

OP/ED

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Witnessing for Jesus



Ernie Pitt
This 'N' That

I have basically kept silent about a lot of unfortunate occurrences that have taken place in my life over the last 10 years. I have basically allowed anyone who had an opinion about my life to say and do just about anything with impunity. Although I would never respond physically to such aspersions, I can't say that the thought has never crossed my mind.

Fortunately, my pastor, the Rev. Donald Jenkins, preached a sermon this past Sunday at St. Paul United Methodist Church on God's desire for us to be witnesses for Jesus. "Go throughout the world and make disciples of men!" he said. Anyone who has ever suffered for one reason or another, rightly or wrongly, and has been brought to the cross by God's

grace and mercy needs to share their story with everybody.

I thought my only obligation was to simply display my ability to withstand the violent and abusive language and horrible misinterpretations of how I have tried to live my life. I have always known that God was in charge of everything and that no one can take that away or change it into something else.

I mentioned in one of my previous columns that while I was serving my prison sentence at Butner, I was drawn to Martin Luther King's Letter from the Birmingham Jail. Soon after the piece was published, I was sent an article written by a columnist accusing me of portraying myself as Dr. King. That, of course, was not the case. I was simply stating that, like King, no weapon formed against me shall prosper — not even prison bars.

The long and short of it is that God changed my life. He showed me that there was only one perfect person who has ever graced this Earth — Jesus.

But God forgives, and He equips us with everything we need to live in this world. He taught me that one does not need to live in the lap of luxury in order to be happy and content. No, I'm not a preacher, just a soldier for Jesus.

I'm not worried about anything. I'm not worried about anyone. And I'm not angry with anybody. I just want to do God's will. I know you've heard that before, but that sincerely reflects my present condition.

This is my declaration to all who may have by intent or accident tried to — and succeeded, perhaps — in mistreating or belittling me: I forgive you, unconditionally. And, yes, I do know who you are.

You don't owe me an apology. Just pray for me and pray for our people — that we will get to know God and claim Jesus as our Lord and Saviour.

Ernie Pitt is the co-founder and publisher of the Winston-Salem Chronicle. Reach him at erpitt@wschronicle.com.



Master quilter Andrena Coleman is among the featured artists.



Cornelia Webster with "Gordan." Photos by Layla Garmes

Delta

from page A1

African American artists from across the state. It was Daniels' first show.

"It's time," said the Richmond, Va. native, who got his start as a photographer in the US Army in 1976. "I've been shooting for a long time. I've got a passion for photography, particularly portraiture, and I think I've got a story to tell through my photographs."

"Invitational 2014 @ Delta Arts" opened Thursday, Feb. 6 to an enthusiastic crowd of more than 200.

"We couldn't be more pleased with the turnout, or the submissions," declared Marguerite Oestreicher, a member of Delta's Board of Directors and one of the exhibit's curators.

The 2014 Invitational, which served as a kickoff of the gallery's celebration of Black History Month, put out a call for work several weeks ago. The result was a diverse collection of 49 pieces by 33 emerging and established artists. The pieces are not just for gawking at; they are for sale, with profits benefitting both the artist and the gallery.

Akinyele Cameron-Kamau, a senior studying art at Winston-Salem State University, was among the emerging artists who made the cut. Ironically, the self portrait Cameron-Kamau submitted was the first painting she did after changing her major from elementary education to art two summers ago. Although her instructor, Professor Scott Betz, told the students they could keep their portraits simple, Cameron-Kamau went the extra mile.

"He was like, 'I just want you to finish it. It doesn't have to be great,' but I'm a stickler for detail, so I took mine home," related the Holly Springs resident. "...I wanted to make it count."

Cameron-Kamau's efforts paid off. Last year, when WSSU officials approached Betz in search of an artist who could depict Chancellor Donald Reaves in a portrait to hang in the new Donald J. Reaves Student Activities Center, Betz said he knew just who to call on.

"She is very meticulous, she is very professional, she follows through," he said of Cameron-Kamau. "This would reflect well on the art program, and I knew Akinyele could pull it off."

Cameron-Kamau rose to the occasion, completing the massive portrait in just two weeks. Despite the considerable exposure she has gotten for the Reaves piece, the Invitational was Cameron-Kamau's first show at what she calls "a real gallery." The 21-year-old was one of four current and former WSSU students whose work was on display at Delta last week.

"I'm very pleased that you can see so much good work that is being done by our students," said exhibit curator Allison Fleming, a Delta Board member and chair of the Department of Art & Visual Studies at



Akinyele Cameron-Kamau with her self portrait.

Winston-Salem State University.

The show was intentionally fluid, allowing the artists to submit work on virtually any theme or medium they chose, with a goal of celebrating the breadth and diversity of African American contemporary art, Fleming said.

"It was specifically advertised just for African American artists, just because that's our mission, to promote African American art," she explained. "It's Black History Month in February, and we really wanted to kind of go back to our core mission."

Roxboro native Cornelia Webster's piece, "Gordan," is one of the only mixed media works in the show. The piece, with its leather and acrylic paint on Indian cotton, is part of a style of art Webster has dubbed "hispectorials" — works of art with historical back-

"Gordan was a runaway slave," she explained. "He used a very ingenious method of covering himself with onions so he could evade the slave catchers. He went into the safety of the Union Army and he eventually joined ... There is a

photograph of him in the Smithsonian, so this is a reproduction of that photograph."

The stories behind Webster's work — which spans more than 35 years — will be detailed in her forthcoming book, "Society Conscious," which is slated to be released next month. Webster says she is hopeful that her work will one day be used as a tool to teach younger generations about the storied history of African Americans.

"(I hope) that they see it as an avenue to educate our youth," the grandmother of three said of area educators. "Without knowledge of ourselves, we are apt to repeat the mistakes of the past."

The Delta Arts Center is hosting two events in conjunction with the show, an African American Read-In today (Thursday, Feb. 20) at 6 p.m. and "Gospel and Gumbo," which is being billed as "an evening of networking, delicious gumbo and great music," on Thursday, March 6 at 6 p.m. "Invitational 2014 @ Delta Arts" is on view through April 26. For more information, visit www.deltaartscenter.org.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Presidential Praise

To the Editor:

This section of the U.S. Constitution describes the duty of the President to give a State of the Union address.

"He shall from time to time give to the Congress Information of the State of the Union, and recommend to their Consideration such measures as he shall judge necessary and expedient ...". President's Obama's State of the Union address vehemently and metaphorically challenged all Americans to be citizens of action to make America "a more perfect union" in very precise language. His unifying message supported with real citizens as examples of what America represents to

the world community was rich in history and in the spiritual essence of America's core values and unique identity as a world leader.

The citizens identified in the balcony were a true quilt of America. The pragmatic recommendations to provide individual retirement options to average working Americans, to increase the minimum wage to a livable wage, to promote excellence in educational opportunities and to move America forward based on the common core values that we share demonstrates his commitment and resolve. Thank you, President Obama, for reminding us of what it means to be an American.

*Fleming El-Amin
Winston-Salem*

Respect Restroom Privacy

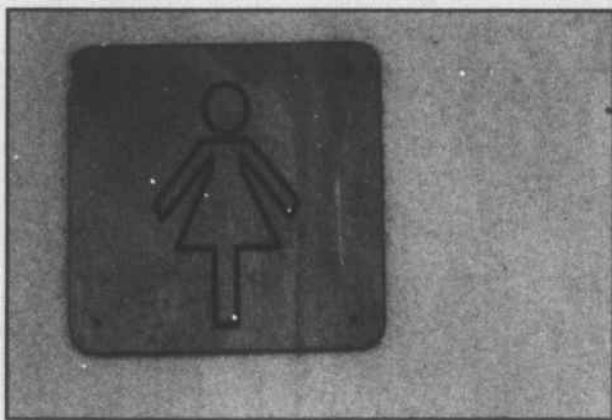


Olymphya Brown
Guest Columnist

When we "conform" it means that we do the things that everybody else is doing, whether it is right or wrong.

There are a lot of things going on in the world today that are not meant to be done. A month or more ago, I was in a popular local restaurant and had to go to the restroom. There were many ladies present of various ages. One was elderly and in a wheelchair, and another lady was helping her to straighten her clothes out. Suddenly, two other older women came in with a young boy who appeared to be about 12 years old. The young man seemed shocked and surprised to be facing all these women in their private space — the restroom. The women who brought him in apparently seemed to think that it was OK for him to be there. It obviously made the ladies who were using the restroom uncomfortable; it made me uncomfortable, and the young man was uncomfortable.

This is obviously a situation where the rights and privacy of others were being ignored and all of us present were forced to



ignore our values in place of someone else's convenience and "right" to do what they want. This is not the way it is meant to be. I reported this to the restaurant manager and he just shrugged it off. I have not been to that restaurant since that event.

I was traveling about two months ago and had to make a restroom stop. They did not have a lock on the door, and as I was washing my hands to leave, a young man about 20 years old walked in, stared me up and down like, "What are you doing in here?" Again, this was another situation of the rights to privacy being violated and an expectation for me and others to go along with it. My concern about restroom sharing was reported to the management, and they looked at me like, "What's the big deal?"

I was in Raleigh a few days ago at a conference, and as I and several others prepared for our trip home, guess what? I had

another incident in a restroom. A man and a woman were cleaning. When I saw the man, I asked the lady where the next available restroom was, she did not know. I told the man that he had to leave, and he was offended, but he left. Offended? I don't share the restroom with a man present at anytime or anywhere and I am sure that many others share the same values. I told the lady that we are not used to using the restroom with a man present.

The point is that it is becoming increasingly common to have to go along with and accept the new society norms and expectations because we simply will not speak up and speak against what is not meant to be. We have that choice to not do as the world is doing.

Olymphya Brown of Winston-Salem is a licensed professional counselor and licensed clinical addictions specialist.

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