

## The Charlotte Post

The Voice of the Black Community

A Consolidated Media Group publication  
1531 Camden Road Charlotte, N.C. 28203

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# Just chillin' and grillin'

By James Clingman.  
SPECIAL TO THE POST

Just Chillin' and Grillin.' Commanding millions and probably billions of dollars, our young people, especially men, have brought a whole new meaning to those two terms.

In the parlance of the past chillin' meant "cooling out" or "relaxing." Grillin', of course, meant "cooking out."

From what I saw on two television stations owned by media giant, Viacom, and mostly watched by Black teens and even younger children, those terms have moved to a much higher level. They have taken on a connotation that would have our youth thinking about and reaching for an endless, meaningless, and senseless level of economic empowerment. It's what Amos Wilson calls, "Dreams without Means." It's what I call, "Means without Ends."

The two TV shows, running simultaneously, lionized so-called "thugs" by introducing us to their "ice" and their "grills" (As if Crips and How I'm Livin' aren't enough).

On one show a beautiful, well endowed, young sister was interviewing several "thugs" about their medallions, bracelets, rings, and those diamond-ensconced, clock-sized watches they wear on their wrists. I think it was titled Bling-Bling. It should have been titled, Cha-Ching.



Clingman

One by one these young brothers flaunted their diamond-studded medallions, large enough to be hubcaps, and probably weighing enough to cause serious neck damage.

They call it "ice," and they have lots of it. Their rings made those you see worn by professional athletes who win championships look like something from a Cracker Jack box. Their bracelets looked large enough to serve as weights; maybe that's why their arms are so big. And, man, those things around their necks. One was not only huge but it was spinning, just like those wheel rims we see; it had so many diamonds in it the brother didn't even know how many there were.

The sister was impressed though; boy was she impressed. One of the guys, who happened to be White, gave her one of those necklaces as a gift. He just happened to have an extra one in his pocket.

One enthusiastic brother bragged about how much one of his medallions cost. That's right; he had several around his neck, as if one just wouldn't do the trick. He said, "Dis one is five figures." Then he reached down and lifted up another one and said, "Dis one is in da high five-figures." I wondered if he really knew how high. As he displayed his "ice," he was definitely proud of the things he had spent his money on, and the sister was just speechless, obviously blinded by the light of all that "ice" and all the Bling-Bling on display next to her.

It was a sight to behold, especially those necklaces. Is what we are seeing from these young brothers the result of that guy who wore the clock around his next in the rap group, Public Enemy. Flava Flav is his name. Look at the trend you started, brother Flav. They ought to be paying you royalties.

On the other channel, just when I thought I had seen it all, I got a lesson in oral surgery and dental prosthetics. I also got a lesson in economic empowerment and economic enslavement as I watched brother after brother strut their stuff by letting the camera go right into their mouths to check out their "grills."

This was really amazing. Some of the brothers had front teeth missing, but they still had gold on the ones they had left. They had diamonds in white gold settings, designs that would make one of those New York fashion designers quiver, and they moved well beyond the one gold tooth fad of their father's generation. They did their entire mouth. Oh yeah, I'm sorry, their entire "grill."

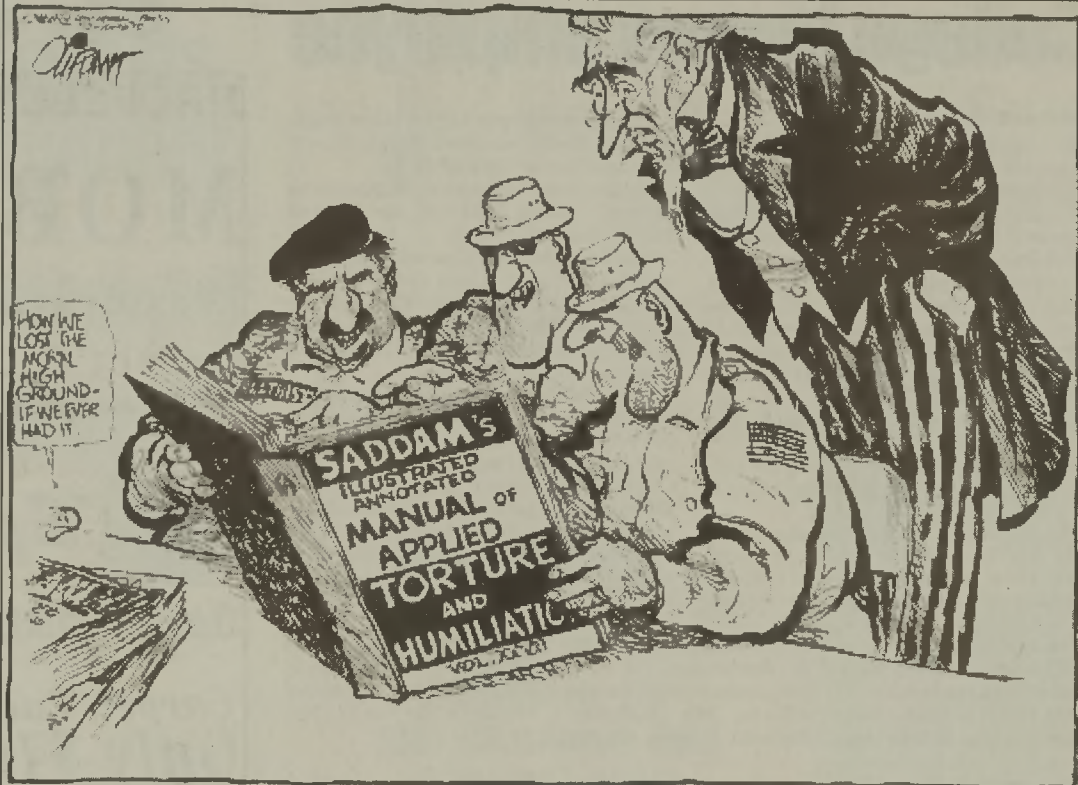
One brother even said, "I got so much money, I can put it in my mouth." But then came the dénouement, the coup de grace, the final solution. They introduced the dentist who creates all of those "grill" masterpieces. I guess we could call him the "Grill Master." Quite appropriately, his name is Dr. Cunning. As one brother hugged his "master" dentist, Dr. Cunning told the viewers how he was just pleased as punch to a "homey" and that if his boyz wanted their grills done at 2 o'clock in the morning he would get up and go take care of business. After all, he is an artist, y'all. Did I mention Dr. Cunning is White?

Claud Anderson has a saying, "Black people can't even do wrong right," which is certainly the case with our chillin' and grillin' generation. If they have to get their grills and their ice-covered bling-bling on, at least they could let a Black dentist or sales person hook 'em up and make that outrageous commission and profit from their ridiculous purchasing habits. If we are going to be economic slaves, we should at least be economically enslaved to one another. You know what I'm sayin'?

I was saddened as I watched those two shows. I saw our young people being sucked into the abyss of economic enslavement, finding their value in baubles, gold teeth, and obligatory tattoos. I also saw a generation, neglected by many of its elders and by some of its leaders, earning untold sums of money only to give it right back to the very people who hold them in disdain. How misguided they are. How misguided we have allowed them to be.

Could it be that "chillin'" really means we are cold, even dead? And, could "grillin'" really mean we are burning? You draw your own conclusions.

JAMES E. CLINGMAN, a professor at the University of Cincinnati, is former editor of the Cincinnati Herald and founder of the Greater Cincinnati African American Chamber of Commerce.



## Putting athletics ahead of academics

GEORGE E. CURRY



Two years ago, the Baltimore Sun filed a federal Freedom of Information request with the University of Maryland to obtain a copy of the contracts of the school's football and basketball coaches. The university, a tax-supported institution, fought the request. Last week, the Maryland Court of Appeals ordered the school to release the documents. Now, we know why the University of Maryland tried to keep them secret.

Both basketball coach Gary Williams and football coach Ralph Friedgen are guaranteed annual salaries of more than \$1 million. Various incentive clauses allow them to earn at least another \$400,000 each year.

To put these salaries in perspective, consider this: Clayton D. Mote, the president of the University of Maryland's flagship campus at College Park, earns \$337,999 per year. William E. Kirwan, the chancellor of the University of Maryland system, earns \$375,000. And Robert L. Ehrlich Jr., the poverty-stricken governor of Maryland, earns \$140,000.

Something is wrong with this picture.

Why should football and basketball coaches earn three times more than the

university president? Why should they earn 10 times more than long-serving full professors? Equally important, what message does this send to the students who are under the illusion that the role of a university in a democratic society is to educate its populace, not to serve as a farm system for the National Football League and the National Basketball Association?

In defending the high salaries, Athletic Director Debbie Yow told the Baltimore Sun, "We want Ralph to be competitive with the other ACC coaches who are doing great things, and we want Gary to be competitive with the other basketball coaches who are achieving at high levels."

In fairness to Williams and Friedgen, they are not even the highest paid coaches in their conference. Williams trails Duke's Mike Krzyzewski and Fiedgen earns less than Florida State's Bobby Bowden and Virginia Tech's Frank Beamer. In football, LSU's Nick Saban, after leading his team to a shared national championship (with USC) last season, is guaranteed at least \$2.3 million annually. Both Bowden of Florida State and Bob Stoops of Oklahoma earn more than \$2 million a year.

In basketball, Kentucky's Tubby Smith has an eight-year, \$20 million contract, and Louisville's Rick Pitino has a six-year, \$12.4 million deal.

Clearly, Williams and Friedgen are collecting what the market will bear. That's the American way. But is it the right way?

I think teachers, not coaches, should be the highest paid workers in society. Everyone who excels in life can attribute part of that success to smart, caring, dedicated teachers — from pre-school to graduate school — who enjoy imparting knowledge to students. Where would we be without them? Increasingly, teachers are working in financially-strapped districts that don't even provide them with basic supplies. Consequently, they dig into their own wallets or purses to augment limited school supplies.

And we reward them by complaining: Today's teachers are not as good as those in the old days. Anyone worth his/her salt wouldn't go into teaching. Teachers are merely collecting a paycheck. Instead of being grateful that these dedicated people decided to enter the teaching profession, knowing they could make more money elsewhere, many of us ridicule them, take them for granted or, even worse, don't think about them at all.

The disclosure of the University of Maryland coaches' contracts proves that at the college level, at least, we place more emphasis on what athletes do on the football field or basketball court than how students

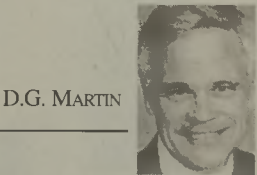
perform in the classroom. As a society, we ought to be ashamed. President Bush should worry about this disparity rather than the use of steroids in athletics. Let's get our priorities straight.

A look at the contracts reveals the extent to which the coaches are pampered. One would think that anyone earning more than \$1 million a year could afford to purchase his own automobile. But, no, coaches need allowances for that as well. So Friedgen gets a \$12,000 annual automobile allowance while Williams gets only \$8,000. Overall, Williams can earn up to \$1,871,021 and Friedgen \$1,469,000, when you count all of the shoes and broadcast deals.

I want to make a modest proposal. No coach should make more than 50 percent of what the president of the university earns. In the case of Maryland, that would still be more than \$175,000 a year. If the governor of the state can get by on \$140,000, surely a coach can squeak by on \$175,000 a year. If nothing else, adopting my proposal would prove that we don't put athletics ahead of academics.

GEORGE E. CURRY is editor-in-chief of the NNPA News Service and BlackPressUSA.com. His most recent book is "The Best of Emergent Magazine," an anthology published by Ballantine Books. He can be reached through his Web site, georgecurry.com.

## What is John Edwards running for?



D.G. MARTIN

Is John Edwards running for vice president?

That question, which is always on the minds of North Carolina political observers, came back into the news last week. The North Carolina Democratic Party announced officially that Edwards won 57 delegates to the party's national convention. Also, Edwards traveled to South Carolina where he got a warm welcome from Democrats in the state where he was born and where he won his only primary victory.

Neither of these stories would have gotten much notice if Edwards were not still running for something.

So, is Edwards running for

vice president?

The answer is "no."

John Edwards is still running for president — just not in 2004.

Becoming the Democratic nominee for vice president, and perhaps being elected to that office in November, might be a steppingstone to his objective. But his eye is on the bigger prize.

By the way, it is not certain that the vice presidency is a good place from which to run for the highest office. Vice President George Bush, the elder, was elected president. Al Gore almost did it. But, before them, you have to go back to Martin Van Buren, Thomas Jefferson, and John Adams, to find sitting vice presidents who were elected presidents.

Several recent vice presidents did become president—but not by election. Teddy Roosevelt, Cal Coolidge, Harry Truman, and Lyndon Johnson became

president upon the death of the President. Gerald Ford, when Richard Nixon resigned. Nixon, who lost the presidency when he was a sitting vice president, later won the office by beating Lyndon Johnson's vice president, Hubert Humphrey.

Former vice presidents, other than Nixon, have not had much luck winning the presidency. Walter Mondale, who had been Jimmy Carter's vice president, lost to Ronald Reagan in 1984. Former Vice President Dan Quayle failed to get his party's nomination. Henry Wallace (Roosevelt's vice president before Harry Truman) ran unsuccessfully as a third party candidate in 1948. Truman's vice president, Alben Barkley, was an unsuccessful candidate for his party's nomination in 1952.

What about the Joe Liebermans of presidential history? Does it help to be

the vice presidential nominee on a losing ticket? Not in Lieberman's case. Nor did it lead to success for Ed Muskie, Hubert Humphrey's vice presidential running mate in 1968. Muskie lost the Democratic nomination in 1972.

Although Bob Dole lost to Bill Clinton in 1996, his place on Gerald Ford's losing ticket in 1976 probably helped him gain a national platform from which he finally gained his party's presidential nomination 20 years later.

There are no sure, or necessary, steppingstones to the presidency — neither the Senate, nor a vice presidential nomination. Edwards will find his way into the public eye over the next four (and eight) years whether or not he is the nominee for vice president.

D.G. MARTIN hosts "North Carolina Bookwatch" on UNC-TV.