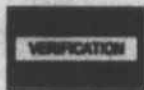


# OPINION/ FORUM

**THE CHRONICLE** Celebrating 38 Years

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## The AKAs Are Here

Downtown Winston-Salem is awash in pink and green.

The ladies of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. are in town for their 60th Annual Mid-Atlantic Regional Conference. The four day gathering, April 4-7, is expected to attract more than 2,700 sorors from chapters throughout North Carolina and Virginia.

Attendees are expected to pump about \$1.3 million into the local economy, but their impact here can't just be measured in dollars and cents.

The women of Alpha Kappa Alpha have long been trailblazers, the movers and shakers of their various communities. These women are our elected officials, educators, corporate executives, our doctors and lawyers. They set examples of excellence for our young girls.

The sorority encourages its members to reach back and give wholeheartedly to their communities. Alpha Kappa Alpha's dedication to community service will be evident this week. An educational youth summit and a college prep seminar will be held during the conference for local students. Attendees are also donating gift cards and school supplies to Family Services, Inc.

"It is business, not as usual, but to a higher degree," Dr. Linda Gilliam, regional director of the Mid-Atlantic Region, told The Chronicle last month. "We are always ensuring that we are living out our mission, and that is service."

Of course we are perhaps a bit biased, but we feel Winston-Salem is the perfect place for such a grand gathering of esteemed women. This city, after all, has produced some of the most loyal and devoted AKAs that this world has known. Foremost among them is the late, great Dr. Barbara K. Phillips, who became the sorority's International President in the late 1970s. Phillips took Alpha Kappa Alpha to new heights and she would be so proud of the work her sisters do each day to better the lives of others.

Welcome to Winston-Salem, ladies, and thank you for all that you do!



Dr. Phillips

## All White Federal Courts

It's 2013, not 1950, but someone forgot to tell our federal court system that.

The N.C. NAACP is again voicing its concern about the lack of racial diversity on the U.S. District Court of the Eastern District of N.C. bench. The judges who preside over the district, which includes more than 40 counties, are all white, even though blacks and other minorities make up more than 25 percent of the District's population.

The federal District Court has never been black-friendly in North Carolina, thanks, in no small part, to Jesse Helms, the racist who represented the state in the Senate for a number of decades. Winston-Salem's own James A. Beaty was nominated to the U.S. District Court of the Middle District of N.C. in the 1990s by President Clinton, but the state's Eastern and Western districts have never had a black judge.

Washington protocol dictates that a state's two U.S. Senators forward the names of judges for consideration to the federal bench to the president, who then forwards his nomination for Senate approval. With a Democratic president (who also happens to be the nation's first black leader) and senator (Kay Hagan), this process should be seamless, yet there has been a vacancy on the Eastern District of N.C. bench since the beginning of 2006.

N.C. NAACP President William Barber indicated to the Raleigh-based News and Observer that U.S. Sen. Richard Burr, a Republican and Winston-Salem resident, may be the problem. Burr's reps say the senator submitted a list of possible nominees, including minorities, to President Obama in 2009, but they won't divulge the names of the candidates. Hagan has been more forthcoming. Her list of three possible nominees includes two African Americans.

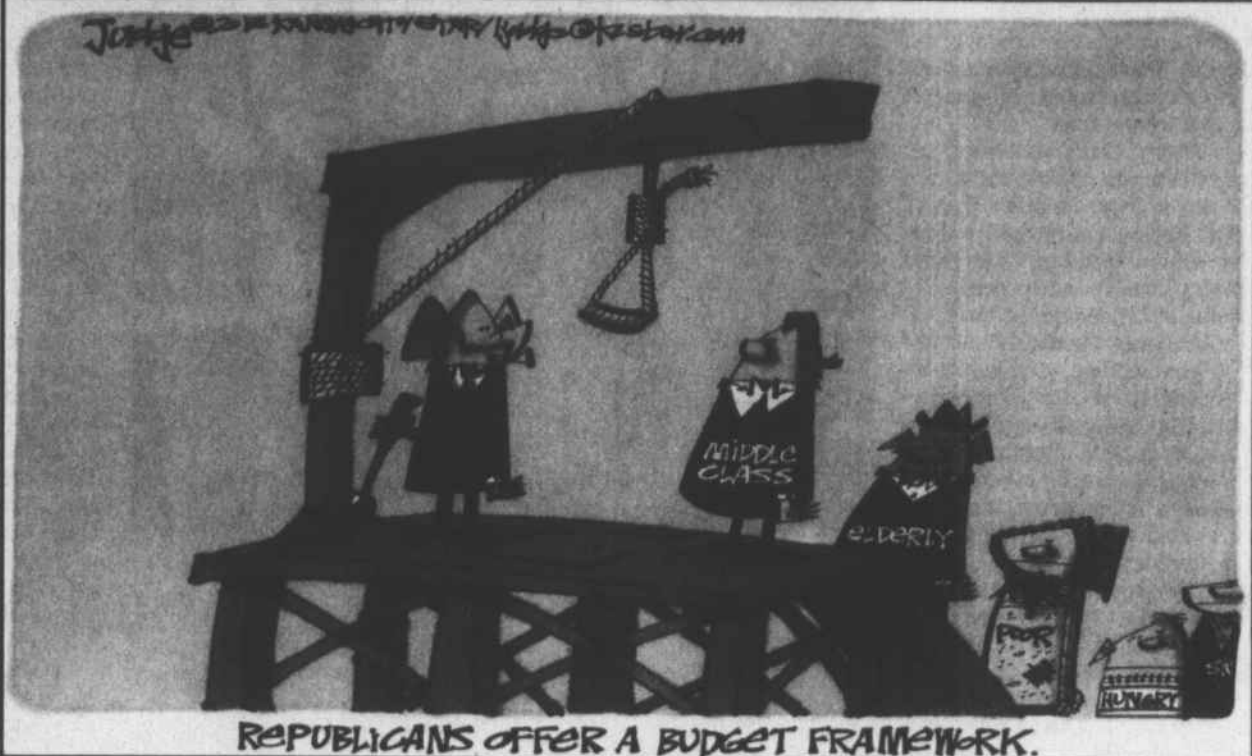
This apparent stalemate may be indicative of why so little gets done in Washington. There is this political dance that must be performed, and dancers on both sides of the political aisle must be careful not to step on toes.

While we are fans of bipartisanship, we don't believe that political niceties should trump progress. Surely if President Clinton could sneak in Beaty at a time when Helms was still in the Senate, President Obama can maneuver around any objections that Burr may have. It may cause a mini political battle, but it would be well worth it. As Barber told the News and Observer, if now isn't the time to diversify the Eastern District of N.C., when is?

"Race has been a factor for more than 200 years," Barber said. "This should be a unique and historic opportunity to bring diversity."



Beaty



## 45 years after King

**Jesse Jackson**  
 Guest Columnist

Today (April 4) marks the 45th year since the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King at the Lorraine Motel in Memphis. Dr. King, 39, at the time, has now been gone from us longer than he was with us. A monument celebrates his life on the mall in Washington. He is remembered as the man with a dream at the March on Washington.

In 1968, however, Dr. King was far from the favored celebrity he is today. He was under fierce criticism for opposing the war in Vietnam. Former colleagues were scolding his commitment to nonviolence. When he went to Memphis, headlines called him "Chicken a la King." The St. Louis Globe-Democrat termed him "one of the most menacing men in America today." The FBI was planning COINTELPRO operations to spread rumors about him and discredit him.

The civil rights movement had succeeded in ending

legal segregation. The Voting Rights Act had been passed. But Dr. King knew that his greatest challenges were still ahead as he turned his focus to poverty and equal opportunity. The war on poverty was being lost in the jungles of Vietnam as war consumed the resources needed.

Dr. King went to Memphis to support African-American sanitation workers who were striking for equal pay and for a union. His first nonviolent march there was disrupted when some of the marchers started breaking into and looting stores. King decided to return to Memphis because he believed that nonviolence was now on trial.

Dr. King was focused on organizing a Poor People's Campaign to march on Washington, reaching out to impoverished white miners, Hispanic farmworkers, Native Americans, the urban poor. Injustice anywhere, Dr. King preached, was a threat to justice everywhere.

Dr. King decried the

unemployment that was so crippling to the black community. But he also knew, even then, that a job no longer guaranteed a way out of poverty. "Most of the poverty-stricken people of America," he said, "are persons who are working every day and they end up getting part-time wages for full-time work."

So Dr. King went to Memphis to march with sanitation workers — and there his life was taken from him.

Now, 45 years later, his last mission is still unfulfilled. One in five children in America are at risk of going without adequate nutrition. One in three African-American children. Forty-six million Americans are in poverty. More than 20 million people are in need of full-time work. African-American unemployment remains twice the rate of whites.

Dr. King knew that these conditions would not change unless working people and the poor joined across lines of race and religion and region to demand justice. Nothing would change unless peo-

ple disrupted business as usual, with nonviolent protest, expressing their own humanity while exposing the inhumanity of the current arrangements.

On April 4, many will remember Dr. King. The news programs will rebroadcast parts of his sermon the night before he was shot when he promised those gathered that they would "get to the promised land" although "I might not get there with you."

The way to remember Dr. King is to pick up the struggle. Poverty and inequality, he taught us, are a threat to democracy and to freedom. And only nonviolent engagement by people of good conscience joining with those who are afflicted can possibly drive the change we need.

Today, inequality has reached even greater extremes. Wages are sinking, poverty is spreading. In this rich nation, poor children go hungry. The Poor People's Campaign that was lost in the wake of war and the assassinations of Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy is needed now more than ever.

Rev. Jesse Jackson heads the Rainbow PUSH Coalition, [www.rainbow-push.org](http://www.rainbow-push.org).

## Trayvon Martin: One Year Later

**Ben Jealous**  
 Guest Columnist

One year later, the Trayvon Martin tragedy still stings - and some people are still throwing salt on the open wound. Recently, George Zimmerman's brother, Robert Zimmerman, posted a tweet comparing Trayvon Martin to De'Marquis Elkins, a 17-year-old black teenager charged with fatally shooting a one-year-old baby.

The tweet showed a photo of Elkins side by side with a photo of Martin, both making inappropriate gestures, with the caption "A picture speaks a thousand words. Any questions?"

Zimmerman's follow-up tweet read "Lib[er]al media [should] ask if what these [two] black teens did [to] a [woman and her baby] is the reason [people] think blacks might [be] risky". The implication was that Trayvon Martin's actions on the night he was murdered were equivalent to the killing of an innocent child.

This would be worrisome enough if it were just the opportunistic cry of a family embroiled in racial controversy. But this belief - that male "black



Trayvon Martin

teens" are inherently more likely to be criminals - is ingrained in our society. It has seeped into our institutions in the form of racial profiling, and too often it poisons the judgment of those who are supposed to protect us.

Last year, I visited Sanford, Florida in the wake of the Trayvon Martin case. The NAACP hosted a forum where residents could report incidents of police abuse. A number of African American mothers alleged that their teenage sons had been profiled, abused or even assaulted by the police. I found that the attitude of the local police department toward "black teens" was uncomfortably similar to that of Robert Zimmerman.

But the fact is that fifty years after the Civil Rights Act, racial bias still runs rampant among law enforcement in this country. And Zimmerman's attitude infects an institu-

tion much more influential than the Sanford Police Department: the NYPD.

The New York Police Department is currently fighting a class-action lawsuit against their racially biased practice of "stop-and-frisk" policing. Stop-and-frisk allows officers to stop, question and physically search any individual they consider suspicious. In 2011, NYPD officers stopped nearly 800,000 people for alleged "suspicious activity." Nine out of ten were innocent, 99 percent did not have a gun - and nine out of ten were black or Latino.

The most revealing tidbit to come out of the class-action trial is a secretly recorded conversation between a deputy inspector and a police officer. The inspector is discussing a high-crime neighborhood, and he can be heard telling his patrolman: "The problem was, what, male blacks... And I told you at roll call, and I have no problem telling you this, male blacks 14 to 20, 21." In other words: stop more young black boys.

Other evidence indicates that patrolmen may be encouraged to meet arrest quotas. A tape played at the trial reveals a supervising officer asking for "more 250s" - or more stop-and-frisk forms. One plaintiff, a police officer, testified about the pressure he felt from supervisors - "they were very clear, it's

non-negotiable, you're gonna do it, or you're gonna become a Pizza Hut delivery man."

A picture may speak a thousand words, but leaked recordings speak volumes about an institution's priorities. These tapes reveal that the NYPD has effectively placed a bounty on "black teens." By profiling young teens of color, they are using the same grisly logic as Robert Zimmerman. And the result is apparent: in 2011, black and Latino men between the ages of 14 and 24 made up 42 percent of those targeted by stop-and-frisk. That group makes up less than 5 percent of the city's population.

The crime attributed to De'Marquis Elkins' was truly horrific and despicable. But Elkins does not represent an entire demographic, just like Adam Lanza did not act on behalf of all young white men. Racial profiling punishes innocent individuals for the past actions of those who look and sound like them. It misdirects crucial resources and undercuts the trust needed between law enforcement and the communities they serve. It has no place in our national discourse, and no place in our nation's police departments.

Ben Jealous is President/CEO of the NAACP.