

FORUM

Lessons from Nehemiah



Ernie Pitt

This & That

This is part of the speech given by Ernie Pitt at the Housing Authority of Winston-Salem's Residents Recognition Banquet on July 1. Pitt was the event's keynote speaker.

To the honorable Mayor Joines; Dr. Reid (Lawrence), our chief exec; my fellow commissioners; award recipients, HAWS residents; staff; management; ladies and gentlemen:

Why they keep asking me to speak to you all, I really can't say. All I know is that I am honored to be in your presence in such a positive environment, with such wonderful people. And I mean that sincerely. And since I do not proclaim to be a speaker as such, I will make my comments as brief as possible especially since that was a part of my overall instructions.

Now, Mrs. Young says I ought to have been a preacher. In fact, she thinks I am one. Nothing wrong with that except, as Dr. Lawrence always reminds me, I really was cut out to be a preacher; I just wasn't sewed up right.

However, it is interesting that Mrs. Young feels that way

about me because tonight I really am going to preach. Yeah...that's right...I'm going to preach. I'm going to preach because in preparing some remarks for this evening, I didn't want to just come in here and feed you all a bunch of accolades and false compliments. I wanted my talk tonight to have some profound meaning to you. The only place I knew of where I could find something truly meaningful was in the Bible.

As I was perusing through the text, I remembered the story of Nehemiah. You all are familiar with Nehemiah because it was last week's Bible school lesson. A good friend of mine, Ben Ruffin, also used Nehemiah as the subject of one of his speeches, and I was totally enthralled by it. I hope you will relate to it the same way I did.

As the story goes, the Jews who were able to escape into exile were back in the province but were in trouble and disgraced because the wall of Jerusalem was in ruin. When Nehemiah heard about this, he immediately offered up a prayer asking God if He would bless him to go and repair the wall. As God's servant, knowing what he knew about the covenant made between God and Moses, Nehemiah wanted to make things right and whole again. He asked the king to grant him written protection so that he would not have any problems when he got to

Jerusalem to work on the wall.

Of course, when Nehemiah had recruited other workers to help him, they were immediately attacked, ridiculed and scoffed. They were despised for trying to restore the wall. They suffered all manner of mockery and insults. Even some of those working with Nehemiah were complaining and griping.

When Nehemiah's opposition heard that real progress was being made on rebuilding the wall, they actually tried to set him up to kill him. But Nehemiah was being lead by God and he trusted in God. So the plot didn't succeed because Nehemiah wouldn't leave the wall to go where they had requested a meeting.

Nehemiah, through all of the schemes and plots, would not leave the wall. He stayed on the wall until it was finished. And when it was finished, all of his enemies lost confidence because they realized that it was Almighty God who was behind Nehemiah.

What is this message that Nehemiah has so eloquently conveyed to us, and how is it relevant to us today?

All of you award recipients have been servants of God. You have been servants to the (Housing) Authority, and you have been servants to the many people you have impacted.

I am sure that you have been confronted with many obstacles along the way. Nevertheless, you didn't quit; you stayed on

the wall. Even when your friends asked you, "Why are you doing that? They don't care about you," you stayed on the wall. When people turned their backs on you...you stayed on the wall. When your friends and enemies alike didn't believe, you knew what you were doing...you stayed on the wall...When perhaps you doubted yourself in ways...you stayed on the wall. When you were down and out...sick and didn't think you could make it...you stayed on the wall.

All of you sitting in here know the problems that we all have experienced for the past five or six years or so. And I say to you tonight, we are here honoring you because we stayed on the wall.

Our wall is not completed, but I know it will be because God has given us the job to complete this wall. I know deep in my heart that my fellow commissioners, Dr. Lawrence and the rest of the staff are all going to...stay on the wall until it is finished.

So I congratulate all of you for staying on the wall. Stay up there until your job is done. I have faith in all of you that the job will be done. Thank you and God bless you.

Ernie Pitt is the publisher of The Chronicle and the chairman of the Housing Authority of Winston-Salem Board of Commissioners. E-mail him at erpitt@wschronicle.com.

Homosexual High



Armstrong Williams

Guest Columnist

A good measure of the government is how it spends our tax dollars. So let us consider what New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg is doing with our hard-earned money. Despite across-the-board tax increases, Bloomberg recently funneled \$3.2 million into Harvey Milk High School, which calls itself "the nation's first accredited public high school designed to meet the needs of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and questioning youth."

Just one thing: High school-age children simply aren't emotionally ready to make radical decisions about their sexual identity. What child, for example, knows for certain that he or she should have a sex change or engage in sodomy the rest of his/her life? Yet the creation of a gay public high school passively encourages children to make these decisions, decisions that will follow them around every time they fill out a job application asking what high school they attended.

Proponents of the homosexual lifestyle consider it a stunning victory. But there remains something particularly insidious about indoctrinating children in order to push the homosexual agenda into the mainstream.

Nonetheless, Bloomberg has signed on, ostensibly to protect our children from all of the hate-spewing antagonists out there. "I think everybody feels that it's a good idea because some of the kids who are gays and lesbians have been con-



Michael Bloomberg

stantly harassed and beaten in other schools," Bloomberg told The Associated Press. No doubt these things happen, but segregating homosexuals in their own high school does nothing to confront the discipline problem that underlies the abuse. And a fat lot of good it does for the vast majority of homosexual - or merely effeminate - students who remain in public schools.

Instead of building a wall around a couple hundred students, why not address the real problem by instituting a zero

tolerance rule for bullies who harass other students based upon their ethnic, social or cultural heritage? Because the alternative is to create separate schools for every group that perceives itself as oppressed - blacks, Jews, members of the occult whose ancestors were enthusiastically tortured during the Salem witch-hunts, etc.

Truly, this is an alarming thought. For 200 years public education in America has brought diverse groups together. It has socialized a vast tapestry of individuals and allowed

for the friction of diverse minds to generate progress. Are we ready to turn our backs on that tradition by willingly segregating ourselves? Has our culture become so soft and marshmallowy that we feel every child who is picked on is owed his own special corner of the universe from which to learn. That's a warm and endearing thought. But it also removes words like individual striving from the cultural dialogue.

The bottom line is, all societies have a certain propensity toward aggression and malice. At some point, children have to get out there and join the fray. Along the way, they may get picked on. And we should remain deeply sensible about that possibility. But splintering our public school system - our society - along sexual, ethnic and cultural boundaries does little to help the situation. This kind of self-segregation only encourages tribal ignorance and hate. See Northern Ireland. See the Balkans. See the United States circa 2003.

This is the new American myth. Gone is the "rags to riches" ethic. Now it's "woe is me, give me some special treatment." In this country it is now taken for granted that the principles by which our culture has traditionally functioned are no longer deemed appropriate. Those who engage in a homosexual lifestyle are the victims of social intolerance, not subtle destroyers of tradition. In fact, they even deserve their own schools. It's a desperate situation, made worse when Mayor Bloomberg and countless others enthusiastically tote the homosexual agenda. They think this is a good thing, a PC thing - just one more indicator that our culture has become unhinged.

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Nigel Alston is on vacation. His Motivational Moments column will return next month.



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