

Black women and the price of success

The writer is the director of corporate affairs for the Hanes Group. She adapted this column from a recent speech.

DESPITE THE FORCES of slavery, violence and hatred, black men and women have fought throughout history to live their lives together. Together

THE GUEST COLUMN By ELYNOR WILLIAMS

Black women have worked alongside black men since the first African slaves were brought to America. Together, we helped to build the wealth of this nation. Often our labor was free because

Historically, the African-American woman has never simply accepted her lot. Instead, she sought creative ways to solve her problems. She also instilled this legacy of survival in her children, especially her daughters. We have always felt if we can have our daughters look up to us, then they will never have to look down on themselves.

"As black female professionals, we are expected to leap over tall buildings without tearing our pantyhose, out-run speeding bullets without mussing our hair and stop oncoming trains with a full-toothed grin. However, juggling the demands of a career with personal relationships or family needs can produce anxiety, frustration and unhappiness for the black female achiever. For many there is no one to talk to and no one to listen or understand. Loneliness and alienation are not uncommon."

From generation to generation, black mothers have cared, nurtured and protected their children ... and passed on good advice. Cornelia, a former slave, quotes her mother as saying, "I'll kill you, gal, if you don't stand up for yourself." The traditions continue. And so does the survival.

Throughout her history, "(the black woman) had nothing to fall back on: not maleness, not whiteness, not ladyhood, not anything," writes Toni Morrison. "And out of the profound desolation of her reality she may well have invented herself."

Our desire to survive resulted in great progress for our race. Prior to World War I, domestic work was one of the precious few occupations open to black women. It was soon realized, however, that good education

we've survived an onslaught of some of the most unimaginable cruelties ever visited upon a single race.

And black women who work, throughout our long history, have structured and reformed the definition of womanhood. Indeed, a noted sociologist has said that the black woman is the most viable model of womanhood in America today.

we had no choice.

As black women, we performed all the domestic chores of cleaning, cooking, washing and scrubbing to survive under slavery or simply to keep our families alive. "A woman's gotta do what a woman's gotta do," writes Bebe Campbell. "Surviving is nothing new to us. Mama and Grandma did that. Sisters got survival down to a science."

was a ticket to a better life for a black woman and the key to fulfilling the need for more black teachers.

With the outbreak of World War I, the black economic situa-

tion worsened. Blacks went north to join the industrial work force. For black women, the doors were open for better education and better jobs. Opportunities seemed to abound. But the North

wasn't the place to be. It was there that self-esteem began to wither. Black women became the lowest-paid and most exploited workers in the country. It was in
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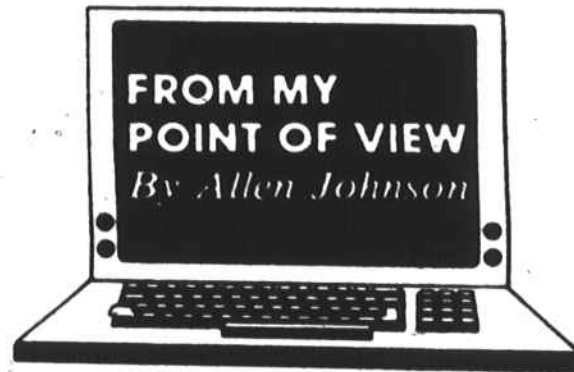
Band leader Joe Daniels

Darryl Hunt trial, the Cinnamon Reggae band and the Arts Council

The Cinnamon Reggae band got political last week, pleasing some people, displeasing others and dramatizing the far-reaching impact of the Darryl Hunt murder trial.

As part of the Arts Council's "Outa the Bag" concert series, which provides lunchtime music for patrons of Winston Square Park, the band dedicated its performance Friday afternoon to Darryl Eugene Hunt, a 20-year-old black man who is being tried for the murder of *Sentinel* copy editor Deborah Sykes.

The band, which has played often in Arts Council-sponsored events locally, included among its repertoire a song whose lyrics contained the phrases,



"Free Darryl Hunt" and "Whatever happened to truth and rights?"

The Arts Council received some complaints about the concert, including some from people who said they'd never again contribute to the organization,

said spokeswoman Jenny Callison, who also disavowed the organization's prior knowledge of the band's statement and lyrics.

"The Arts Council was not aware that these statements were going to be made," she told the *Winston-Salem Journal* Friday. "The views expressed are not necessarily those of the concert sponsors."

Callison told me in an interview Monday that the Council has no policy on the lyrics or subject matter of concerts, nor is it very eager to start one.

"We had a lot of calls from people who found it offensive," she said, but "I really would hate for the Arts Coun-

cil to get into the business of telling people what they can or cannot say."

But will the Arts Council allow Cinnamon Reggae to play in future concerts?

"I can't speak for the whole Arts Council," Callison said, "but I don't think that (the mention of Hunt) rules out that they don't play with us again."

Reggae music is often the music of protest. One of its most famous purveyors, the late Bob Marley, sang long and hard about the politics of his native Jamaica, where reggae music was born. One of his obviously more mili-
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