

## Nat Irvin's response

**NEWSARGUS NEWS EDITOR JANELL J. LEWIS:**

What is your reaction to the readers reactions? Do you still feel the same way now? Would you change anything about the article now that you have received various opinions and more information about your views?

**MR. NAT IRVIN:** I'm not surprised by the reaction that I received. A lot of people care about the university [WSSU].

I wanted to get the attention of young students.

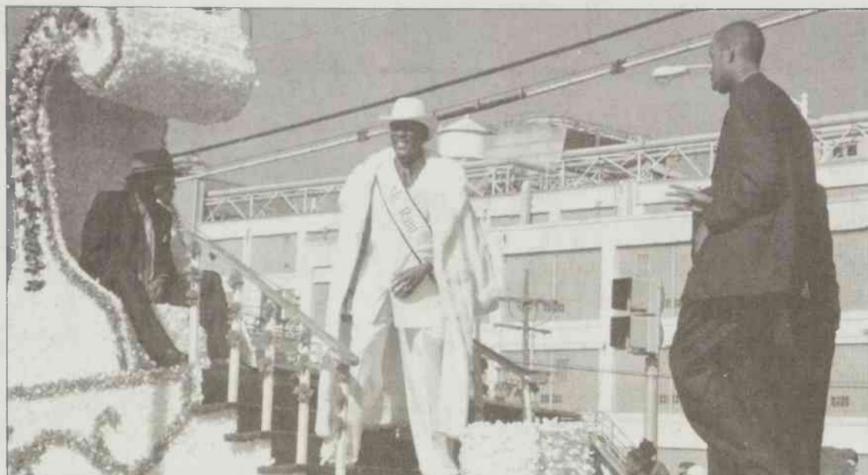
There's been an extraordinary response ... I've probably gotten about 65 [plus] letters ... probably 90 percent of the letters I received saw things the way I saw them.

A lot of letters reflected graduate's awareness of image in the future and this is a very serious matter. It is not a matter for the faculty or the administration — this is something for the students.

We've got to get past the emotion [we feel about the article] and get analytical and critical.

I'm a futurist and that's what I do — study the future of people ... I can tell you that the most important currency in the future, will be image.

Nat Irvin was debating on if he should write the article, but said, I was confronted by an older, elderly woman — she was about 90 — and she asked why was he [Alan Brown] wearing that ... I owed it to anybody who helped build that school [to write the article].



This Argus photograph is similar to one that appeared in the *Winston-Salem Journal*. Photo courtesy of the News Argus

## Alan Brown's response

**NEWSARGUS EDITOR-IN-CHIEF NICOLE FERGUSON:**

What is your reaction to Nat Irvin's column he published Nov. 9 in the *Winston-Salem Journal* concerning your attire in the Winston-Salem State University Homecoming parade?

**MR. ALAN BROWN:**

Anyone that knows me knows that I am a happy, free-spirited person. The smallest things just make me excited. People thought that something this big would automatically bring me down, but it didn't. I feel happy they were talking about my coat. That means I made a good investment.

I'm just somewhat shocked with him [Irvin] being a professional, an educator at Wake Forest and a former administrator of WSSU, and having sons of his own, that he would write this. If anything I would think he'd be trying to uplift youth and accentuate the positive. Now if I was on the float with my pants hangin' down or huge earrings on, or maybe if my dreads weren't clean, what would we say about me then?

There's a grand possibility that he [Irvin] was trying to prove a point that we need to look at ourselves, and I was a good tool in which to do that. Maybe he said that this is a great person with a great soul and a great spirit and maybe I can use him he wouldn't take offense. And if his intentions were to "bring us down" to lift us up and make the average person attentive to his issue, he did just that. He lifted us up, and made us come together and become attentive.

# What's the FUSS?

By Nat Irvin  
JOURNAL COLUMNIST

"Celebrating Their Achievements," read the caption above the picture of three members of the 2003-04 Mr. Ram Homecoming Court, as they rode through downtown Winston-Salem during Winston-Salem State University's homecoming parade.

But when I saw the brightly colored picture prominently displayed in the *Winston-Salem Journal*, I cringed.

These were not academic achievements, as one might have hoped. Instead Mr. Ram was dressed as a pimp, decked out in a full-length white fur coat, red leather suit

This is a reprint of Nat Irvin's column, "Mr. Ram: Celebrated the Worst of Stereotypes," originally published in the Nov. 9 Sunday edition of the *Winston-Salem Journal*

and white hat. In 80-degree weather no less, waving to the crowd, looking for all the world like the Mack Daddy or Superfly, an escapee from one of the black exploitation films of the '70s. The only thing missing was a bottle of hip-hop Nelly's Pimp Juice, which just last month went on store shelves in many urban communities, and the music

of rapper 50 Cent screaming, "Ho make the pimp rich, I ain't payin' bitch."

Some will point fingers at the *Journal* for having selected from among the many images in the homecoming parade the one that perpetuated the worst of black stereotypes. But such criticism misses the point entirely.

A culture of violence What students should be asking themselves is much more fundamental: Why do they find it necessary to celebrate pimp culture, when it is the pimp who is directly associated with slapping, beating, denigrating, abusing and otherwise misusing their mothers

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## Campus Voices

What was your reaction to the opinion article printed in the *Winston-Salem Journal* by Mr. Nat Irvin?

"I feel that he stereotyped the Mr. Ram float and organization, because I didn't feel like they were portraying pimps; They were portraying a certain time period when many people did dress like that."



— Hezekiah Cunningham-Bey, junior, mass communications

"In reading the article, I found that it's bigger than Mr. Ram. A lot of people got the misconception that he's talking about Mr. Ram, but he's actually talking about all WSSU students. It's definitely an eye-opener."



— Corry Ruffin, Location Manager (Aramark), Alum

"I felt it was unfortunate that out of all the positive activities that went on during homecoming, he noted a negative aspect. However, it does emphasize to the public and students, how much public appearance reflects on people's perspectives of you."



— Felisha Davis, senior, business administration, marketing

"My response to the article was that no matter the approach of the writer, whether or not it was wrong or right, I feel now, it's the responsibility of the WSSU student population to work harder to supply people with evidence to confirm that this picture is not an image that represents us [the black race, WSSU students]. Basically, I believe it's a wake-up call, but I felt like he [Nat Irvin] went about it the wrong way and his approach was unfair to use."



— Heather Davis, senior, business management

"We have to realize that as students and as black people, we are attached to image and history. You have a historical responsibility to know who we are, where we come from, and where we need to go. You have a historical responsibility to know something about your history. You cannot live in ignorance. You must be aware of tradition. Every culture and generation should know something about their people, their past, and their traditions ... whether good or bad."



— Dr. Michael Brookshaw, Associate Professor, Spanish

"I think Mr. Irvin is off base ... he has installed himself as the "fashion police" and it's an unfair attack on the student dress and it is not a representation of Mr. Alan Brown. Mr. Brown dresses with a lot of style, daily. My generation dressed like that and we were not addressing the "pimp culture." Today, people like the legendary Ronald Isley dress like that and it isn't glorified that way. I think it is deployable and I think he's totally off base."



"In the past, Mr. Irvin has criticized those who oppose conservatives like him as a part of the "thought police." He now has established himself as the "Fashion Police" [Alan] Brown is an "old-school" dresser. "He's a throwback to my era of dress."

"People have a right to self-expression; It's unfortunate; he does a disservice to Mr. Brown and to the students and to the public."

"I find his views and Clarence Thomas' views in opposing affirmative action to be troubling and dangerous to black people."

— Dr. Larry Little, professor, political science

— compiled by Janell J. Lewis