

# OP/ED

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Coach Connell Maynor leads his team to the field.

## Rams Deserve Better Press

When we saw the Winston-Salem State logo staring back at us from the television screen, we knew it could not be good. The set was on ESPN, after all, and "The Worldwide Leader in Sports" doesn't expend its valuable airtime on black college sports unless something untoward occurs — a locker room skirmish, on-field bruhaha, athletic department malfeasance.

As seemingly the entire world now knows, the ESPN report was about a violent confrontation on the WSSU campus that left the team's star quarterback black and blue and a member of the rival team, Virginia State University, in the slammer. Adding to this sordid drama was the fact that the two teams were slated to play for the CIAA championship the next day and that this West Side Story-ish rumble took place in a restroom just feet away from a formal pre-championship ceremony.

The dynamics of the story were just too irresistible for the media. The story had legs, running halfway around the world just hours after the incident occurred last Friday. By Saturday morning, the name Winston-Salem State University, by default, was omnipresent. Unfortunately, the mention of its name was almost immediately succeeded by descriptions of violence. It is not the way such a venerable institution and accomplished football program wanted to make their international debut.

Coach Connell Maynor's football team had a story worth telling long before the attack by VSU thugs. He has led the team to one of the best records in the nation. Few schools or coaches — be they black, white, DI, DII, etc. — can toot their own horns louder. His Rams, with their 24 consecutive CIAA wins, were set to win their third-straight CIAA championship Saturday — a certainty that no doubt triggered the opposing, inferior team. The team has earned three straight DII National Championship berths, including last year, when the Rams played for the DII title.

Such achievements are rare in DII play and even rarer among historically black schools, but, like sharks, ESPN and the others were attracted by bloodshed. Mainstream media doesn't dwell on scandal just for the heck of it. It sells and attracts attention from an audience that publicly abhors violence, yet oddly can't get enough of it. There were more Facebook posts and Twitter chatter about the bathroom melee than there have been in three seasons of WSSU football milestones.

We are concerned that in the long-run, the attention this story has received will add to the widely-held — and racist — notion that HBCUs are wild and out of control and their sports programs are just a mess. The WSSU story made national waves just weeks after another HBCU football program did. Grambling State's football players staged a boycott to protest their lack of adequate training facilities and other issues, and the press salivated and tripped over themselves to broadcast the kerfuffle.

We should insist that the national, mainstream media — the ESPNs and Yahoo! Sports of the world — make an effort to broadcast to the world the many things that are going right in black college sports. And we, the public, should celebrate and propagate good news the same way we spread information about death, violence and the like.

## Time to raise the minimum wage



**George Curry**  
Guest Columnist

The first federal minimum wage of 25 cents an hour was established in 1938. Since then, it has been raised 22 times. It's time to increase the floor for the 23rd time, from its current \$7.25 to at least \$10 an hour.

According to the Center for Economic Policy Research, the value of the minimum wage peaked in 1968. If the minimum wage had been indexed to the official Consumer Price Index each year, the minimum wage today would be \$10.52. The last time the minimum wage was raised was in 2007, when it was raised from \$5.15 to \$7.25.

Still, there is resistance. Republican leaders say raising the minimum wage will cost jobs. But opponents, such as Washington Post columnist Jared Bernstein, argue that rather than job loss, employers compensate by charging higher prices and increasing productivity.

Another common myth is that employers shouldn't be forced to pay young people the minimum wage.

But 88 percent of workers who would be affected by raising the minimum wage are at least 20 years old and a third are at least 40 years, according to the Economic Policy Institute.

The federal minimum wage is covered by the Fair Labor Standards Act. There are approximately 3.6 million workers, or 4.7 percent of all hourly paid workers who are at or below the federal minimum wage of \$7.25 an hour. Employers are allowed to pay students and the disabled — defined as those "whose earning or productivity is impaired by age, physical or mental deficiency, or injury" — less than the minimum wage. It also places limits on workers who derive part of their income from tips.

A study by the Congressional Research Service found that 40 percent of those earning the minimum wage or less work in "food preparation and serving related occupations." It also discovered that 72.2 percent have at least a high school diploma and 8 percent have a bachelor's degree or higher.

Washington State has the highest state minimum wage at \$9.19, indexed to inflation. California enacted a law that will raise its minimum wage to \$10 over three years. Some cities have wages that are even higher. The minimum wage

is \$10.55 in San Francisco. And in the recent election, New Jersey voters approved a constitutional amendment increasing the minimum wage from \$7.25 to \$8.25.

Where city or state minimums exceed the federal standard, workers receive the higher wage. The movement to increase the federal minimum wage has stalled in Congress. In March, the House voted 233 to 184 against raising the minimum wage to \$10.10 by 2015, with all Republicans voting in the majority.

Two Democrats, Senator Tom Harkin of Iowa and Rep. George Miller of California have sponsored legislation, called the Fair Minimum Wage Act, to raise the federal minimum wage. The hope was to overcome past opposition by adding some sweeteners for small businesses, including allowing them to deduct the full cost of equipment and expansion up to \$500,000 in the first year.

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Marissa Jennings and Natalie Jordan pose with fellow Bennett Belles.

## Jennings

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Socialgrlz is trying to do is really change the conversation."

More than two dozen women signed on to take part in the War Room video shoot at Bennett on Monday, where Jennings and fellow Bennett Belle Natalie Jordan guided the students in creating videos, emails, tweets and texts to promote Socialgrlz.

"The girls are able to tweet, make videos and really talk about why Socialgrlz is needed and how it impacts girls' lives," explained Jennings, who conceived of the idea after speaking at Bennett recently and witnessing the broad-based support for the company's mission that existed there. "It's kind of like an opportunity for both of us (company reps and students) to get together and actually experience the same thing that Bennett has been doing for years, which is exposure, relationships and being our sisters' keepers."

"It's really special to come back to Bennett to work with these girls," added Jordan, a member of the Class of 2004. "...It's just a humbling experience to come back to a campus that I love, a campus that cultivated an environment for me to learn in and grow so much."

The event was the first in three scheduled "War Room" activities, a takeoff on the political outreach efforts of the same name, where those who believe wholeheartedly in the Socialgrlz mission were given the chance to parlay their enthusiasm into much-needed funds to create the app.

"I'm really excited to meet these girls that are going to be pushing Socialgrlz — they get the concept," said Jordan, a native of Fort Washington, Md and Socialgrlz's communications director. "They believe, like we believe that the conversation needs to be changed."

With Sasha and Malia Obama growing up in the White House before the eyes of the whole world, black girls are in the spotlight like never before, Jennings said. She believes Socialgrlz — which offers resources, information, advice and ample opportunity for girls to speak out about the issues that affect them — could help ensure that the world, and the girls themselves, see black females in a more favorable light.

"I think the first step is creating a mobile app and meeting the girls where they are and highlighting women that are doing great things," said Jennings, who was slated to participate in a White House-led panel discussion on Twitter about African American girls on Tuesday.

Despite being avid consumers of web and mobile content, African American women and girls are largely overlooked by the mobile app community, Jennings said. The Socialgrlz app will be the first of its kind to reach out to African American girls in the target age bracket, she said, and the company is eager to get it on the market.

"We're meeting these girls in the palm of their hands," she declared. "...We really need everyone to rally behind this concept to make sure that these girls are not overlooked anymore."

Socialgrlz hopes to raise \$50,000 in time to launch the application on Android and Apple platforms in March, National Women's Month, and that will hopefully be just the beginning, Jennings said.

"I want this to go as far as it can go," she remarked. "I really want to make sure that our girls are viewed in a positive light, here and across the country."

For more information about Socialgrlz, or to contribute to the mobile app fundraising campaign, visit [www.indiegogo.com/projects/socialgrlz](http://www.indiegogo.com/projects/socialgrlz).

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