

# Reaction By Ministers To Angelou Film Positive From Page 1

country and feels the church should be "open enough and willing to accept the message in the film."

"My concern is that we look at a particular movie in terms of what is to say," Campbell said.

The Rev. Warner Durnell, pastor of Dellabrook Presbyterian Church, said he was initially "offended by the minister, but I would take issue with the church instead. No one (in the congregation) came to the minister or Carolyn to confront them on the relationship. I think the Christian community viewing should zero in on that aspect — our responsibility to each other."

**DURNELL SAID HE** did not see a statement "about ministers or Christians per se" in the film, but he saw "a character, a minister who fell vulnerable to an attraction to greed and lust."

The message is that the clergy should not fall into that trap, Durnell said, which is comparable to doctors being tempted to abuse drugs or lawyers to break the law.

Durnell pointed out that the black community has placed its ministers on a "pedestal, where they have no business being," and that the church also has its share of hypocrites, "from the pulpit to the back door and if we own up to that and confess that, the better we will be."

He added that even though the movie is bad publicity for the church, "I was glad to see it in the sense that bad publicity is better than no publicity."

All three ministers say they feel the portrayal of the church in most films is very negative and said they would like to see a more balanced picture of religion in the media.

**AFTER THE DISCUSSION**, Jerry Kenion, promotions director at WXII, said the controversy, ironically, had served to publicize the film. "We should send Donald Wildmon (chairman of the Coalition for Better Television) flowers," Kenion said. She said she also felt the film and the development of the relationship between the sisters is realistic. "I felt this was a woman's film," Kenion said, "and a fascinating human drama."

The film is centered around three sisters, Carolyn (Diahann Carroll), Freida (Rosalind Cash), and Sissy

(Irene Cara) Lovejoy, who are the daughters of a deceased railroad porter, a father whose memory dominates their daily lives and their relationships with each other. Carolyn has an affair with her pastor, Richard Henderson, an ambitious politician played by Dick Anthony Williams, and divorcee Freida has returned home with her 12-year-old son, Sissy, who is the youngest sister, dreams of being a successful ice-skater. Along with their own problems, the Lovejoy sisters have to deal with their torn emotions about their father and his effect on their lives.

The mounting tension between Carolyn, a pious starch-collared spinster and Freida, a heavy drinker who has a zest for life, culminates when Freida confesses to sleeping with Richard and the two sisters fight.

As a human drama, the ministers say the film was well written and they all appreciate it as a film that depicts blacks in roles other than comedians or servants. Durnell pointed out that the film has only one white character when the situation is usually the reverse.

Donald Forrester, who viewed the telecast at home, said his opinion is unchanged. "I think I'll have to make clear where I'm coming from," Forrester said. "Even though I had not seen the film until tonight, I had a written summary of the plot."

Forrester said it was the portrayal of the minister in the film he had initially objected to because he felt it was unfair to the church and the religion. "You just don't go out and air your failures and still expect the church to be in high standing in the community," Forrester said. "I think the church can clean its own house from within without hanging out all its dirty linen for the non-church world."

**FORRESTER SAID HIS** complaint is more with NBC than it is with Channel 12 or Ms. Angelou's drama. As a member of the Coalition, he said he receives summaries of shows presented and, based on that information, Forrester said, very few television programs are "positive."

"I wish that for every hypocrite, there is a show that portrays a minister out doing something right for God," he said.

Forrester said the movie has a valuable message against hypocrisy, but makes the wrong statement about the church.

He added it would have been better if the minister had repented. "This guy is a minister," he said, "but there is no turning point for him. So many great men of God who have made mistakes have gone back to get repentance."

Forrester said that as a literary work, "Sister, Sister" was "great," but he wishes it had been shown through any other medium but television. "A lot of people just sit back and accept what comes in as normal," he said.

He said the church in the film is not the kind of church he has been dealing with and is not representative of the black church, either.

"My initial objection is still there," he said, "and I

regret that the church was used. It is just one more rock removed from the wall of confidence people have in the church."

**FORRESTER SAID HE** also objects to the film because it hurts the efforts of his college to recruit young black ministers. "I am associated with a small college that is desperately trying to recruit and train ministers for black churches," he said. "It is hard with this sort of thing."

There are some things that are too sacred to criticize in the public medium, he said, and the church is one.

Forrester said Ms. Angelou is a "gifted author" and that his criticism was not of her because, when he wrote NBC, he did not know the author of the movie. He said he would rather have seen the film centered around a social organization in the community instead of the church.

In a phone interview from California, Ms. Angelou commented on the reactions to the film, from one segment of the white community to another. "It is interesting that both sides of the white community has taken issue in this," she said. "The liberal NBC group thinks there is not enough violence, car chases, cursings or prostitution. They kept the film (on the shelf for three years) because they feel nothing is happening in it and

nobody would be interested in a psycho-drama about black people." On the other hand, Ms. Angelou said, she has been accused of insulting Christians.

"That same group were silent when people were drilling stones in black people like Martin Luther King Jr.," she said. "They have shown total disregard for black ministers." She added that if the critics were concerned, they would be in coalition with black ministers.

**MS. ANGELOU SAID** she is glad the film was done. "I'm glad to write something about black women in particular and the love they had for their father," she said.

She maintains that the plight of the black man who worked to send his children to school is rarely seen in film. "We rarely see that black man who had a job at the post office and the railroad to send his children to school," she said.

The purpose of the film, Ms. Angelou stressed, was not to "make ministers or anybody look bad, but to show that we are all human." She said the film shows a struggle against basic desires and weaknesses. "That's what being a Christian is all about," she said.

Ms. Angelou said the film is being criticized by "moral majorities," and stressed that she is a Christian and her life is Christian. "For someone to dare to say I wrote something anti-Christian is ridiculous," she said.

## "Lord, can that woman work."

"Lord, can that woman work."

That's what her managing editor says about reporter Ruthell Howard, a 1980 graduate of North Carolina Central University who also has taken graduate courses at the University of North Carolina.

A native of Engelhard, N.C., Ruthell is a newcomer to Winston-Salem, but she's already seen a lot of the town by doing stories ranging from an interview with an undercover narcotics agent to coverage of the upcoming political primaries to an examination of current trends in hairstyles.

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Winston-Salem Chronicle

"Something for everyone"

## Armed Robberies

From Page 1

times have not been the same, either. "The first one was a strong-arm robbery," he said, "or a robbery without a weapon." Mason said the second robbery was at a business and the robber said he had a razor but produced no weapon. The third involved a stick and the victim was hit on the arm. In the fourth, the weapon was not stated in the complaint.

Mason said the latest robbery was reported Monday and had occurred over the weekend. "In this one, a person approached a lady and a man and asked the time," Mason said. "Then he covered his face with a handkerchief and pulled a gun and took their money and their automobile." He added that any automobiles taken have been recovered, but never at the same location.

Mason said he urges citizens to be aware. "The economic times are pretty hard," he said, "and jobs are scarce. Looking at that, a person would assume robberies could increase. People are hard-up for cash and people should be aware of that and take precautions."

Citizens should be suspicious of any stranger walking up to them to ask the time or knocking on their doors, Mason said. "Everybody tries to be a good Samaritan, but you just cannot."

## WSSU Gets Grant

Winston-Salem State University has been awarded a \$100,000 grant by the Kate B. Reynolds Health Care Trust. The funds will be used to purchase furnishings and equipment for the university's nursing and medical technology programs. Last year, the Reynolds Health Trust provided \$6,578 to strengthen the nursing program at WSSU.

The Kate B. Reynolds Health Care Trust, a private foundation located in Winston-Salem, was created in 1946 through provisions in the will of Mrs. William N. Reynolds for the purpose of improving health care to the people of North Carolina. Approximately \$1.5 million is awarded annually in grants to non-profit organizations throughout the state.



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