

OPINION

Editorial Cartoon



Letters to the Editor

Biased attitude

To the Editor:

Brenda Diggs, chair of the Winston-Salem State University board of trustees, has stated publicly that Dr. Harold Martin is her choice for chancellor of Winston-Salem State University. I think the majority will agree. However, can Mrs. Diggs, in good conscience, chair a committee for a chancellor and have such a biased attitude?

James Banner

Thanks for supporting higher education bonds

To the voters of Forsyth County and North Carolina:

It is with a profound sense of gratitude that we take this opportunity to thank the voters of Forsyth County and those across North Carolina for their

enormous vote of confidence by passing the higher education bonds during the Nov. 7 general election.

The importance of these bonds to the future of our state cannot be overemphasized. With the funds provided by the bonds, our state universities and community colleges can now make much needed renovations and begin the new construction necessary to meet the challenge of major enrollment increases over the next decade. In addition, these funds will help strengthen all of our institutions so that they may do an even better job of preparing our students for the future. The impact of your vote in favor of the higher education bond package will be realized by our state for years to come.

Again, we say thank you for keeping North Carolina's future a major priority.

Harold L. Martin Sr., Chancellor, Winston-Salem

State University
Wade Hobgood, Chancellor,
N.C. School of the Arts

Desna Wallin, President,
Forsyth Technical
Community College

Thanks for helping Hospice

To the Editor:

For 68 Hospice families, the excitement, warmth and good cheer associated with the holidays would have only been a dream without the support of many wonderful people in our community.

For people in grief, the holidays are very difficult. Some of our families are dealing with the recent death of a loved one. Others are caring for a family member facing a serious illness.

Many are "sandwiched" between caring for both a seriously ill parent and their chil-

dren. Because of loss of income and hefty medical expenses, they are financially strapped, making it difficult to pay just for the necessities of life, much less extras during the holidays.

Many of your readers came to the rescue. Thanks in part to a story, which appeared in The Chronicle in December, 168 adults and children had gifts under their trees. Thirty-three sponsors reached out helping hands to individual families. Food baskets were delivered to 23 families, and many other people sent in donations totaling more than \$2,000.

We thank The Chronicle for publicizing our story and the newspaper's readers for their support. Thanks to you, the holidays were made much brighter for many in Hospice care.

Sincerely,

Lisa H. Holleman Director of
Community Relations

New worries about mega-black churches



Earl Ofari
Hutchinson

Guest
Columnist

In January, many blacks were surprised and pleased at the announcement that one of the nation's premier black mega-churches, the 15,000 member Inglewood, Calif., based Faithful Central Bible Church had purchased the Inglewood Forum.

The Forum long noted as the home of the Los Angeles Lakers and the National Hockey League's, Los Angeles Kings, ranked as one of the nation's top sports and entertainment venues. The church plans to convert the Forum into a combined religious/entertainment/ hotel complex. There will be family entertainment that includes concerts, circuses, and ice skating shows. The church will also build a conference center and shopping center complex on the site.

The \$22.5 million purchase, though it grabbed headlines and public attention, is not the only move by black mega-churches into eye-popping real estate and economic development projects.

In Los Angeles, West Angeles COGIC is putting the finishing touches on a \$50 million state of the art Cathedral. In New York, Houston and Raleigh, N.C., the Abyssinian Baptist Church, Windsor Village United Methodist and Tabernacle Baptist in those cities have launched wide-ranging urban renewal projects that include low-income housing, day care centers, recreation and job training centers, and retail businesses.

The mega-churches have gotten encouragement and a finan-

cial boost for their development enterprises from the Congress of Black Churches. The group, which represents 65,000 black churches with a combined membership of 19 million, has assisted 100 churches in 15 cities in their push to secure government and corporate grants and loans to aid economic revival in underserved black communities.

slashing in health care programs, the disparity in the criminal justice system, the rise in racially-motivated violence, the deterioration in public education, the draconian cuts in welfare, and the escalation in police abuse and homelessness. This silence has left many blacks politically confused, socially stunted, and physically at risk.

and shrug off their failures by some black leaders further deepens the cynicism and distrust of many blacks toward the black church and black leaders.

Thankfully, many black ministers are not in a manic hunt for dollars and personal prestige, or do not publicly disgrace themselves with their carnal lapses.

They put in long hours ministering to their members, developing their ministries, and expanding their outreach programs. They have active ministries that support and encourage everything from business development to prison reform.

Still, they and other churches can do even more to push the envelope on critical public and social policy issues by starting or re-energizing their social justice ministries, and educating and mobilizing their flock on political and social concerns. The leaders of the black mega-churches who make a mighty effort to address deep seated social ills and use their influence to be spiritual mentors and social advocates deserve much praise and support. Those who have slumped into complacency and inaction and are helplessly enmeshed in self-aggrandizement forget or ignore the entreaty in Luke to "put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalt those of low degree." In secular words, they must not abandon or betray the traditions of protest and struggle for social justice that have been the proud trademarks of the black church for more than a century.

Earl Ofari Hutchinson is the president of the National Alliance for Positive Action - email: ehutchinson@natalliance.org and website: www.natalliance.org - and the author of "The Disappearance of Black Leadership"

But amid the euphoria and excitement over their new ventures there's the real worry that many black ministers have developed terminal amnesia.

Church leaders counter that their mammoth urban economic revival projects will provide jobs in the community, revitalize businesses, lift home property values, provide greater and more comfortable worship space for their congregations, and most important, act as models for black achievement that will boost community pride. The spectacular growth of many black churches was inevitable given the tremendous expansion in the ranks of black businesspersons and professionals.

But amid the euphoria and excitement over their new ventures there's the real worry that many black ministers have developed terminal amnesia over the titanic historic role many black churches played in the struggle for civil rights and social justice.

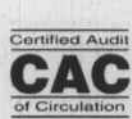
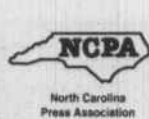
The reality is that many black ministers and church members have been mute on the rollback of affirmative action, the assault on civil liberties, the gutting of job and social programs, the

Then there's the question of moral corruption and personal greed. This has driven some ministers into the hot chase to build showy, pricey new buildings; purchase glittering furnishings; haul in inflated salaries; pad expense accounts; take globe-trotting trips; and make endless pitches for collections. Their brandishing of fancy cars, expensive homes, clothes, and jewelry has done more to fan the popular public image of black ministers as fast buck con artists than anything else.

The moral failings of Bishop Henry Lyons and Jesse Jackson have also caused worries. They are not just ministers, they are also leaders. And this imposes a special kind of burden on black ministers. They are not only looked to and expected by many blacks to be moral and ethical guardians, they are also expected to be outspoken advocates for social and political causes. Their fall from grace and the shameless need to excuse, apologize,

THE CHRONICLE

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Chief has not lived up to expectations

When Linda Davis was appointed chief of the Police Department nearly two years ago, there was great hope that with her female sensibilities and great experience she could somehow close that great and ancient gulf that exists between the African-American community and the Police Department.

It's true that many blacks hoped that Chief Sweat's departure would usher in the city's first African American chief, but the community applauded Davis still. She, after all, is our first female police chief and in a city that is still very much dominated by white men, we took Davis' appointment as a sign of progress, regardless of how tiny the progress was for us.

But hopes of Davis being the great savior at the department have all but diminished. Her tenure has been marred by a series of bad choices and weak defenses that have been endorsed by her boss, Bill Stuart. We expected Davis to be a bridge builder. Wouldn't you be if you landed a job you didn't even apply for and claimed that you were not interested in?

The bridges we hoped she'd build were not just within our community, but also in her own department. After all, there are still not enough black faces in blue, a problem that WSPD has been trying to address for years.

Perhaps in the beginning, Davis had good intentions. But not even a year into her tenure, she demoted the three African-American sergeants after a rap concert got out of hand at Joel Coliseum. Those who were truly responsible for the wild concert - the people who failed to hire enough security and failed to check with other venues where the acts had played - got a slap on the wrist much later. But that was months after Davis took her hasty action, demoting officers who were clearly in over their heads the minute they walked into the coliseum that night. The chief was ready and willing to let members of her own department take the fall for something that was way beyond their control.

Thankfully, the African-American community took action, and demanded that the officers be reinstated. Davis' actions were not only unfair, they thwarted progress. For a brief time, the department lost three of its highest ranking black members. The same department that says publicly that it needs more blacks in leadership roles and patrolling the streets, did a U-turn with Davis at the wheel.

Now comes word that Davis is once again turning her back on the department's commitment to foster black leadership. Davis left a recently-appointed captain in charge of the department instead of veteran African-American Assistant Police Chief Mike McCoy. Davis' reasoning behind the decision centers around ambiguous themes like "efficiency" and "well-being of the department," words that show that she really does not have a good, valid reason for her actions. They are unexcusable.

Davis and Stuart can hide behind Police Department policy all they want. It does not matter if she had the right to leave someone else in charge other than McCoy. What we should demand to know is why Davis has a problem with a man who has served this city for close to 30 years, a man whose tenure in the department nearly equals hers, and, yes, a man who would be chief if this city was as liberal and open-minded as it would like outsiders to believe.

Did the chief give any thought to what her actions meant for McCoy and other blacks in the department. McCoy is probably the longest serving African American still in the department. The younger officers surely look up to him. How do you think they felt when they heard that McCoy was not the man in charge? What about McCoy's feelings?

Word is that McCoy has filed a grievance over the matter. We support him in his outrage. We believe Davis' knack for playing favorites sucks! Davis has to realize that just because she is police chief, those under her will not automatically agree with the decisions she makes. Those under her still have their own minds and as long as they do what is expected of them, that should not be a problem. After all the department is a taxpayer-supported agency, not some monarchy where subordinates are expected to smile, shake their heads in agreement and keep quiet.

Davis should be happy that her job is not akin to a baseball game, because after three strikes, she would be out. But, of course, when the umpire is on your side, you're allowed to play double and even triple headers without even being called for a strike.

Submit letters and columns to:
Chronicle Mailbag, P.O. Box 1636,
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