

The Charlotte Post

The Voice of the Black Community

1531 Camden Road Charlotte, N.C. 28203

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MATTERS OF OPINION

Another conspiracy against us by our own

There's a conspiracy to block access to films of substance or films that might educate minority communities by movie executives and big business.

These same people are also the reason why we only get certain types of films in our local theaters. While often times the people who hatch up these plots don't look like you or me or live where we live, the people who carry this injustice out do.

Having been so busy with work, on a recent Friday night I found myself with enough down time to catch up on a long list of movies that I wanted to see. Always one to try and keep the dollars in my community, where else would I look first but to Magic Johnson's theater.



JASMYNE CANNICK

At the top of my list was the independent film "Wal-mart. The High Cost of Low Price," a feature length documentary that reveals the effects of Wal-Mart on low income families and communities across the nation, followed by the PG rated "Good Night and Good Luck," starring George Clooney as one of the icons of American broadcast journalism, Edward R. Murrow. I also wanted to see North County starring Charlize Theron, which deals with America's most groundbreaking sexual harassment lawsuits and the newly released Jarhead, starring Academy Award Winner Jamie Foxx.

Perhaps because the movies on my list do require participation in the form of thinking from the audience, they were not included in the roster of screenings at the Magic Johnson Theater located five minutes from my house in the "black and brown" part of town. Instead I was faced with selecting from three romance films "The Legend of Zorro," "G," "Roll Bounce," three horror films "Doom," "The Fog," "Saw II," two children's films, "Chicken Little," "Wallace & Grommit: The Curse of the Were-Rabbit," and of course, a religious-themed film "The Gospel." To the theater's credit they did have "Jarhead," which I assume made the list because of Jamie Foxx and for no other reason.



Johnson

In order for me to see any of the other films on my list, it was clear to me that I was going to have to take my dollars outside of my community, which is often the case whenever I want to see a movie of any substance. But that doesn't make it right and it's time we had a candid conversation about the access of minority communities to non-violence themed within our own community.

It is wrongly assumed by the "powers that be," that the only films we're interested in are films with extreme violence, religious themed, or of course children's films. How else do you explain dedicating three screens to "The Passion of the Christ" and the lack of any films that are remotely educational in our theaters? This is especially true with the release of 50 Cent's upcoming film "Get Rich Or Die Tryin'" and all of the well deserved criticism of Paramount Pictures for advertising gun violence and gun glorification in minority communities. How many screens do you think Magic Johnson Theater's is going to allocate to this film, two, three, maybe even four?

Few remember the 1998 controversy starring Magic Johnson himself involving Hype Williams' film "Belly." Starring Nas and DMX as New York gangsters, Magic Johnson banned the screening of Belly for portraying negative images of black men.

Now flash forward seven years and apparently Magic is okay with having films shown in his theaters that depict black men as gangsters and glorify gun violence. Why? Because there is an orchestrated plot against us not only by the movie executives but by our own people, in this case Magic Johnson, to keep us killing each other. It's as simple and plain as that and we play right into their hands when we dutifully trek up to the theater to see these films. Mind you, there will be theaters that won't even offer "Get Rich Or Die Tryin'" to avoid having us as patrons.

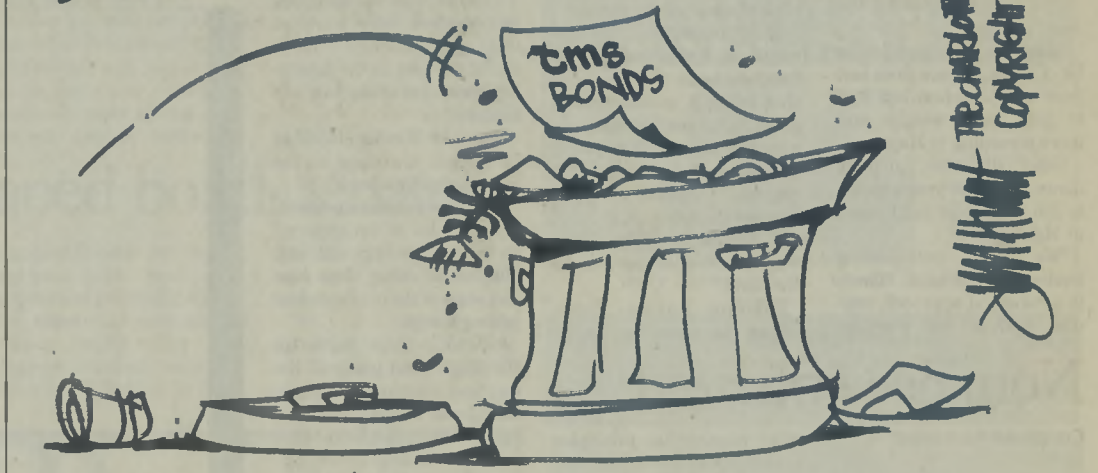
So while reporters tell us about the most recent deaths due to gang and gun violence in our communities this week, the entertainment industry is poisoning itself for "Get Rich Or Die Tryin'" to be hailed as the number one film of the week and for millions of dollars in revenue. The irony will be that many of the deaths reported this week from gun violence will be of black and brown people and many of the dollars reported in revue for this film will also be from black and brown people.

If we really want to make changes and improvements in our community, we are going to have to start with small but significant things like demanding that certain films are not shown in our community and that certain films are shown in our community. As it stands now, the only time we can see a foreign or independent film is in February during the Pan African Film and Arts Festival. We deserve access to good films all year long, like other communities.

At the start of each screening at the Magic Johnson Theater there's a trailer starring Magic where he says we can laugh and cry and stuff our faces full of our popcorn in our own neighborhood. Sadly, this isn't true for those people who want to see decent films. No, we must still go out of our way and out of our neighborhood to see films of substance. When will this madness end?

JASMYNE CANNICK is a social and political commentator and a member of the National Association of Black Journalists. She can be reached via her website at www.jasmyne.cannick.com

RIGHT INTO THE CIRCULAR BALLOT BOX...



Blueprint to rebuilding a black college

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. — Eight years ago, Knoxville College, my alma mater, lost its accreditation for the first time since the historically black institution was established in 1875. Usually, the loss of accreditation is a death knell for colleges, with most of them closing their doors within three years after falling from grace.



GEORGE E. CURRY

But Knoxville College has refused to die. And how it has remained alive without accreditation since 1997 can provide a future blueprint for saving troubled historically black colleges.

And they are worth saving. Black colleges represent only 3 percent of the nation's colleges and universities yet produce 24 percent of all African-Americans earning bachelors degrees. Black colleges represent nine of the top 10 colleges that graduate students who go on to earn a Ph.D. And of the top five colleges that produce students who are accepted into medical school, four of them — 80 percent — are historically black colleges.

Although it has never had a journalism program, Knoxville College has pro-

duced numerous notable journalists. They include: Vernon Jarrett, the first black columnist for the Chicago Tribune and former president of the National Association of Black Journalists; Barbara Rodgers, anchor for KPIX in San Francisco; my first professional job was as a reporter for Sports Illustrated and Ralph Wiley, who also wrote for SI and appeared regularly on ESPN. I served as president of the American Society of Magazine Editors, making Knoxville College the only institution to have had its alumni head both NABJ and ASME.

That's just Knoxville's track record in journalism. Similar lists could be compiled for other fields and would include the late "Jake" Gaither, the legendary Florida A&M football coach who won more than 85 percent of his games over a 25-year period; Dr. Edith Irby Jones, the first female president of the National Medical Association; Tuskegee, Ala. Mayor Johnny Ford and Green Bay Packers defensive tackle Grady Jackson.

After KC lost its accreditation, board Chair Jack LeFlore recruited a half-dozen of us to join the board in an effort to regain the school's footing. In addition to rejuvenating the board of trustees, the next step was to

reinvent Knoxville College. This, perhaps more than anything else, is why it's still surviving today.

Prodded by LeFlore, Knoxville College became and remains the nation's only historically black work college. Students can attend college for \$5,600 per academic year. Of that amount, students pay a total of \$2,800, with the other \$2,800 subsidized by grants and income from businesses that participate in the work program. When students graduate, they begin their careers virtually debt-free (For more information on the work program, go to www.knoxvillecollege.edu or contact the admissions office at (865) 524-5502, 524-5625 or 524-6500).

The change in leadership has transformed the atmosphere on campus. Students and faculty praised the decision, inactive alumni have stepped up their contributions and we are now able to attract people to the board who were unwilling to serve before. Recent board additions include Gregory L. Turner, chief financial officer of Oak Ridge Laboratory; Darrell Akins, former chief executive officer of the Greater Knoxville Chamber of Commerce and vice chairman of the Tennessee Independent Colleges and Universities Association; Rev.

James Foster Reese, a nationally-known pastor and the first director of the next Presbyterian Church's (USA) Racial and Ethnic Ministry Unit, and Nancy Cochran, a local business leader. Under the leadership of Ronald Damper, a Chicago businessman, the board is now stronger and more diverse than ever.

We're not yet out of the woods. The national alumni association has launched a \$1 million campaign for the next year (it has raised almost \$300,000 of that goal in three months), the Tom Joyner Foundation continues to come to our aid, student recruitment is being expanded and a team is in place to focus on regaining accreditation. Even without accreditation, KC students have been able to enroll in Ivy League graduate schools and get hired by Fortune 500 companies.

If we've been able to stay alive eight years without accreditation, just imagine what Knoxville College will be like after we regain it.

GEORGE E. CURRY is editor-in-chief of the NNPA News Service and BlackPressUSA.com. He appears on National Public Radio as part of "News and Notes with Ed Gordon." To contact Curry or to book him for a speaking engagement, go to www.georgecurry.com.

'Minority' rules for disenfranchisement

I know you have heard the clamor about minority groups not getting their fair share of the reconstruction dollars being spent in New Orleans.



JAMES CLINGMAN

Headline articles abound across this country disclosing the unfairness that is being perpetrated against minorities in New Orleans. Apparently white folks are taking over, giving no-bid contracts to their buddies. "Vice" president Cheney came in to survey the damage to see what he could channel to his company, Halliburton, and all of the other players are there already working and making millions while the newspaper headlines continue to say, "Minorities not getting in on the action in New Orleans."

Newsflash! I beg to differ. Minorities are, that's right, I said they "are" getting their fair share of the economic benefits from the reconstruction of The Big Easy. The newspapers, advocacy groups, television news shows and radio shows, politicians, and social activists are all wrong and dead wrong on this one.

As a matter of fact, in New Orleans the principle of majority rule has been surpassed by "Minority Rules," which has taken over and assured the minority will reap bountifully from the devastation of black people in

that city. How is that possible?

Here's how. The New Orleans black population is 67 percent; at least it was before the hurricane. My math tells me that's a "majority." Thus, simply put, white folks are the minority in that city. White folks are getting more than their fair share of the contracts, business opportunities, and employment. In other words, the minority rules in New Orleans, brothers and sisters. But, don't feel like you're alone, New Orleans' minority rules are in full effect in Detroit too — and other cities.

What we see in New Orleans is exactly why I rail so much against this word, "minority." It is totally ridiculous for us to allow ourselves to be placed in that category under any circumstances, but even more so in this instance. We find ourselves giving in to being called minorities and complaining about not receiving equitable treatment in a city that has a majority black population. Even though black folks are the majority, they — and we — are acting like minorities. So stop complaining about the minorities not getting their share of the money in New Orleans. Believe me, they are getting their share, and most of your share, too.

Let me be very frank by saying it is just plain stupid for black people to continue to submit to such disparate treatment, all under the guise of minority programs, and accept being called

minorities. It is even more stupid, insulting, and demeaning for black people (or should I have used a small ibi there?) to use the term to describe themselves. We have blacks in my hometown who use the term all the time, but they are the gatekeepers and the Hayward Shepards of our town. They are always the ones who are "selected" and put in charge of the minority programs and the minority inclusion initiatives. But, as I said in my first book on economic empowerment, "We deserve what we accept."

Here we are in 2005 accepting some silly classification called "minority" and now are paying dearly for it in New

Orleans as we subscribe to what the newspapers are printing: "Minorities not getting their fair share of construction contracts in New Orleans." If they mean blacks are not getting their fair share, why don't they just say that? Is it because "minority" is less acerbic, less pointed, less threatening?

As we can plainly see in cities like New Orleans, Detroit, Washington, D.C., Atlanta, and others, unless black people write our own "minority rules," the real minority will always rule us.

JAMES E. CLINGMAN is an adjunct professor at the University of Cincinnati and former newspaper editor.

LETTERS

Rosa Parks quietly made a difference for all Americans

Rosa Parks didn't use trash talk. Nor did she dress in gangsta style clothing. She simply conducted herself in a mature and dignified manner, through which she left her mark on the world.

All of us could look to Rosa Parks as an example to emulate. The best way to preserve her legacy would be simply to ask a four word question prior to taking any action: What would Rosa do?

Stephen V. Gilmore
Charlotte

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