

## NEWS

# BACKLASH Thurmond viewpoint on slavery skewered

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U.S. Sen. Strom Thurmond's statements about slavery on Friday did not strike some Upstate residents as an educated point of view. The 90-year-old politician said slaves were treated well by his white ancestors and he stands by his heredity. "Slavery means immoral, and you cannot treat a person well in an immoral environment," Spartanburg attorney James Cheek said. Thurmond made the comments after fellow Sen. Carol Moseley-Braun, D-Ill., the Senate's only black member, in an emotional speech persuaded her colleagues to vote down a design for the United Daughters of the Confederacy that would have included the Confederate flag. Moseley-Braun said the flag is a reminder of slavery and a symbol of racism. In his discussion of the Confederate flag, Thurmond said he, like many other Southerners, does not believe the Civil War was about slavery. He said the central issue was economic sovereignty for the South that slaves helped establish. Cheek, state coordinator for the Rainbow Coalition, said slaves "were a part of the economic system to build the South. But they didn't share in the benefits. Consequently, everything (Thurmond) does is reflective of that use of misinformation." Harold Miller of Spartanburg says he has long been familiar with Thurmond's ideas and is not surprised by the senator's comments. "Coming from him," Miller said, pausing before he finished his thought, ". . . that's Strom Thurmond. As long as there are descendants of slave owners in the U.S., there will be people with his views. Racism will never go away." Miller believes Thurmond has tried to do a lot for black South Carolinians, but he said the politician is misinformed about the days of slavery. Thurmond's comments also seemed illogical to a local historian. "I know some slaves were well treated, but that does not mean anyone should endorse slavery as a stable institution," said Lewis Jones, a retired Wofford College history professor. "If that was the case," Jones said, "I would assume some of our white ancestors would have joined in and become slaves, too - and I don't think that was ever the case."

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