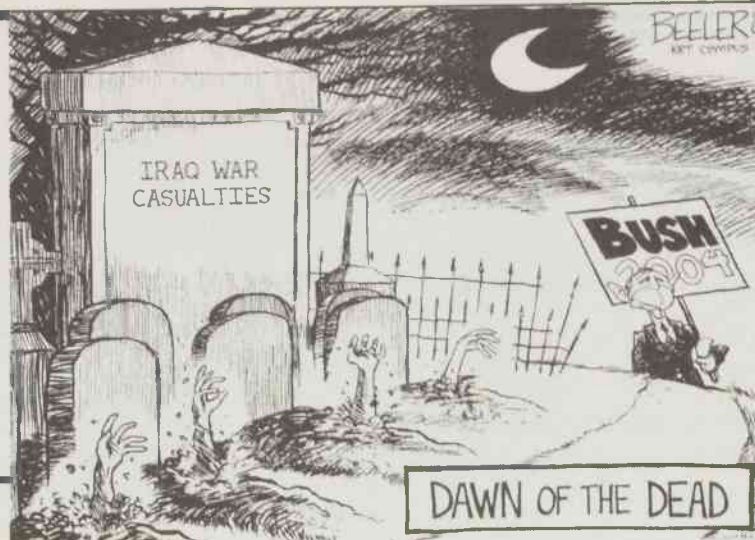


# Opinions & EDITORIALS



From the Editor

## Mass Communication conference challenges, inspires Argus editor

It's important for people to have what I call and "eye-opening reality check" every once and a while. I received one last weekend.

I take great pride in my love for and dedication to the field of journalism. That's why I was elated to find out I was one of three WSSU students chosen for the National Association of Black Journalists broadcast short course.

NABJ hosted this course on the campus of North Carolina A&T State



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University. Black college students from different campuses, including Temple University, N.C. State, Hampton, Middle Tennessee and others were chosen for the program.

In three days, we were taught the ends and outs of broadcast news operations and afforded the opportunity to produce our own newscast which aired on WXII-12 for the first time in history.

I learned TV lingo last weekend.

Ask about VOs, VOSOTVO, OTS, tite

shots, 3-shots, A block, B block, C block, and I can tell you.

Ask me the meanings of the acronyms of government organizations, and I'll tell you.

Ask me what's going on in the news today, and I'll tell you. Now ask me what else I learned. I can tell you the answer to that is I've got a long ways to go before I can claim to be the best at what I do.

Even though I try to stay on top of the news game, I realized that in the competitive news industry, there's no room for ignorance. When I say igno-

rance, I simply mean not knowing. I was challenged with working with some of the best students journalists in the country who happened to look like me, and we all learned that we had plenty of room to learn, especially from each other. I went into the conference confident, cocky you could say.

I came out humbled with a willingness to learn more than I ever had before.

When you take the time to enrich yourself on the field you want to go into, you have the opportunity to evaluate yourself and give yourself a thumbs up for what you know, while continuing

to hunger for the knowledge of the things you don't.

Have a goal. Find a plan and make it happen. If you don't have experience in what you want to do, get some, because these days it's the game in which we play is that of the survival of the fittest and no one is willing to wait for you to catch up.

I encourage everyone, especially my mass communications colleagues, to attend hands-on conferences like the one NABJ hosted. Most fields in the working world are constantly evolving. Will you and your mind evolve with them?

## HIV: It's time to address the real problem

By Keith Caesar  
SPECIAL TO THE ARGUS

Recently a note was left for the *News Argus* office by an unidentified person. The person left an editorial which appeared in the *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*.

The title of the article, "Blacks flee gays, can't flee AIDS." The unidentified person wrote that we should print the article, because the colleges should know.

Now this disease which was considered a disgrace a decade ago is now an epidemic, which Black America doesn't know how to handle.

What once was seen as a gay disease has now become everybody disease. We can no longer say that we have not come in contact with a person which is infected.

Black America, accounts for 12 percent of the population and 54 percent of all new HIV cases. Recent statistics show that at least 56 college students in North Carolina have been diagnosed with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. A good portion of them are black males.

Let's face it, we all know there's a problem out there and there are some who feel that it doesn't apply to them.

The full scope of this illness is one which cannot easily be remedied.

Many of these cases are said to have been related to men having sex with men. This exposes one thing which is prevalent, not only on the campuses of North Carolina, but on university and college campuses around the nation.

Some might argue that there is a great deal of information on the illness out

there, yet there is still an increase in the disease especially by young people.

The bottom line is there is still more information needed about prevention.

Are we getting the message about HIV and AIDS?

With all condoms and other preventative information out there, why is this disease spreading at such an alarming rate?

Why is this happening?

I believe it is true that African-Americans are the least likely to admit that they are gay and come out of the closet. So for those who think they can have it both ways, the cycle of HIV and AIDS continue.

Now there is trend being brought to the forefront where many men engage in homosexual on the DL or Down Low.

Maybe it is time we all stop hiding from the issue and confront it. This in turn may reduce some of these statistics.

No matter how hard you look at the statistics, no matter what we as a people have gone through, it does appear that now we are killing ourselves. And there is no one else to blame.

Can we really be shocked by the recent results made clear about the HIV infection rates in North Carolina, especially as they relate to Black Males. Not really.

There are two ways we can handle this epidemic, we can sit around and pretend like it is not happening, or we can take responsibility for our actions as adults and human beings.

We can pray all we want. When given the choice between life and certain death.

Which one will you choose?

## Is rehabilitation a reality in the American legal system?

By Janell J. Lewis  
ARGUS MANAGING EDITOR

Three African-American men, all of whom recently walked out of state prisons after spending years behind bars, shared their views on injustices in the legal system, on their experiences as prisoners and on their regrets during a public forum held at Bennett College in February.

One of the three, Kwame Cannon, commented that "having been out of prison for almost five years, I can understand why 'they' go back."

The "they" in which Cannon spoke are fellow prisoners, and the irony of his statement is that within hours of making it, Cannon faced four warrants for his arrest.

His statements and subsequent arrest have left me wondering is there any such thing as rehabilitation.

"Conversations" was hosted by the Triad Black Media Professionals of which Robin Adams is president. The two other panelists at the forum were Darryl Hunt, who served almost 19 years behind bars and gained his freedom as a result of DNA evidence. Ronald Cotton, the third panelist, served 10½ years in prison.

Cannon was sentenced to two consecutive life sentences for burglary. However, as a result of today's sentencing guidelines, he should not have received more than nine years. Cannon was released after serving 13 years.

Shortly after the two-hour forum, however, four arrest warrants were taken out against Cannon for assaulting a female, communicating threats and two for harassing phone calls. This raised the eyebrows of many who attended, myself included.

When I heard the news, my reaction was typical: "Yeah, well, you're a part of that 'they' group now." It was difficult for me to reconcile the fact that I had just listened to a man tell me the hell he went through in prison; the hurt and pain he had caused his family, especially his mother, and then learn that he had allegedly committed an offense which would land him right back in jail.

Cannon's original sentence had been commuted on the condition that he was forbidden from breaking the law during his five years of supervision, which would have ended March 31 — one month after he was arrested.

During the forum discussion, Cannon talked about prison life and the aggressive attitude he possessed as a young man. He



Photo by Janell J. Lewis

These hand cuffs are representative of the bondage that criminals sometimes feel even after being released from prison.

talked about how hard it was to rehabilitate himself and reenter the world outside of prison. He added that his definition of rehabilitation is "to return one to one's original state, meaning that if you were aggressive and (harbored) nothing but hate and anger before you stepped into prison, then, essentially, that's the state they are putting you back into. It seems like prison only nourishes the mind frame that an individual has already set—not change it for the better."

A WSSU professor who attended the forum warned those of us who heard Cannon not to rush to condemn him. She gave us something to think about: You're 17 with one of those "I'm bad" attitudes. You commit a felony and go to jail for the next 13 years of your life. When you get out, this world is going to be a totally different place."

Cannon said that when you're in prison all you do is think of a better way to do the crime that put you there in the first place. Again, it makes me wonder, "is there really a such thing as rehabilitation? Can you turn a criminal into a productive member of society?"

Fortunately for me, I know the answer is yes, and I have to look no farther than my own family for confirmation.

My uncle was incarcerated for more than 6 years, and had been in and out of jail for the majority of his life. He is now married with a family and actively involved with his

church. He holds down a regular job and he just became the owner of a new house. While in prison, he would write the family, including me, letters that moved me to tears. He has a gift with words and speaking, and entertaining. This is a gift that not even years in prison could take away.

Darryl Hunt said that when he first stepped foot on to his porch, he just stood there until his wife told him that he had to use the key to open the door.

He said he was so accustomed to prison, where all the doors open for you and you are always told what to do, that he was standing at his own home waiting for the door to open. Once you're in prison, it's like that is a totally different world that confines the body and even the mind.

Hunt and Cotton were fortunate enough to have strong minds and hearts, and not let anybody or anything contaminate it. It seems that Cannon was not as fortunate.

There were a lot of messages to be gleaned from the Conversations forum, but a few stuck out the most. Darryl Hunt showed me the pointless effort in holding grudges and ill will; Ronald Cotton pointed out that we need to take notice of our social environment and who we congregate with, and Kwame Cannon simply reinforced the age-old adage "a mind is a terrible thing to waste." They all taught me to have great value in life and not to take any one day for granted.

## WSSU alum Raoul Davis shares Iraqi war opinion

By Raoul Davis  
SPECIAL TO THE ARGUS

Let's start with the premise of honesty. Saddam Hussein does not deserve to be in power and his current home, a jail cell with a large picture of President Bush smiling at him is an appropriate location for him to rot. He is a liar and a mass murderer and was funding suicide bombers to attack Israel, he invaded a country, and tried to assassinate an American president.

On our road to honesty, let us be

clear that 9/11 is not what provoked the interest in going after Iraq. President Bush in his 2000 presidential debate against Al Gore mentioned going after Iraq. Going to war with Iraq has been a goal of the administration since it initially took office and the United Nations process was more of a pony-show then an effort to create a diplomatic solution.

One of the more interesting paradoxes from the war was Bush and Powell's false accusations that Iraq had a substantive link to Al-Qaeda, how-

ever; by engaging in this war, Iraq is now a haven for Al-Qaeda.

Leadership of this heinous terrorist group has decided Iraq is the best front to "kill the American infidels." So now President Bush has made it easier to kill Americans, no need to visit the United States when you can go after soldiers every day in Iraq. The support for Al-Qaeda is growing in the Muslim community. Our approach in Iraq has aided this growth. If we had not sent our forces to Iraq, Al-Qaeda might not exist today, U.S. intelligence

officers openly admit half of the intelligence and Special Forces in Afghanistan and Pakistan were diverted to the war in Iraq.

Additionally, the administration made no substantive effort to gain international support and the burden is placed on the backs of not only American soldiers but also the American taxpayers. The administration has engaged in wishful thinking, they thought getting rid of Saddam Hussein would make democracy easy to establish in Iraq and throughout the

middle east and it would lessen the influence of Al-Qaeda. Instead, they have strengthened Al-Qaeda recruitment and the resolve of its members. Now we see new threats as Hamas, Islamic Jihad and Hezbollah are looking to focus their efforts on U.S. interest after the war in Iraq and fighting between Israeli's and Palestinians.

This country needs leadership that the rest of the world will respect. After Bush's comments post 9/11 about the crusades is it a wonder why many Iraqi's believe this is a holy war?