

# Journalist's trouble doesn't describe us all

By Dennis Schatzman  
SPECIAL TO THE POST

Let me just speak for myself. Janet Cooke, you did a bad thing 15 years ago when, as a reporter for the Washington Post, your perpetrated a hoax on the American people by creating "Jimmy" and his world of drug abuse. The 8-year-old heroin addict you wrote about in your Sept. 28, 1980 story never existed. You paid dearly for that, as well you should. You were summarily run out of Washington, D.C. on a rail and was forced to give up your Pulitzer Prize.

That was then; this is now. You have asked your one-time journalist colleagues - and presumably all of Black America - for forgiveness. After 15 years of exile, I believe you are entitled to be forgiven. I mean, practically everyone else has been forgiven after committing similar acts. Some were worse than yours.

The world of journalism has long since forgotten when the late Arthur Pegler (father of the late columnist Westbrook Pegler) of the Chicago American planted arsenic in cellar of a boarding housekeeper who was suspected of poisoning some of her roomers. Reason: Pegler believed the woman was guilty. A jury found her guilty of first degree murder and sentenced her to death. Later the sentence was commuted to life. How touching.

The sad part about this cruel hoax is that Pegler became a respected reporter and editor for some of the nation's most respected newspapers.

Let us not forget that the Pulitzer you were forced to

give up was passed on to Teresa Carpenter of the Village Voice for her story on the murder of former New York congressman Allard Lowenstein. The article suggested



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that Lowenstein's murderer had maintained a homosexual relationship with him. Friends of the congressman raised hell and challenged Carpenter's reporting methods and sources. Carpenter's major source was the killer himself. She quoted him repeatedly. Later it was learned that Carpenter never interviewed the murderer. Last I heard, Carpenter still had her prize sitting on a mantle somewhere in her house. How about that?

I found no proof that white reporters fretted and hung their heads in shame because of the misdeeds of Pegler and Carpenter. Yet when the going gets rough for one of us, we black journalists rarely think of ourselves as individuals, but only as a monolithic group just because some whites view us that way. Contrary to public belief, we are not our brother's and sister's keepers. We blacks can be so weak sometimes.

Many of my African American colleagues would say, however, that what you did set black journalists back years. They argue that your act placed undue pressure on us because it caused white editors and reporters to second-guess everything we did journalistically for many years after your ruse was discovered. In essence, they say, you were a traitor to the black journalistic cause.

Well, Janet, I'm here to tell you that argument is pure

horsepucky. You never spoke for me as a journalist, and neither have your critics. I live and die on my own journalistic merits. Every reporter does - black, white, yellow or brown. What you did, you did to yourself. You didn't do it to black journalists, except the weak ones. And maybe the prima donna ones. Certainly not me. You went out on the skinny branch of deception by yourself. You didn't drag me out there with you. As far as I know, only Milton Coleman, your editor at the time, climbed part way out there with you. And we all know he is not without journalistic sin either.

My colleagues might recall that it was Coleman who used another (read, white) reporter to publish 1984 presidential candidate Jesse Jackson's off-the-record "Hymietown" comment that hurt black-white (and Jewish) relations more than your act ever will.

So I will forgive you, even if no one else will. I am certainly no paragon of virtue in this business. What journalist really is? But I never have, and never will, care what my critics think. When I mess up, I just learn from my mistakes and keep striving forth to try to be the best reporter I can be. Unlike you, I never asked anyone for forgiveness when I messed up. But you have asked. And the least we can do as men and women is to accept your apology.

I do.

*DENNIS SCHATZMAN is a freelance reporter based in Los Angeles. He is co-author of "The Simpson Trial in Black and White" with Tom Elias. He has been a journalist for over 20 years, all with black-owned newspapers.*

## Letters to The Post

### E-mail from cyberspace

We asked readers of The Post's World Wide Web site their opinion on several topics. Here are the questions and a few of the responses.

• *Has the NAACP lost its relevancy in helping solving community problems?*

L. Sigler Jr.  
age: 48  
E-mail: lsiglerjr@worldnet.att.com

I must qualify my answer. While I feel that there are plenty of laws on the books to ensure civil rights for all, I think there is still a need for a watchdog organization to monitor and publicize abuses.

However, I think there is a greater injustice today. That is the economic immaturity of the African American community. We cannot even hire our own school age kids for the summer.

The organization that steps to the forefront in addressing this problem will be far more beneficial to our community in the long run.

Maurice George  
age: 24  
E-mail: mgeorge@uncc.edu

The NAACP has always stood up for African-Americans. The organization has respect and power in this country. As long as we African Americans stand behind the NAACP, it will be able to represent us more adequately.

We must not forget that a divided kingdom cannot stand. Let us embrace the values and ideals of the NAACP as it fights for all of our rights.

If the organization is in trouble financially, let's get some of the big salary people together and help out.

Recruit more members and be more visible before things happen.

• *Has free agency helped or hurt sports?*  
DJ Sr.

I think that this is only an issue because now it allows so many African men to become multi-millionaires. I think it's great, because the players won't get half the money that the owners are making off of them.

• *Will the welfare reform bill help or hurt children?*  
Cheryl Jenkins  
age: 34  
E-mail: jenkins@gwvenus.cmd.gwumc

It will certainly help us taxpayers weed out the bad apples. I see too much of it every day.

**What's on your mind?**  
Send your comments to The Charlotte Post, P.O. Box 30144, Charlotte, N.C. 28230 or fax (704) 342-2160. You can also use E-mail - charpost@clt.mindspring.com  
All correspondence must include a daytime telephone number for verification.

## Environmental racism at root of transfer station

By Fran Farrer  
THE CHARLOTTE POST

In times when health is a prime concern of most citizens in most cities, why must I feel like the city in which I live is only concerned with the health and welfare of a certain segment of the city.

Waste and garbage are created by all people. Why is it that my family, friends and neighbors must be the dumping ground for everyone's waste?

Has privatization been the culprit in all of this? When cities say that waste and garbage concerns becoming private owned helps the business sector, it's only because they don't want to be bothered, but they still gain, and we, the minority community, lose.

The northwest side of the city has been the dumping ground of

all things not desired in south Charlotte. It is constantly stated that it does not effect property values, but it does. It is constantly stated that there is no health hazard, but there is. If it's OK, and harmless, why aren't they request-



Farrer

ing waste transfer facilities in Raintree, South Park, and Providence?

The answer to me, to all the above is environmental racism. What the neighborhoods highly populated with the wealthy majority doesn't want, the city just says, "Put it on the west side. The black community won't mind, or won't say any-

## Communities are joining to fight westside trash facility

thing."

Well, this time they are wrong. I'm not emotional, I'm angry. I did not purchase a home in a nice neighborhood to have my children become ill from fumes, or fear the invasion of pests, or run the risk of not being able to sell because of a nearby waste transfer facility.

Why doesn't the owner of NationsWaste place this facility in an industrial park near his home? He doesn't because he knows the risks. Is his only desire to make money at the expense of those he feels have no value?

The NationsWaste Corporation was invited to the organizing meeting of the com-

bined communities' association, but as you would know, he nor any company representative showed up. Why? Because they do not care about the community that they are attempting to destroy, little by little.

Why can't waste and garbage be taken from point "A" to its final resting place without entering residential neighborhoods? Because unfortunately our city does not care enough about all of its residents. That would be too easy, or too much like doing the right thing.

The communities are upset, the churches are upset. We can not allow our communities to be destroyed by NationsWaste or the city of Charlotte.

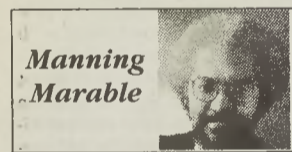
There has been an association formed by 11 of the effected communities. Now operating under the name of The Northwest Combined Neighborhoods Association, our communities will do everything within our power to prevent the building of this proposed transfer facility at 4330 Northpointe Industrial Blvd.

We need the support of our entire community in this effort. The association is meeting weekly to prepare for what we know will be a fight, but we are not afraid. We will no longer lay dormant.

Join us this evening at 6:45 p.m. at Simpson-Gillespie United Methodist Church, 3545 Beatties Ford Road.

*FRAN FARRER is advertising and marketing manager at The Post.*

## Dialogue needed between blacks, and Asians in U.S.



Manning Marable

Racial minorities - African Americans, Asian Americans, Pacific Island Americans, Native Americans and Hispanics - are growing more than seven times faster than non-Hispanic whites.

Much of this population explosion has occurred in only the past decade. Nationwide in 1990, minorities accounted for about 61 million Americans, representing 25 percent of the country's total population. By the year 2000, that percentage will have increased to nearly one-third of the U.S. population. According to demographers, the entire United States will have a "majority minority" by the year 2060. Issues of multicultural diversity will become even more

central to all aspects of American life.

Racial minorities themselves must engage in a critical, honest dialogue about their areas of mutual concern. Certainly one dimension of that discussion must occur between Asian Americans and African Americans. Asian Americans are the most rapidly-growing group in the U.S. Today, there are more than 7.5 million people of Asian descent in this country.

Like African Americans and Latinos, Asian Americans have experienced a history of discrimination and oppression. As early as 1854, the California Supreme Court ruled that Chinese weren't permitted to testify against whites. In 1882, the Chinese Exclusion Act banned all immigration from China. As Japanese immigration to the U.S. grew, discriminatory legislation was extended to them. In 1913, California prohibited aliens ineligible for citizenship

from owning property. The 1924 National Origins Act excluded most Asians from migrating to the U.S. With the outbreak of World War II, 110,000 Japanese Americans were relocated to internment camps. It was only in 1952 that Asians born outside the U.S. were permitted to become citizens. African Americans have not been alone in their search for a non-racist democracy.

Conversely, an appraisal of racial and ethnic realities today illustrates profound differences between minority groups. Blacks and most Latinos, for example, continue to be subjected to extreme economic and social discrimination, while most Asian Americans are not. According to Census surveys, the median household income in 1989 of Asian Americans was \$36,100, compared to \$30,400 for non-Hispanic white households, \$21,900 for Hispanic households, and \$18,100 for

African American households.

According to the Census Bureau's 1987 Survey of Minority-Owned Business Enterprises, the number of Asian-American-owned businesses in the U.S. grew from 187,691 in 1982 to 335,331 in 1987, an increase of 79 percent. By 1998, about 6 percent of all Asian Americans owned a business of some type, compared to 6.5 percent of all non-Hispanic whites, 2 percent of all Latinos, 1.5 percent of all black Americans, and 1 percent of Native Americans.

Similarly, in terms of access to higher education, there are real differences between minority groups. Although African American and Latino college enrollments reached 1.4 million and 1 million respectively by 1993, both were well underrepresented, based on their percentages of the general population. Between 1976 and 1992, the number of African

Americans who received both master's degrees and doctorates actually declined. Conversely, access to higher education for Asian American increased significantly during these same years.

These statistics may explain why Latinos and African Americans overwhelmingly support affirmative action programs and minority scholarships, while a large percentage of Asian Americans do not.

We are rapidly moving beyond the older "black vs. white" model of race and ethnic relations in the U.S., and African Americans must recognize the impact of this social transformation. We need to recognize that within the Asian-American population that there are many nationalities and communities whose interests parallel our own.

*MANNING MARABLE is Professor of History at Columbia University in New York.*

## Children's sabbath: Time to reach out to all of our young



Marian Wright Edelman

Rosemary Matthews prays for the day when people of faith all across America will begin to reach out to society's most isolated and lonely children.

Those are the children, she says, who wonder every day whether anybody even knows they are alive. Rosemary is the outreach director for Philadelphia Citizens for Children and Youth, and she has become one of that city's most vocal advocates for young people, pushing for everything

from eyeglasses and dental care to free lunches and legal aid. She has also become one of Philadelphia's most active organizers of the annual National Observance of Children's Sabbaths, coordinated by the Children's Defense Fund and the Black Community Crusade for Children.

"The call on our lives is for all children," says Rosemary, whose organization lobbies both City Hall and the state house on behalf of children. "If there are children who are isolated, they need to know they're not alone. We have got to let them know that there are adults who care about them all across this country."

With that in mind, Rosemary

has decided that in Philadelphia, this year's annual Observance of Children's Sabbaths will be aimed at reminding people of faith that everyone will be judged on how they treat "the least" of society, she says, reflecting on God's promise in the scriptures. PCCY will hold Children's Sabbath celebrations at the Philadelphia Youth Studies Center, a detention facility that houses more than 100 mostly black, male juvenile offenders.

"When we think about our children, we cannot forget these children. They are the least," Rosemary says. "We want children to understand they are part of this nation and part of this universe, and that they

need our prayers and need to be lifted up. What the Children's Sabbaths celebrations do is tie these youths to something that is national. We will be joining them with people all across this country, and helping them understand they are connected to larger families."

And it is our link to those families, despite seeming differences, that help us feel needed and cherished, Rosemary says. "We all look different, we worship differently, we're tall, we're short, we're black, white, Indian, and Asian," she says. "Yet there is a basic thread that runs through all of us. The Children's Sabbaths help us bring everybody together to share and celebrate the com-

monality that we are all created by God."

The services at the center will be nondenominational and include clergy from a variety of faiths, says Rosemary, a Catholic. "There will be music and singing, and an opportunity for youths to offer a prayer, a wish, a blessing, or a statement about something or somebody they care about. We must allow them to take an active role in the service and keep reminding them of who they are despite the act that got them there. It is important for them to have some kind of commitment, to be open. On the other hand, we need to make a commitment to them that we adults will never betray them again."

But most important, Rosemary says, "we cannot just leave it there. We must find other ways to use Children's Sabbaths to network and help children. We must not only figure out ways to connect them, but we must maintain that connection."

The National Observance of Children's Sabbaths is held annually on the third weekend of October. Congregations can order kits from the Children's Defense Fund to help them plan celebrations for Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish congregations.

*Bennettsville, S.C., native MARIAN WRIGHT EDELMAN is the president of the Children's Defense Fund.*