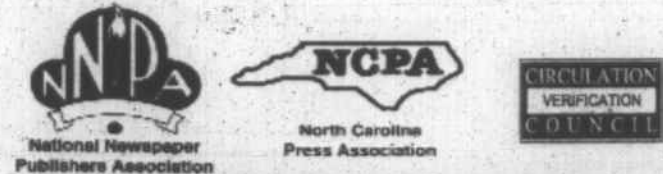


OPINION

THE CHRONICLE

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Member schools like Hampton are one of the MEAC's greatest asset.

OPPORTUNITY ON THE CHEAP

The city's winning bid to host the MEAC Tournament for the next three years was obtained at bargain basement price. Basically, the city got the tourney for \$100,000 cash and other non-monetary, but revenue-producing incentives. Price is not the primary issue - opportunity is. This union presents many opportunities for both the city and the MEAC.

If properly handled, both entities can build a brand that could attract fans that would eagerly spend the kind of money that will have a tremendous impact on our local economy.

The city of Winston-Salem and the MEAC are a nice fit. We have the ability to help the MEAC create the kind of branding that can make the tourney unique, and not a carbon copy of the CIAA, which has managed to become a successful brand-name over the years. Winston-Salem helped the CIAA achieve that status a decade ago when our city hosted that tournament during its lean years. Now, we need to help the MEAC do even grander things. But we can't do it alone.

The MEAC has to stop running behind the CIAA, hoping to catch some of its magic. It is no coincidence that the MEAC has a tendency to hold its tournament in the last city that the CIAA vacated. We suppose they are trying to reap some of the benefits that the CIAA may have left behind. Instead of playing follow the leader, the MEAC must create its own identity and its own flare and its own following.

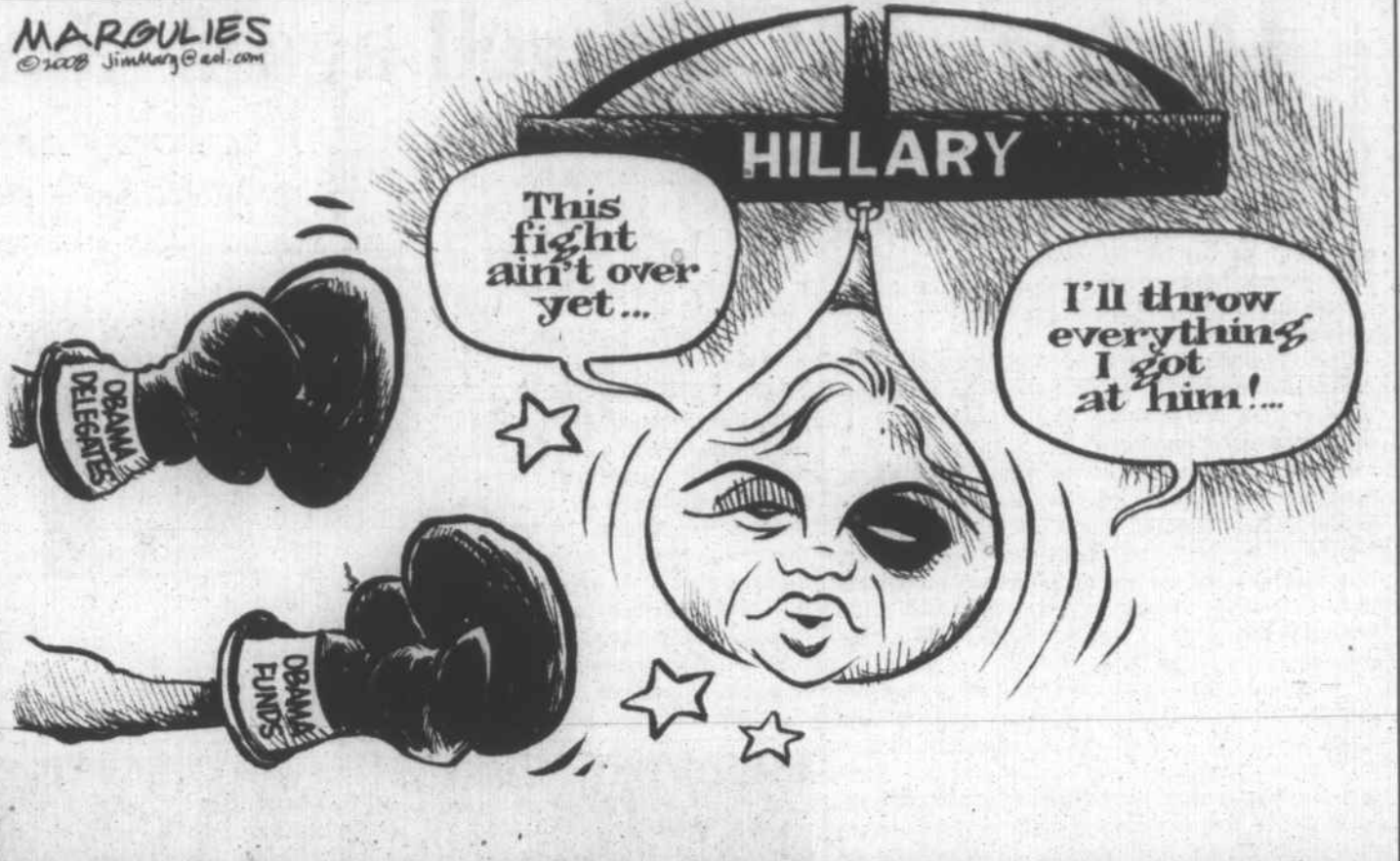
We have plenty of suggestions on how to accomplish that. For one thing, the MEAC should do its best to highlight the great characteristics of its member schools. After all, Howard University is considered the black Harvard. Hampton is one of the most prestigious universities in America. The MEAC is a Division I conference. Its champions have an automatic bid to the NCAA Tournament.

Perhaps the simplest thing that can be done to begin to build the MEAC's fan base is for them to focus on making the tournament convenient for its students, rather than its alums.

The CIAA is so successful because it has built its fan base over the years. Going to the CIAA tournament has become a family tradition for many people. The MEAC has to do the same thing. Very few CIAA fans are going to attend the MEAC tournament a week after having spent thousands of dollars at CIAA games and events.

However, students attending MEAC schools are more likely to attend the MEAC tournament if it is affordable, convenient and attractive to them. Those are the fans that will buy into this concept and grow the tournament. It will take time, but it is doable. We hope the city will make the commitment and that the MEAC will let us help them.

MARGULIES
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Blacks should not fear being called elitists

To the Editor:

Webster New World Dictionary defines the word "Elite" as the group or part of a group regarded as the best, most powerful.

During this time of year when we celebrate the graduation of students from high school and college, we openly praise them and their families for the hard work and sacrifices made to reach this goal.

It is the beginning of a process that most Americans agree is an attempt to pursue the American Dream, which should mean that an individual from a difficult background can defy all odds, work hard, go to the best schools, get the best possible education and live a clean wholesome life.

Then this individual does not forget where they came from, and reaches back to

help others pursue their efforts to share in the American Dream. By definition, anyone who completes this scenario would be considered an elite person. For instance, Tiger Woods, Michael Jordan, Ted Turner, Bill Gates and Bill Clinton to name a few. By any definition the term elite is a compliment to these individuals.

Some may agree that the remarks made by Sen. Barack Obama (about the people of Pennsylvania who cling to guns and religion as a result of their depressed economic state) deserve to be criticized.

But to label Barack Obama as an elitist in a negative connotation is completely ridiculous. Why would an educated media and public use this word to criticize Barack Obama? They must be using it as a code word or term to call him an "Uppity Nigger." This term has historically been used before when an African-American has become so educated and successful that he steps out of line or out of his place.

I implore graduates at all levels of education to pursue the American Dream. You have taken an important first step. Continue in your pursuit, it is worthy! Do not be afraid that you may one day be labeled an elitist or an 'Uppity Nigger.'

I ask again, is Barack Obama an 'Elitist?'

Luther Miller Jr.,
 Winston-Salem

Reaves' vision deserves attention

To the Editor:

My husband, Harvey Kennedy, and I attended the recent inauguration of Chancellor Donald Reaves of Winston-Salem State University at the Convention Center.

Chancellor Reaves' outstanding address was filled with many points and information, which I believe should be disseminated to our

local African-American community.

In particular, Chancellor Reaves spoke about his vision for WSSU, which includes increasing its academic standards for admission, among many other noteworthy ideas. He spoke about the challenges facing all historically black colleges and universities today.

I strongly recommend that a transcript of Reaves' speech be run in The Chronicle so that our African American community can understand the problems that WSSU and other HBCUs face in this "global world" and how Reaves' plans to address them.

Mayor Allen Joines and UNC System President Erskine Bowles have pledged their support to WSSU. I hope that The Chronicle can help also by informing the community at large of Reaves' mission to improve WSSU.

Sincerely,
 Pat Kennedy

Remember Katrina!



Marc Morial
 Guest Columnist

A deadly cyclone in Myanmar. A devastating earthquake in China. Cataclysmic twisters across the American Midwest. It seems that almost everyday, there is a natural disaster that commands the world's attention and compassion. That so many have done so much for people both near and far is a sign of the basic decency of human beings in general and Americans in particular.

Almost three years ago, when Hurricanes Katrina and Rita struck our gulf coast, we saw a similar outpouring of attention and support. One of the lessons of Katrina is that the needs of people affected by these horrific disasters persist long after the cameras and dignitaries have moved on. Significant parts of the city of New-Orleans, as well as the coastal regions of Mississippi and Alabama still need our help and I am proud that the National Urban League has not forgotten.

One of the things that makes the National Urban League so unique is our ability to quickly respond to local and regional crises through our network of strong affiliates across the country.

Immediately after the storms struck, and it became evident that the federal response was woefully inadequate, we joined with the Congressional Black Caucus



Relief workers try to save lives in quake-devastated Beichuan, China.

and others to call for a Katrina Bill of Rights, which would guarantee the tens of thousands of displaced citizens the right to recover, return, rebuild, work and vote. Those principles have continued to guide many of the private and public recovery efforts that have sprung up since August of 2005.

Part of our long-term outreach has included the development of the Gulf Coast Economic Empowerment Program (GCEEP). BP America has partnered with us to establish the GCEEP that has helped more than 400

small and minority construction-related firms in the region participate in redevelopment projects. With nearly \$10 billion worth of public and private projects up for grabs, we believe that small and minority businesses must get their fair share.

As part of the GCEEP, we are conducting a series of Empowerment Tours, to put local small and minority businesses directly in touch with government and private contractors in need of contracting assistance. Upcoming tours will be held in Lake Charles, La., on May 21, Port Arthur,

Texas on July 9 and New Orleans in September.

The noted hurricane forecast team at Colorado State University has predicted a "well above average" storm season this year, with at least one major hurricane expected to hit the United States. We hope that the nation has learned from the lesson of Katrina that we must be ready to respond as soon as these storms hit and long after they have gone.

Marc H. Morial is President and CEO of the National Urban League.