efficient. If there was one thing that everyone agreed on, it was that the mayor was ethical and honest. There was never even a hint of a scandal or corruption throughout his entire first term. Morial was tough, never willingly backed down, lest other consider him weak, a concern he had had since his 7<sup>th</sup> ward childhood. To Dutch, people were either with him or against him. Oftentimes, his own actions caused people to dislike him. Undoubtedly some disliked his race, and especially his efforts to include minorities in the city's employ and to create new departments like the Office of Small and Minority Business, which was something that had never been done before in the city. By 1982, the white and black entrepreneurs who wished to do business with city government now met each other on equal ground and this, along with Morial's so-called abrasive personality, was a reason for some to try to force him out of office.

Perhaps the anti-Morial factions could have defeated him with other candidates, but neither William Jefferson nor Ron Faucheux was strong enough. The former, while acceptable to the old vanguard had little credibility among black or white voters. The latter, strong in the conservative white community, lacked support among the masses of black and liberal white voters. Moreover, Faucheux, even with support from prominent politicians like Moon Landrieu, represented a return to the patron-client relationship of years past that relegated blacks to a junior partnership at best.

On the other hand, Morial won re-election for the same reasons he succeeded in 1977. It is true he was a driven leader who was “fit to be mayor,”<sup>71</sup> but his high approval rating just months before the election was validated by the racially diverse coalition of voters that supported his efforts to keep the drive alive. Faucheux and Jefferson notwithstanding, Morial was not the polarizing figure they painted him to be. Faucheux and Jefferson lost because they failed to provide the public with a legitimate reason to dump an effective and honest mayor.<sup>72</sup> For New Orleans as a whole, Morial’s victory was another step forward towards racial equality. Since his re-election in 1982, black men, including Dutch’s son, Marc, won each successive mayoralty, unlike in other cities such as Chicago, New York and Los Angeles where black mayors have been replaced by non-black mayors. In New Orleans, legitimately or not, each appealed to an increasingly larger black electorate as a successor to the Morial legacy to fulfill the dream.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Everett Newman (friend of Ernest Morial) in discussion with the author, New Orleans, LA, October 9, 2007.

<sup>72</sup> Faucheux went on to become a political consultant and has written books on successful campaign strategies.

<sup>73</sup> The changing demography of post Katrina New Orleans could return the mayor office to a non-black person.

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## **Vita**

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