

OPINION

THE CHRONICLE
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Let's keep it real

It is no wonder that members of the City-County School Board green-lighted an obvious conflict of interest last week. Members of the board routinely rewrite history, take credit for things they have nothing to do with and vote as if they were appointed and not elected.

Last week, before the board voted to let the superintendent oversee equity issues in the school system he is charged with running, board members feted themselves for improving the academic performances of poor, black students. Board members said that by implementing the redistricting plan, which created neighborhood schools and ended cross-town busing, minority students have closed the achievement gap rapidly because students feel more comfortable going to schools in their own communities.

Board members also patted themselves on the back for creating smaller class sizes at poor schools and allocating additional funds for students at such schools. The school system has tons of data showing the achievement gap between whites and blacks narrowing, and that is certainly a good thing. But for the board to even insinuate that it had the best interest of poor little black children at heart when it developed that plan is a crock (you fill in the rest of the sentence).

The redistricting plan was a thank-you to white voters who were sick and tired of sending their kids to Atkins, Kimberley Park and Diggs. The feelings of the black community, or the effect it would have on us, never came to mind.

The board's gloating would be like George and Jeb Bush taking credit for election-reform legislation.

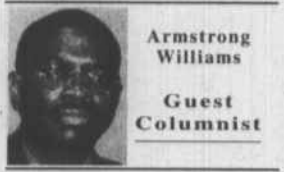
School Board members were driven by their personal motives when they started the plan. The decent testing results that have occurred since are great news but not some well-planned strategy.

If members of the board want credentials to wave before the black community, they should work to develop some - legitimate ones.

Corrections

Last week's story about shotgun houses in Happy Hill should have said that Habitat for Humanity will build in the community sometime in the future.

The May 2 Community Focus story on the Gospel Train concert misidentified the main choir that performed. The choir was the Phillip Chapel Baptist Church Male Chorus.



Armstrong Williams
 Guest Columnist

Recently, FOX news commentator Juan Williams and I joined sides in a reparations debate sponsored by the Harvard Black Law Students Association.

We were pitted against the high priests of reparations, Harvard Law professor Dr. Charles Ogletree and talk-show host Joe Madison.

There along the well-manicured lawns of America's premier educational institution, we were joined by hundreds of Harvard students. Ninety-nine percent were inclined to Ogletree/Madison mantra that they are - and always will be - victims. Victims of what? you may ask. Victims of the centuries-old crime of slavery. Victims of social hierarchies. Victims all.

I took the opposite view.

The discussion heated up when a young black American student raised his wool gabardine clad arm (shirt, Dolce, \$55), and asked, "Don't you think African Americans have been victimized by the white man and his racist system?"

The question caused me to wonder aloud how much these victims pay a year for their Harvard education.

"Thirty-five thousand dollars a year," a student later responded.

I shook my head incredulously. "What precisely about your \$35,000-a-year education has taught you to believe that you are a victim? I mean, why even go to college if you are already defeated?"

The questions went unanswered. Instead, a panelist asserted that many black women suffer from breast cancer and a lack of health benefits - twin facts that she attributed to the lack of reparations payments. This is too much.

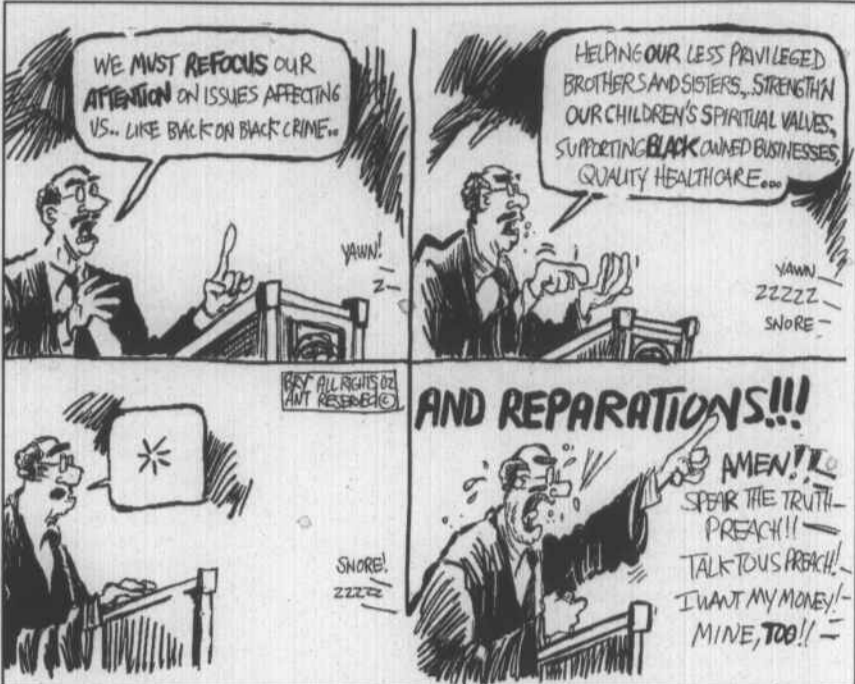
"So let's get this right: if reparations had been paid, no black women would suffer from breast cancer or find themselves in need of health care?" I asked.

"The disease would somehow leap over black women if reparations were paid?"

Ripples formed across the student's forehead.

Ogletree interceded on behalf

Reparations



of victim status. He made some reasonable points: a shared history of slavery has created certain social hierarchies in this country. Over time, these social hierarchies have given rise to internal sentiments, such as the expectation of future possibilities for white kids and the destruction of future possibilities for poor minority children.

Yes, so far this made sense. I concurred: "It is true that there remains quite a bit of hangover in this country from the cultural division that slavery wrought. I firmly believe that the racism of today isn't as much about skin color, as it is about the racial hierarchies that a shared history of slavery and discrimination ingrained into our national identity."

Ogletree looked stunned and perhaps appalled that I was agreeing with him. He kicked it up a notch. Civil rights in this country, he insinuated, is not simply a matter of individual rights, but rather a collective effort to reverse those social hierarchies that deem minorities inferior.

I was being set up as a betrayer of the race, a self-hater for opposing quotas and affirmative action and countless other measures designed to engineer racial progress.

I cut him off: "The question

isn't really whether minorities have been victimized. We have. The question is whether embracing victim status really helps us achieve equality. In other words, how do we move beyond initial steps of civil rights legislation? Many of our civil rights leaders have created the myth of retribution - the idea that seeking pay-back will somehow create equality. That's how they stay in business: by nurturing other people's anger and ignorance. But this is dangerous because it encourages society to regard all members of a fixed group as victims. It even convinces bright, capable Harvard students to regard themselves as victims."

I tossed out a few examples of people fattening themselves on the racial angst of others: from Jesse Jackson-style racketeering, to the recent scam in which black accountants collected fees by encouraging other black Americans to file for reparations on their tax returns. I then quoted my mentor, Justice Clarence Thomas, who once observed that "the (civil rights) revolution missed a larger point by merely changing the status (of minorities) from invisible to victimized."

"How shameful," I concluded with a dramatic sweeping gesture (I had been practicing the move all

week in the mirror).

My opponent observed that I failed to argue in terms of alternatives - that eschewing victim status does little to confront the realities of prejudice and inequality. He received a smattering of applause.

I fell back on the Declaration of Independence, and its guiding spirit "that all men are created equal." My opponent countered that The Declaration of Independence was intended as a notice to the world and therefore was written with a rhetorical flair appropriate to the occasion. Needless to say, there was an obvious disconnect between what our Founding Fathers espoused in general terms of equality and what they practiced in the specific.

Nonetheless, I argued that if we are to embrace common rights, we must accept common humanity. That means protecting individual rights, rather than legislating group rights.

"In other words, minorities should be treated as other humans," shouted a member of the student body.

"Yes!" I effused.

I then congratulated the Harvard student on doing something rather extraordinary - grasping the obvious.

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Letters to the Editor

Agency deserves kudos for work

(This is an open letter written by a Housing Authority resident to thank officials at HAWS. - The Editor)

To the Editor:

After completing six successful weekends of the paralegal certificate course offered by the Center for Legal Studies and Winston-Salem State University, I feel proud of myself or having the self-determination that led me to pursue this goal.

The course was very concentrated, as we had a lot of ground to cover in six weekends. Attorney Denise Hartsfield was the instructor for the class. The way that she taught made me love what I was doing, and I have always had a passion for the law. I learned a lot, about the law, about myself, and, more important, I saw exactly where I want to be and the kind of determination it takes to get to that place.

The pride I saw in my 7-year-old daughter's eyes when I told her that I was going back to school was one of the most precious moments in my life, because I am always talking to her and instilling the importance of education and success in everything we do. She was able to see me practicing that same philosophy, and I am sure that she will carry that with her for a long time to come.

Nothing in this world takes the place of education and knowledge, and knowing that I have succeeded in this endeavor only makes me want to reach higher and climb harder. I am thankful to

the Housing Authority of the City of Winston-Salem for supporting me, encouraging me and helping me to reach my goals. I have found a family here at the Housing Authority, and I am proud to say that I have been a part of it. I think it is the best administration thus far.

My thanks go out to the Winston-Salem Housing Authority:

- To the executive director, J. Reid Lawrence, who saw the potential in me and nourished it to my benefit.
- To the deputy executive director, A. Fulton Meachem, who oriented me on my first day, and has been a supportive co-worker and friend for every day that has followed.
- To my second family in the Resident Services Department: Director or Resident Services Burnetta Evans, who trusted my instinct, insight, and ability. Thank you, thank you, thank you. Your inspiration and support have helped me in ways that you may never know, but I am grateful for your leadership and friendship.
- Adult Services Coordinator Paulette Davidson: Your support, your kindness made me feel like I could do anything, and I can. Thank you, sister!
- FSS Coordinator Tyrann Fennell: Didn't you say, "You go, girl." I'm already gone. Thank you for your diligence when it came to getting those funds approved. You went above and beyond, and not just for me. I have seen you do it for each person who is interested in advancing through the FSS Program. Your commitment to the FSS Program is the stuff that dreams are made of and the ability to make those same dreams come true.
- FSS/Section 8 case manager Sylvia Neely: Thank you for wanting this for me just as badly as I did. Your support and dedication to my self-sufficiency inspire me.
- FSS case managers Tiffany McCravey, Risha Hamlin, Chan-

dra Sherrill, Joan Belcher: With all of the obstacles that you face, you all still get out there and do it each and every day, and for those of us that want better, you all are there to assist. There's something special about the FSS Program, and it's each and every one of you!

Yours very truly,
 Donna Campbell-Binns

A passion for giving

To the Editor:

Marshall Bass has a passion for giving that he exerted more aggressively after his retirement from R.J. Reynolds Nabisco as senior vice president. With his experience, he had more organizational and managerial skills than most other African Americans.

This offered an opportunity for Bass to share his knowledge with business students at Winston-Salem State University for many years. He was recruited to serve as chair of the WSSU Foundation Board. Under his leadership the first serious financial campaign for WSSU was launched, which grossed \$25 million. He donated one of the largest individual gifts to the university at that time.

He is sensitive to the needs of

children. He gave a substantial contribution to help start the Best Choice Center, the only anti-drug facility for children in Forsyth County. He is on the board of directors, gives annually to assist in its operations, and has established the Bass Best Choice Endowment Fund at the Winston-Salem Foundation.

One of the most creative and exciting programs is the Marshall Bass Children's Fund, created by Bass to help in the "delivery of better services to children."

Kahlil Gibran wrote: "You give but little when you give of your possessions. It is when you give of yourself that you truly give."

Thank you, Marshall Bass, for giving both and being one of the greatest benefactors of color in this area.

May God continue to bless and keep you.

Virginia Newell

Students should be taken seriously

To the editor:

The end of the school year often means that students are put off and put on the back burner on important issues. Students are the reason schools run. We are the ones who need instruction and guidance from people who are supposed to instruct and guide us. If a student has a problem, it is my understanding that talking to administrators should help fix the problem.

That has not been the case for me. I have been having an ongoing problem at my high school with one of my teachers, who blatantly mistreats me and many other students. I have reacted to her treatment the wrong way, by walking out of class. But when I tried to fix the problem the right way, my concerns fell on the deaf ears of administrators. I thought conflicts were supposed to be solved by administrators. But I and many of my peers have been subjected to blatant mistreatment by this teacher, including being assigned work with no instruction and snide remarks. Administrators at my school have urged us to come to them when we have problems instead of reacting in negative ways. I tried that and it failed.

Last week, I walked into class to discover we were being given a chapter of work from a book from an entirely different course. I took my complaint about the assignment to the office and was astonished to hear administrators defending the teacher's actions. But that proved my point that students have absolutely no bearing on anything.

It is not fair to assume that the teacher is always right. This happens every day at every school, and it is not fair. I feel it is time for students to stand up for our rights. We are not subordinates but human beings.

If students were taken more seriously, it could prevent many of the problems we see in

schools today, such as violence, absenteeism and fighting. The way students are treated breeds these types of activities.

Wali Pitt

Thanks to those who took part in event

To the Editor:

The 10th annual Dining for Friends dinner parties on or about April 20 brought together large and diverse groups with a single mission: to support local people living with the AIDS virus. HOPE (HIV Outreach Programs and Education) and AIDS Care Service, whose programs are supported by Dining for Friends, offer heartfelt thanks to the party hosts, volunteers, and donors who made the event a spectacular success. The "Finale" at the Sawtooth Center was a great party for a great cause.

The Center for Disease Control estimates that more than 900,000 people in the United States are infected with the AIDS virus. If Winston-Salem is in line with the national statistics, about 10,000 local people are infected. AIDS Care Service and HOPE are on the front lines of the battle in Forsyth and surrounding counties, providing social services, material assistance, referrals, and education to those who have few personal resources to fight the disease.

That's why your support for Dining for Friends and our AIDS service agencies is important. That's why we are enormously grateful.

Donna Budde
 Executive Director, HOPE
 Larry Roth
 Executive Director, AIDS Care Service, Inc.



WSSU Chancellor Harold Martin thanks Marshall Bass for his contributions to the university.