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Reading list omits too much

GERALD O. JOHNSON

As I
See It



Recently I was handed a "Suggested Reading List" from a 12th grade class at West Charlotte High School. The nearly 200 books with 72 authors was made up of some classics, some interesting reading, and some junk. But what it did not include was any authors of African descent. The list was made up

primarily of European male authors.

I was somewhat shocked to see a suggested reading list that was so exclusive being presented to high school kids in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school system. I would have thought this striving-to-be world-class city kept up with such buzz words as "diversity" and "browning of America" and would have incorporated such concepts in the shaping of the minds of our young people.

Moreover, I would have thought parents who had an opportunity to see this list would have complained.

Even students of non-European descent should have asked the teacher about the obvious missing pages of the list. Maybe all of this has transpired and I just don't know about it.

But I have a personal problem with a list that would remotely suggest that the canon of reading material that would make one well-read is composed of predominantly European male authors. This sends the wrong message to young minds of people of non-European descent and females.

This type action can not be condoned and must be obviated as quickly as possible.

This is yet another example of why it is extremely important for parents to get involved and stay involved with their children's education. The innocent, subtle, little things can have just as much of a detrimental impact on our children's self esteem as the blatant things. But the subtle is more dangerous because it can easily go undetected.

Remember, if you forfeit your time to be involved, you forfeit your right to complain.

Peace.

GERALD O. JOHNSON is publisher of The Charlotte Post.

Food service flip-flop in North Carolina

By William Turner
WINSTON-SALEM CHRONICLE

Many grounds and housekeepers at North Carolina's public black colleges are like old professors, long tenured and cozy members of the communities. These 2,430 people — mostly blacks on the five predominantly black campuses — maintain the school's grounds and buildings and may be replaced by private contractors in a cost-cutting move, as recommended to the state by a consulting group. The unionized workers have organized to keep their jobs.

Last month, in an apparently unrelated, though just as ominous development, N.C. A&T State University ended its decade-long partnership in a model program of the state's interest to encourage and promote the use of minority-owned firms in the purchasing of goods and services. Shaw Food Services, black-owned and Fayetteville-based, operated five cafeterias on public historically black colleges until last month, when N.C. Central University also dropped its contract.

Fayetteville, Winston-Salem, and Elizabeth City State universities remain Shaw clients, as does Saint Augustine's College. Said company CEO, Evelyn O. Shaw — wife of state representative and state senate candidate, Larry Shaw — "Our historically black colleges and universities accounts are the backbone and heart of our business, although we do enjoy the benefits and prestige of operating the dining services of R.J. Reynolds in Winston-Salem."

The A&T and Shaw saga contains some very contentious elements and provides the most testy aspects of botched bidding protocols, accusations and impropriety, and claims and counterclaims about the ethics and even the legality of how the \$9 million A&T contract went from Shaw Foods to Marcorp, a white-owned Memphis-based company.

Were the studies fair?

At the center of the imbroglio is A&T student body president, Rasheed-Ali Cromwell, who "blew the whistle" in mid-August when the state purchasing office announced the three-year award to Shaw Foods. A&T students protested on the basis that while the state rated Shaw highest after visiting their RJR operation, they had recommended that one of two other vendors — Jakamont-Aramark (partly owned for former Atlanta mayor Maynard Jackson) or Marcorp get the contract.

In late August, the state's director of purchasing changed his mind about the earlier award to Shaw, saying that he "had newer and more complete information." It appears that the initial award to Shaw was grounded on summary bidding document submitted by A&T officials, which were neither complete nor submitted in a timely fashion.

However, the key issues lie far beneath and behind a series of system-wide studies conducted by the University of North Carolina administration on students' satisfaction with campus-based services. In one study, discussed in late 1994, of the 16 public UNC campuses, three HBCUs — where Shaw Foods held the contracts — ranked 11th, 15th, and 16th in the "percentage of students dissatisfied with food services." Even though less than 200 students from the five HBCUs responded to the survey, the "satisfaction" rankings were based on responses from all campuses.

Did a message go out to HBCUs (and Shaw Foods) from the General Administration, forewarning the end-game now, where Shaw has lost the A&T and Central contracts? Are students more likely to be satisfied with food services at the "big" campuses, where variety and name-brand concepts, such as Taco Bell and Pizza Hut, are commonplace? More specifically, is it fair to ask students at HBCUs the same questions about the quality of food as asked of students at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, Wilmington, Asheville, Greensboro and Chapel Hill? In fact, of course, students at different campuses pay different rates.

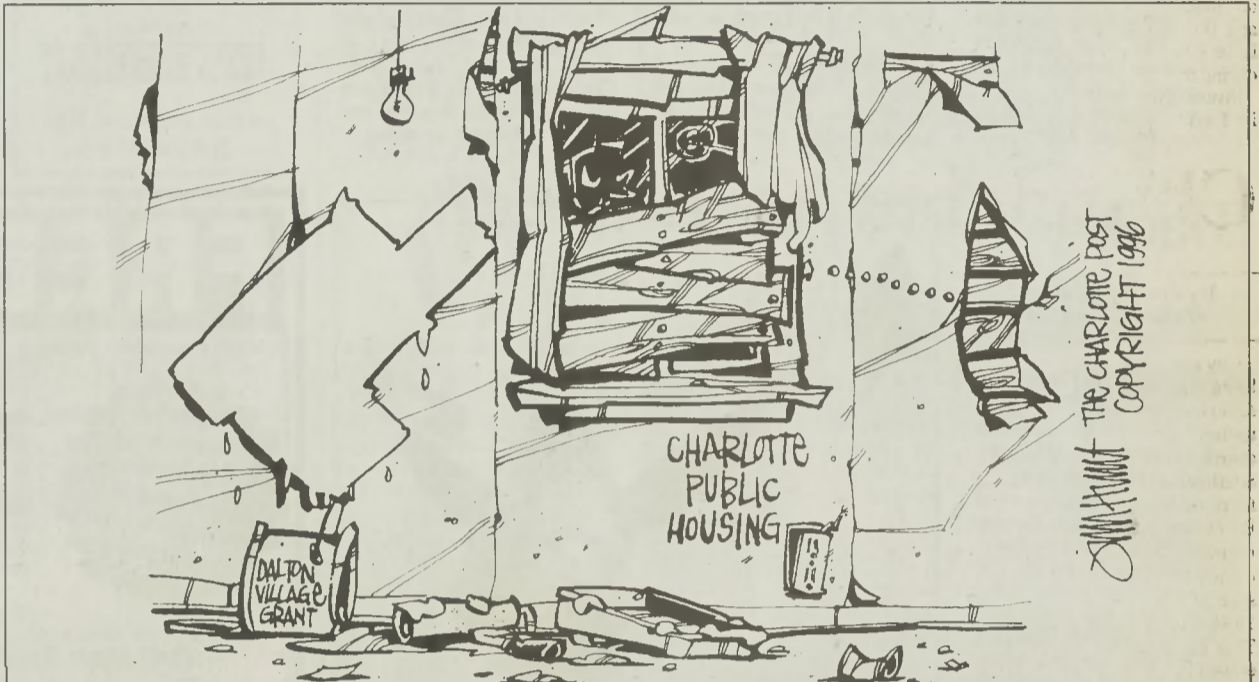
The Shaw Food Service contract at HBCUs, when benchmarked against nationally-based competitors — such as Marcorp and Marriott — is rife with considerations about contestants headed for the same goals on an uneven playing field. Fact is, there are clear differences in the ambiance of the physical facilities between white and black state supported colleges; thus, students at black colleges may have the perception that the food on their campus is worse.

Food money

In off-the-record discussions and in review of public documents acquired by the Chronicle, it appears that some schools opt for minimal menus, thereby not using the entire amount of money collected for meals on meals. The difference between what a campus collects and what it spends for food may be "eaten up" by other auxiliary services such as campus security. In those cases, what the food service vendor serves and uses to pay for equipment and repairs is determined by whether or not the university spends the full amount of the food service contract for food services. In effect, student's "dissatisfaction" may be Shaw's Catch-22.

Is the case of Shaw Food Service's loss of business at N.C. A&T and NCCU a call for alarm? You bet it is! Right along with the recommendation that state campuses "out source" housekeeping, Shaw Foods' integrity, if not impugned by the innuendo and undercurrents of this outcome, is at least temporarily set back, not to mention the real pocketbook impact the loss of the contract means to Shaw's Black workers at these campuses. Is this just the tip of the iceberg? In analytical terms, one is inclined to ask, rhetorically of course, if it is indeed true that "white folks'" ice is colder.

WILLIAM TURNER is a columnist with the Winston-Salem Chronicle.



A case for the U.S. presidency

By Ivan Alexander
SPECIAL TO THE POST

Having served in the United States Navy for six years, I grew to respect highly the tenets of honor, duty, and service. The precepts instilled a sense of responsibility and purpose, with duty being the most vital. Within the Military Code of Justice, duty acquired an ominous presence. "If it happens on your watch, you are guilty until proven innocent."

As civilians, we abide by the Constitution, in contrast to the Military Code of Justice. "We are innocent until proven guilty." However, our public officials should possess a sense of duty.

Through the means of war or the rumor thereof, military personnel preserve the paragons of democracy and freedom. Politically our elected officials have the responsibility to bolster the secrecy of our beliefs. It is their duty, when rumor or suspicion undermines our noble aims, to address our concerns.

The accusations of the CIA's

involvement in drug trafficking have been corroborated by Celerino Castillo III and Danilo Blandon Castillo, a former Drug Enforcement

Administration agent, is quoted as saying "...he sent reports to his agency about Contra drug flights in 1985 and 1986 and even spoke to U.S. Embassy officials about them." Continuing, "...he sent cables to Washington listing dates and plane numbers of drug flights out of Ilo Pango, a U.S. air base in El Salvador that the CIA officials used for logistical support of the Contras." Many of the flights, Castillo contended to then U.S. ambassador to El Salvador, Edwin Corr, were flown by American pilots hired by the Contra leaders. The response by Corr was that the flights were sanctioned by the White House.

The San Jose Mercury reported that between 1982 and 1986, thousands of kilos of cocaine flowed through the hands of Danilo Blandon, a former Nicaraguan government official into Los Angeles street gangs.

The trafficking was done to financially support the U.S.-backed Nicaraguan Contras. In 1992 Blandon pleaded guilty to drug trafficking charges and testified about his efforts to sell cocaine in the black community. In 1994 Blandon set up the drug bust that caught his American contact, Rick "Freeway" Ross, who is now serving a jail sentence. Ross introduced America to what is known as crack, a cheaper form of cocaine.

Until we see ourselves as a part of the problem, we will only see blame. No part of our society is unscathed by the flow of drugs. Hearing corroborated allegations that an American institution played a roll in our maelstrom is devastating. Factions will attempt to polarize the masses, and without mitigating actions, we will be caught between two extremes — one black, the other white. Ross was in a position to make a choice. Because we did not instill the ethics of determination and hard work, he and others like him are in pursuit of an illusive reality.

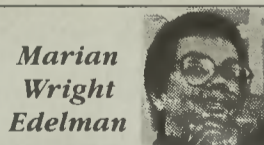
Our tomorrow begins today. We now have the opportunity to choose the individual who is to lead us into the millenium. The choices are juxtaposed as night and day. During their youth, one became a veteran while the other abstained from war. Their past should be an indication to what they envision as our collective future.

The conventions were where we listened to their platforms. One candidate supports the ideal of a general 15 percent tax cut, while the other mentions tax cuts for education. There is the message "You should not feel guilty about keeping your own money..." while "It does take a village to raise a child." The most powerful message concerns the rise of drug use among children, ending "...Clinton just doesn't get it."

Borrowing from the English poet Samuel Johnson, "It is our first duty to serve society, and, after we have done that, we may attend wholly to the salvation of our own souls."

IVAN ALEXANDER lives in Charlotte.

Freedom Schools motivate children



Marian
Wright
Edelman

Verneta White has witnessed the good that today's Freedom Schools do in children's lives. She recalls the troubled little boy whose behavior problems kept her and the rest of the staff at the Mt. Pleasant Freedom School in Kansas City, Mo., busier than normal in the summer of 1995. His mother struggled with drug addiction, and he didn't always get the supervision at home that children his age need. "We always had to tell him to please quit that, please sit, please read. We wondered if we were getting through," says White, who has served as a Freedom School intern for the past two years.

This summer, says White, the

boy's mother didn't get the notice that Freedom School was starting, but he came back on his own. "He told me he came back because someone cares," she says. "He made the effort to come back to where something positive was happening. And he really wants to read."

More than 1,400 children in low-income communities in 10 states and the District of Columbia found wholesome education, recreation, and nutrition at 27 Freedom Schools this summer. (Some Freedom Schools continue as after-school programs during the school year). Inspired by the Freedom Schools created in the South during the civil rights movement, the six-to-eight-week summer program, sponsored by the Black Community Crusade for Children, was developed in 1992. The schools are designed to be both fun and educational, with lots of reading and supervised play. Nutritious

meals and snacks are provided by the USDA Summer Food Service Program. Parents are encouraged to participate.

In addition, children are taught how to resolve their disagreements in constructive ways. The interns help the children, who range in age from 5 through 18, think about the consequences of violence and the benefits of nonviolent alternatives.

Freedom Schools are staffed by a dedicated corps of 200 college students and college-age young adults. These young people, some of whom are members of the Black Student Leadership Network, are trained each summer at the Ella Baker Child Policy Training Institute housed at the former farm of author Alex Haley, in Clinton, Tenn. The interns say their hard work is richly rewarded by the changes they see in the children who come to the Freedom Schools.

The children's grades "went up tremendously," says Walter McDonald, who served as an intern in the Mt. Pleasant Freedom School in 1995 and 1996. During the past school year, he and other interns kept in touch with some of the children through cards and letters, encouraging them to do well in school. This year, those children "feel pretty good about themselves," says McDonald. "They gail self-esteem from the way we carry ourselves and the way we talk to them and tell them, they're somebody. We have career days, get them thinking about becoming a doctor or a teacher."

For most of the children, this is the first time they've known someone who is in college, says Shylee Holmes-Leverett, site coordinator at Mt. Pleasant.

South Carolina native MARIAN WRIGHT EDELMAN is president of the Children's Defense Fund.