

OPINION

THE CHRONICLE

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Several residents expressed their concerns about the fate of Carver High School at a recent meeting.

System should focus on schools and communities

The deep concerns about the fate of Carver High School are understandable.

Despite its historical status in the black community and its legacy of educating strong leaders, the school can't seem to catch a break these days. It seems like it was only yesterday when the state judge caused that hubbub when he threatened to shut Carver down because of the low test scores of its students.

Now, the school will face an uphill fight to hang on to its already diminished student population once the new Walkertown high school is up and running. Not only will Carver have to fight the excitement and energy of a new multi-million dollar school right down the road, but also the negative perceptions that many white parents have about Carver and every other school and institution in East Winston.

The reality is that new school or not, a majority of Walkertown residents were never going to let their kids set foot in Carver. Like anything black, they see Carver as inferior, scary and dangerous — a place too black to properly educate their kids.

The real fight is against that perception — not the proposed school.

Yes, it is true that the School Board dealt a lethal blow to Carver and other East Winston schools when it decided to end busing and create the "neighborhood schools" plan. The switch was made more than a decade ago and the School Board seemingly has the court of public opinion and the court of law on its side. So we need to get over it and realize that busing ain't coming back and think constructively of ways to save and market our schools.

The neighborhood school plan does still provide parents with the option of sending their children to a school in East Winston — miles away from their suburban homes. But few are taking that option.

We praise Superintendent Don Martin for always being a straight-shooter who never hides in his office — no matter how heated the controversy of the moment happens to be,

But Martin's attempt to ease fears by vowing that the school system will bring new programs to Carver to help it retain and attract students, has to be seen as somewhat disingenuous.

The school system has one of the best, most innovative high school programs in the state at the new Atkins High School. But Atkins is not bursting at the seams like suburban Reagan High School, and the limited amount of students that do attend the school are mostly black and brown.

If the innovation that Martin promises didn't work at Atkins, why would it at Carver?

One of the solutions, we believe, is that educational excellence and community development and redevelopment must go hand-in-hand in order to make East Winston schools as appealing as possible.

The new Kensington Village Apartment complex on Old Greensboro Road should give us all hope of the possibilities.

The complex is right across the street from the new Atkins and Petree Elementary School. Appearance-wise, the apartments look like units one might find on Peace Haven or Robinhood Road, and developers are trying to attract a residential population of professionals. If Kensington is successful, it will help change the perception that Atkins and Petree — a school with one of the county's most dedicated staffs — are in the slums. And that perception change will open more eyes and possibly attract more students.

The school system, which has invested tens of millions in new school construction over the past several years, should consider a way to throw some money toward community redevelopment efforts to improve the communities around its most dire schools.

After all, schools don't exist in a vacuum. They are an integral part of a much larger community, and if the community is struggling with crime and dilapidation, most likely so is the school.



A lot to celebrate during 'home' month

Phyllis Caldwell

Guest Columnist

June is "National Homeownership Month," and, across the country, countless agencies will hold housing fairs and kick-off events to celebrate homeownership as a symbol of the "American Dream." But, at a time when news headlines tell about foreclosures hitting all-time highs, or about mortgage lenders closing their doors, some people might wonder: "What on earth is there to celebrate?"

I believe that there is plenty to celebrate, having seen firsthand the difference that homebuyer education and housing counseling can make when purchasing a home.

Though the foreclosure rate in Winston-Salem/Forsyth County continues to climb, research indicates that families with mortgage loans requiring housing counseling and homebuyer education had a minimal foreclosure rate, compared with families without the requirements. And, for individuals and families who tapped into our local resources for assistance with purchasing a home, the foreclosure rate was less than one percent.

Today's would-be homeowners can gain critical homeowner insights through many avenues. They can obtain housing counseling and homebuyer education through the Center for Homeownership or gain financial literacy through Consumer Credit Counseling Service. They can tap into the City of Winston-Salem, Forsyth County Department of Housing, Partners for Homeownership, SG Atkins

CDC or the New Century IDA Program.

This year, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development has chosen "Back to Basics" as a national theme. It reflects HUD's recognition of the importance of traditional lending and underscores the need for common-sense fundamentals as a way of maintaining a sustainable housing market. (Some of those "basics," such as verification of borrower's income and their ability to repay, were, many believe, overlooked in the lead up to the present housing problem.) Locally, the American Dream Network, which consists of several of the above-mentioned groups, will contribute to "Back to Basics" by informing struggling families about federal government housing assistance, providing tips on how to protect against predatory lending, and offering sup-

port in many other areas.

As a strong advocate of housing counseling and homebuyer education, I have seen and helped many people through the years increase their economic wealth by becoming a homeowner. Arguably, not everyone is destined to own a home. But there's no doubt that homeownership is the foremost single asset that has the ability to increase one's financial well-being. So, I say, let's "Celebrate Homeownership."

Phyllis Caldwell is the director of the Center for Home Ownership, a local HUD-approved housing counseling agency and full service agency dedicated to turning dreams of homeownership into reality. The Center for Homeownership is a program of Consumer Credit Counseling Service of Forsyth County, Inc.

Fox crossed the racist line

Harry Alford

Guest Columnist



The famed comedian D.J. Hughley has stated that whenever he accidentally rests his television dial on the Fox News station it will automatically start tilting to the right.

That's funny, but it also illustrates the dogma and mantra that comes from this station that claims to be "fair and balanced".

That claim is indeed untrue. In fact, there has never been a cable channel so devoted to one area of political debate. Fox News is not extremely committed to the right wing dogma of the political debate it is pro ultra conservative awash with neo conservative views which are not compatible with traditional or progressive Black views.

Anti-democratic, anti-liberal but also anti-Black and this is what sickens me and should cause great concern for the free nation known as America.

The Obama run for the presidency has turned this station into a bastion for hate, propaganda and sick satire. Mahatma Gandhi once stated that when you start a movement "they will first ignore you; then they will laugh at you; then they will fight you; finally you will win".

Fox News is engrossed in the third stage with Senator Obama and the entire Black race in general. It appears to them that the Senator and the entire Black race are one and the same and must be stopped at all costs. The level of hate and racism from the Rupert Murdoch station is turning up to a very serious level.

It has decided to demonize the entire Black church. Since



Billionaire Rupert Murdoch is the man behind Fox News.

the tape and follow up of Rev. Wright, Senator Obama's former minister, the television station has repeatedly blamed this on typical Black church rhetoric coming out every Sunday from typical Black churches and their ministers throughout the land.

They have even brought on their dependable colored buffoons who claim, "This is what's wrong with Black people. They have stupid, hate mongering preachers telling them what to do."

Someone needs to tell this medium that it is the Black church that has gotten our race through the Jim Crow apartheid era of the United States and that it is the Black church that has spawned great leaders like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. who have led us to vic-

tory in the great Civil Rights Struggle.

I guess that's it. They despise the Black church for what it has done — delivering us from oppression through faith and courage. Apparently, this station hates what the Black church stands for and is.

It was not funny at all when one of the paid pundits on Fox News made a Freudian slip by saying, "it would be nice to stop Al Qaeda and kill Obama", when checked by another pundit she continued, "Osama/Obama, let's knock off both of them".

This is intolerable! They tried to cover themselves with a mild jovial apology the next day. This was nothing to joke about and based on the history of this nation it was clearly a threat that should not be taken

lightly. How can a "news show" carry on in such a dangerous and sick manner? If the Ku Klux Klan has an endorsed television channel, this is it.

Racists can clearly be illustrated with the hatred of the Black female. Their fear of the Black male causes them to hate the one who loves him — the Black female. The personal mean spirited attacks against the Honorable Michelle Obama are terribly sad. Another Fox News pundit referred to her as "Obama's baby mama". This is reducing the most celebrated Black family today to an unholy affair replete with illegitimate children. This is more than mean; this is pure hate. You have to be pretty sick to think this stuff up.

It gets worse. Bill O'Reilly has stated on his nightly show on Fox News that he wants to organize a "lynching party to go after Michelle Obama". This is 2008 and we are on the verge of breaking a long cycle of exclusivity. However, there is a news medium that is hell bent on preventing that. Issuing a statement like this is truly indicative that something very wrong is still amiss amongst us. We need to call it out.

I gave up watching Fox News long ago. I just could no longer stomach the mess that was being presented before me. No African-American or any human being with racial tolerance can watch this program on a consistent basis. Bad taste is one thing but racial animus becomes something more sinister.

It is time for us to start officially complaining to the Federal Communications Commission about the antics this channel is perpetrating. Let's stop this monster.

Harry Alford is the co-founder, president/CEO of the National Black Chamber of Commerce, Inc. Website: www.nationalbcc.org.