

OPINION/ FORUM

THE CHRONICLE

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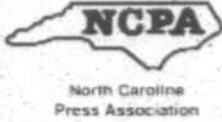


Photo by Layla Farmer

Many police officials were on hand at Tuesday's meeting.

SPEAK UP OR SHUT UP

Like many of you, we at *The Chronicle* are still pinching ourselves, trying to come to grips with the wonderful improbability that is Barack Obama. His Inauguration was the realization of the dream of a people, the manifestation of what so many of us have fervently hoped and prayed, yet dared not to wish for.

It is indeed an awesome moment in our nation's history and we feel incredibly blessed to be here to witness it. But, as the President himself has reminded us on more than one occasion, our work is far from over.

Since his election, Obama has appealed to Americans time and time again to remain vigilant and to look to our own neighborhoods and communities to see where we can create positive change. He implored his supporters to take the vigor and passion we once spent on his campaign and translate it into new programs, new partnerships, new hope for our neighbors, for our townships, for our nation.

Here in Winston-Salem, there is ample opportunity to fulfill the promise many of us made to ourselves on Election Night, the promise to allow ourselves to be hopeful and to believe in a better tomorrow.

One such occasion arose Tuesday night, with the Police Department's community meeting on the new patrol plan.

Unfortunately, that opportunity is one that was missed by the vast majority of the black community. Minority attendance was dismal at best, with Caucasian attendees outnumbering African Americans almost four to one.

Whatever the reason for the low numbers, one thing is for sure: we won't get the help we need if we don't ask for it.

It's no secret that the WSPD hasn't always enjoyed an amicable relationship with the black community. Countless public forums and other open events prior to this one have yielded complaints about the Department's policies, practices and procedures. So where were we Tuesday?

Police Chief Scott Cunningham is asking, no, imploring community members to offer the Department their feedback and input, and very few of us from the black community were there to give it to him.

Regardless of how we feel about the WSPD, these forums are an opportunity for citizens to get in on the ground floor, meeting the officers that will be in charge of keeping them safe. The department has said it is willing to make the direct numbers available for the officers in charge of each beat, and for their supervisors all the way up the line. Cunningham is adamant that citizens should make the proper people aware of any problems that arise with the Department or in a given area.

"They'd better be taking dog-gone good care of you," he told those in attendance at the meeting on Tuesday. "If not, I expect you're going to rattle these (captains', sergeants' and lieutenants') phones, and then you're going to rattle mine."

Police Chief Cunningham is making an earnest effort to make this community better, and safer, for all of us. He is serious about holding his officers to a code of conduct that demands that everyone is treated with respect and dignity. We, as black people, ought to be the first to stand behind him, and it's not too late to do so.

If you missed Tuesday's meeting, there's still plenty of time to make your voice heard. Visit www.wspd.org or call (336) 727-8000 to find out when there's a meeting near you, then GO. Meet the men and women who will be patrolling your neighborhood. Get information; take down phone numbers - let them know what problems you face. Do it for you. Do it for us. Do it for our nation.

Bush Presidency Highlight Reel

Wanna see it again?

AIN'T I A (BLACK) WOMAN?



Courtney Gaillard
Guest Columnist

Apparently, I am not "a true sister."

That's what Jacqueline Moore Bowles, national president of Jack and Jill of America Inc., implied last week in a story on CNN.com about the Black first family.

In the article, Bowles says: "Too often successful black men look for other things ... a white woman or someone who is light, bright and darn near white ... She [Michelle Obama] is a true sister, and she makes no bones about it."

I find it disrespectful and insulting that a Black woman would make such comments following the inauguration of this nation's first Black president. This is a time when all Americans are hoping that we can continue to make great strides in the color war that continues to plague this country. Not to mention that last

week we also celebrated the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who encouraged us all to "judge a man not by the color of his skin, but by the content of his character."

You see, I am a Black woman. I am one of those "light, bright and darn near white" Black women she referenced. So does this mean I am not "a true sister" because I do not have brown skin like Michelle Obama?

My grandfather, who was Black, married my grandmother, who was a White woman. They raised four children together. My two brothers are married to white women, and both are raising biracial children. So is Bowles implying that my grandfather and brothers married their wives because they were looking "for other things?" And what exactly are these "other things?" Is she insinuating that black men marry outside of their race for reasons other than love?

I am proud of my family, my multiracial heritage and the various shades of our skin.

I am proud of the risks and sacrifices my grandpar-

ents made to marry and live in inner-city Chicago as a mixed couple at a time when their love posed many dangers. My grandfather stood guard by their window with his shotgun, watching my grandmother get off the bus so that he could walk her safely every night to the front door of their building. That's an act of love if I ever heard one.

I am proud of all of the days my father and his brother ran home from school to avoid altercations with neighborhood kids who didn't take kindly to their "light" skin. I am eternally grateful to all of the unsung foot soldiers - black, white, brown and yellow - that sat down and stood up, marched and sang during the Civil Rights Movement.

On its national Web site, Jack and Jill touts itself as "a family organization that provides cultural, social, civic and recreational activities that stimulate and expand the mind to enhance life." Bowles' comments certainly stimulated my mind, but I find nothing enhancing, fair or inclusive about her implications.

I never participated in

Jack and Jill as a child. But what are my light-skinned nieces and nephew to make of these comments by this organization's leader? Jack and Jill of America's Web site also states that the country's "oldest and largest African American family organization" is "committed to ensuring that all children have the same opportunities in life." Does this commitment extend to black youngsters of all shades or just to "true" black children with brown skin?

According to my birth certificate from Los Angeles County, I am black. It states nothing about how "true" my race is. Perhaps Bowles can shed some "light" on it.

Ms. Bowles, you don't know the men in my family. I think they are phenomenal people, not because of the women they married or the hue of their skin, but because of the men and fathers they turned out to be. That's the truth that matters to me.

Courtney Gaillard, a former Chronicle reporter, lives in Winston-Salem and works in the advertising industry.

Why Do They Fear Eric Holder?



Harry Alford
Guest Columnist

The Rule of Law and the U.S. Constitution are sacred codes for our society. We must protect them to ensure our democracy and guarantee equal protection under the law for all of us. Anything less is chaos and tyranny.

My fellow citizens, we have been threatened with chaos and tyranny during the last three Attorney Generals. The office of the Attorney General is one of the four most important cabinet positions along with Treasury, State and Defense. Proper execution of its duties and the management by its executives is key to our future and our image throughout the world.

The United States is supposed to be the model for values and liberty. Our leadership role is at risk.

Who would have thought that the United States of America would be committing War Crimes through torture, privacy violations, etc? We have lately committed torture and have subcontracted torture to other, less democratic nations via Rendition. We have held people in prison without habeas corpus or charges. We have brutalized citizens of other nations through the misconduct of our troops and agents. It is now time for Justice to be served. Change must come and it is on its way via the election of President Barack H. Obama.

He has promised change and he will deliver. At the Justice Department he has selected the very talented and experienced Eric Holder. There is no one more qualified to take on this task and we are blessed with his nomination.

But wow, there are those who fear this warrior for justice. They are afraid of the accountability that must be applied to those who have transgressed, no matter who they are.

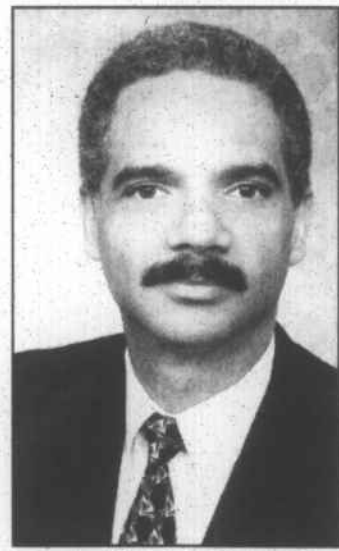
They can run but they cannot hide. Many are squirming at the fact that justice is about to smack them upside their head no matter how high up in the pecking order they may be. Wrong is wrong and no one should get a pass.

History shows us that this must be done to protect our values. Those who mismanaged prisoner of war camps during the Civil War were prosecuted and sentenced accordingly.

U.S. troops who performed "water boarding" during the Vietnam War were prosecuted accordingly. It is wrong to torture and justice must prevail. It is wrong to steal money or ruin mortgages through Wall St. shenanigans and justice must prevail.

It is wrong to discriminate in offices set up for civil rights and justice must prevail. It is wrong to steal the juicy procurement contracts and half perform them and justice must prevail. So Eric Holder is a blessing for us and those who are guilty can try to put up a fight but he is coming and Hallelujah.

After World War II, we evaluated the performance of the Japanese Imperial Army in the Philippines



Eric Holder

where they brutalized civilians, Philippine and American troops. We quickly held trials and every officer of the Japanese military in the Philippines met the Hangmen's noose.

Every one of them was executed. Many of the high ranking noncommissioned officers (top sergeants) were also hanged for war crimes. There were also other formal trials for Japanese officers who committed war crimes such as torture and, of course, the Nuremberg Trials dealt with the German officers and politicians who violated humanity.

The Soviet Union, at the end of World War II, went rather "Medieval" in issuing justice. As they conquered eastern Germany they collected over one million German military prisoners of war. They marched them off into deep Russia and only 5,000 ever returned home.

General Zhukov issued this edit to his conquering Soviet troops (paraphrased): They have ravaged our land

and killed 20 million of our people. You are all hurting and must exact revenge. As of 6:00 p.m. tonight and during the next 48 hours, Germany is yours. No house or business will be locked. Those violating this order should be executed on the spot. Have their women, wine and liquor, and their money. Enjoy in the name of the Motherland.

During the next two days over 126,000 German women were gang raped by Soviet troops. More than 16,000 of these women committed suicide, fearing that this would be their plight forever. It was more Pay Back than Justice to the extreme (Cable TV Military Channel).

U.S. agents and their contractors have tortured, kidnapped and violated the rights of human beings in violation of the Geneva Conference. We are not the old Soviet Union and the courts must be utilized to correct these transgressions.

We must clean up Wall Street and must address discrimination in the name of the Federal Government. American citizens should be protected by privacy laws and not abused.

Our ideal has been threatened and we need an Attorney General to clean the mess up. No man is above the law. Eric Holder is the right guy at the right time. The U.S. Senate must confirm him as soon as possible. There is much work to do! Yes we can.

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