

Vernon vaults to headline status in AZ-3.

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With John Shadegg stepping down from his safe Republican seat in Arizona's Third Congressional District, the [eight GOP candidates](#) are climbing all over each other in an attempt to differentiate themselves.

In an article ostensibly about newcomer Ben Quayle, Paradise Valley Mayor Vernon Parker just got a huge assist from the [New York Times](#):

[Ben] Quayle has the most famous name, at least among voters of a certain age. But he faces other candidates with notable biographies, including Vernon Parker, who grew up in poverty in California, rose to become the first black mayor of his almost all-white town and has the endorsement of the tough-on-illegal-immigrants Sheriff Joe Arpaio. Mr. Parker would be the only black Republican congressman if elected.

...The mayor of Paradise Valley, a suburb of Phoenix, Mr. Parker, 50, was born in Houston to a poor mother who turned him over to his grandmother, who was herself living in an impoverished area of Long Beach, Calif.

After graduating from college and buying a small home, he sold it and used the proceeds — and money from his grandmother, who cleaned homes — to go to Georgetown Law School. “I bought a one-way ticket to Washington,” Mr. Parker said. “Because failure was not an option.” He met his wife, an Arizonan, there.

A childhood lived among drug users and multigenerational public housing residents formed his vision, and a chance meeting with Lee Atwater, who was a Republican strategist, his politics. “I know people who’ve been so dependent on the government that they still find themselves in a trap — and that is the trust fund they have handed down to their children,” said Mr. Parker, whose he-can’t-be-50 face smiles warmly.

It is all something Mr. Parker’s family has had trouble abiding. “I’m not sure any of them would vote for me,” he said. He was advised against running for mayor in 2008 in Paradise Valley, which is nearly all white, because, he said one person told him euphemistically, he was “tall.” He won with 67 percent of the vote.

The interesting crosscurrents in the contest are seemingly endless. Mr. Parker appears to enjoy support from the same people getting behind former Representative J. D. Hayworth, who is challenging Senator John McCain in the Republican primary with a hard right elbow to the ribs.

“I love J. D. and Vernon,” said Barbara Espinosa, who was attending a recent rally for Mr. Hayworth here. “He’s calm, he’s collected and he’s conservative. I know Vernon Parker. I don’t know Ben Quayle.”

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That's how you differentiate yourself. Well done, Mayor Parker.
