

PHOENIX OPINIONS-EDITORIALS



Where have our black heroes gone?

Thousands are massing in Winston-Salem to witness the annual rivalry between N.C. A&T State University and Winston-Salem State University. As the game and its associated activities get underway, there's just one reminder.

In the final analysis this grudge match is only a game. Going overboard and taking things too seriously is counterproductive. No matter which team wins, the economic outcome for the black community and both universities makes the game a "win-win" proposition for everyone.

Considering the dollars generated by the Aggies-Rams matchup, it's a shame that only this game and the schools' respective homecoming generate the bulk of the money from each school's sports seasons. The avid support and school spirit shown now should continue year-round to bolster the funding at both A&T and WSSU.

Although both schools will be winners economically, confidentially, as a 1964 graduate of A & T, my cheers will be for Coach Bill Hayes and the mighty, mighty Aggies!

Being a hero—that paragon of virtue everyone adores—has always been a tough act to pull off. And nowadays, with so many of the people we tend to idolize crashing around us, being a hero is just that—an act.

It's our thirst to find that one person who epitomizes all or at least most of what we want to be and have in life that causes to put that person on a pedestal. Some psychologists say we yearn for heroes because we lack individual, personal role models.

There's something to be said for the good old days when a special teacher, a local scout leader, a minister, or a sports figure was our hero. When we grew up, we wanted to be just like our hero or wanted our children to be. For some perverse reason after a time our parents cease to be our heroes

even though, nine times out of ten, we grow up to be like them.

But, times change and with change has come a sort of national frenzy to know all we could ever want to know about our heroes. The more prominent that person, the more we dig. The more we dig, the more we expose the vulnerable spots. And when our golden idol reveals feet of clay, we either recoil in horror and topple said hero from the pedestal or cling to our picture of perfection with a "say it ain't so" attitude.

Over the past few years, a lot of heroes are stumbling or just plain falling from grace. The issue raised, however, is whether or not it makes a difference to the hero-worshippers. The people we make our heroes are generally a good indication of where our values are as

individuals and, in some cases, as a community

because for many youth, a sports scholar-

Consider the recurring problems of New



EDITORIAL

By Patricia Smith-Deering
Phoenix Managing Editor

and a nation. Those values have tended to change with the times. The danger is that what our heroes do (and sometimes get away with doing) has serious impact on how impressionable youth respond.

Sports figures tend to be high on the list of heroes in the black community. So many young blacks strive to emulate prominent football, baseball, or basketball celebrities

ship and career represent their ticket out of the lower-income level into the heady high-income world.

As we look up to and admire these athlete-heroes, we also love their lives vicariously. We share their lifestyles. But, something is wrong. Without the guidance and direction that instills a deep sense of pride and high moral and ethical values, the price of fame could well lead to shame.

York Giants' All-Pro linebacker, Lawrence Taylor, and his struggles with alcohol and drugs. The fall was quick for Ben Johnson, the black track star who was stripped of his gold medal at the 1988 Summer Olympics because he tested positive for steroids.

Remember David Thompson, at his time the highest paid basketball superstar? He

See Heroes on next page

Smoozing Voters at the WSSU-A&T Classic

Above all, politicians—particularly those up for reelection—need and want to be seen. They want to be seen in the right places. You know, where a lot of likely voters can be found all at one time.

I'll bet you even money that the smart candidates who need to be seen by a lot of likely voters will be smoozing the crowd at the upcoming annual WSSU-N.C. A&T football classic.

Studies by the Joint Center for Political Studies and other D.C.-based think tanks have confirmed that the

group with the highest percentage of voter participation in both local and national elections, is the Black middle class. Those are precisely the people who'll be sitting on the wooden planks rooting

for State or the Aggies—voters; Black voters.

office," the loud speaker blurts, "You

seum in Los Angeles. Stalking through the



VIEWPOINT

By Dennis Schatzman
Phoenix Staff Writer

The smart candidate will be there pressing the flesh and wearing the right colors. So there might only be 20,000 people there, you say, hardly enough to make a significant dent in any local election.

I beg to differ. More than likely, many of those 20,000 people will tell their friends (also middle class) which politicians were there, especially if one of them tries the old urgent phone call ploy: "Will Alderman Larry Womble please come to the main

have an urgent phone call." That one is always an attention grabber and allows the candidate to gracefully leave the game and go somewhere else.

Black college football contests have always been good stomping grounds for political candidates. White elected officials in Memphis were regular patrons to Black college games as far back as the 1940's. Just last week, the Grambling-Alcorn A & M classic played before 45,000 in the Coli-

crowd were hoards of local politicians, including the embattled Mayor Tom Bradley, according to Francine Greer a local spectator from Pasadena.

Similarly, over 10,000 patrons attended the Howard-Univ. of D.C. showdown. So did all of the D.C. mayoral candidates, including hizzoner, Marion Barry himself.

In Winston-Salem there is a mayor's race and several local aldermen's races coming up

soon. In each race, the Black vote will be the deciding factor. Sensible candidates will do all they can do to hone in on targeted groups of likely Black voters. This means visiting certain churches, attending various annual social functions where these stable groups congregate. By "stable" I mean those persons with permanent homes, regular jobs. Conventional wisdom has it that people in public housing are far too highly unemployed and transient to fall into this category.

Therefore, it makes perfectly good sense that campaigners "go where the ducks are." Those are the people most likely to vote on election day.

Bet your bottom dollar that a lot of those voters will be yelling and screaming at the big game.

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