

Winston-Salem Chronicle
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Integration Revisited

Is desegregation the panacea we hoped it would be? A group of concerned black parents thinks not and related those sentiments to the school board Monday night.

Among the group's observations in a paper presented by Walter Marshall:

-- the need to upgrade historically black schools which, despite desegregation, are not "suited physically to handle the student populations within the various communities without an extensive building campaign."

-- the tendency of attendance zones to follow racial and class housing patterns more than geographic and busing-distance guidelines.

-- the perpetuation in the school system of a society that is "elitist, racist, conformist, repressive, status-conscious, middle- and upper-class-oriented and white male chauvinistic".

-- classroom discrimination in such forms as tracking, ability grouping, incentive promotion and competency testing.

-- the decline in the number of black teachers, black coaches and black principals in the school system.

-- provisions in the school system's four-year high school plan that the citizens feel would place undue burdens on historically black schools and black students.

While we reserve comment on the citizens' specific concerns until we can study them further, we applaud the group for taking the initiative to examine issues that black parents all too often know little about until they become policy.

We further commend the group for the spirit it has displayed in voicing its concerns: its posture is not "us against them" or criticism for the sake of criticism, but rather a desire, as its position paper states, to participate "in a collaborative effort with our elected and administrative officials as they design the reorganization plan for the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools."

Finally, we thank those black parents for publicly raising a question that many of us have pondered privately for quite some time: are our children better off now than they were before desegregation? And, if not, why?

Are there separate white and black student bodies within schools that ostensibly are "integrated?"

Are black students being snubbed by Gifted and Talented programs?

Why so many black assistant principals and so few black principals?

Why so many black athletes and so few black head coaches?

We hope the group's efforts are signs of a trend that black parents finally will take more time to have a say in how their children are taught and treated in the school system.

And that they will realize that desegregation, like any other system, is only effective when it is properly, sincerely and fairly implemented -- which very well may not be the case in Winston-Salem and Forsyth County.

About Letters

The *Chronicle* welcomes letters to the editor as well as guest columns. Letters should be typed or neatly printed and concise in length. They should also include the full name, address and phone number of the writer.

Letters should be addressed to Chronicle Letters, *Winston-Salem Chronicle*, P.O. Box 3154, Winston-Salem, N.C. 27102.

The *Chronicle* reserves the right to edit letters for brevity and good taste and asks readers to remember that letters published within our pages do not necessarily reflect our views.



Do You Have A Little Love To Spare?

By TONY BROWN
 Syndicated Columnist

Ben Vereen has been hurt by the reaction of many Afro-Americans to his 1980 Presidential Inaugural blackface performance. "I went through a great deal of suffering behind the Inaugural," he told me in a television interview on "Ben And Bert," to be aired this week.

Vereen is respectfully remembered as Chicken George in the historic "Roots" television mini-series, for which he received an Emmy nomination. For his performance in the Broadway musical hit "Pippin," he won the prestigious Tony Award.



Brown

In fact, his winning combination of musical, dramatic and comedic roles had resulted only in unanimous acclaim until that night in January 1981, at President Ronald Reagan's

Inaugural Gala. Vereen struck a sour note among many blacks and created a furor when he presented his impersonation of the legendary vaudevillian comedian Bert Williams of the pre-World War I era.

Before you read why Vereen did what he did and hear his explanations, think about these questions, none of which are ever going to be answered to everyone's satisfaction:

If another black person behaves in a way you consider to be degrading, can it be a matter of legitimate difference, rather than the other person being a "Tom?"

Can you still regard another black individual with whom you philosophically disagree as being legitimately concerned about the black cause?

Do you believe that just because a black person is rich and famous, by white standards, he or she has escaped racism, and is not being exploited by the system?

If you answered "yes," "yes," and "no," you think on this subject as I do. The first two questions measure compassion -- the kind of compas-

sion that we are all too frequently willing to show to white people, but not to one another. The last question, in part, measures your ability to understand the economic and political facts of racism.

One writer to a black newspaper, in measured disagreement, expressed typical bewilderment about Ben Vereen's blackface act. Wrote Jeanne Brown of New York to Vereen in an open letter: "What is crucial here, to me, is that any performer of high quality and great talent is not, cannot be, by definition, unmindful of images, symbols, etc."

Yet, Ms. Brown didn't know the impersonation was of Bert Williams. "I don't recall the artist your performance was in tribute to," she wrote. "Surely, this is indicative of the ignorance, on the part of many, of the names and importance of early black artists."

And that is precisely one of Vereen's major points of defense. "A lot of people didn't know I was doing a black man," he says. "I was doing Bert Williams. Well, who's Bert Williams? Well, who's Bert Williams?"

Please see page 6

El Salvador: Another Quagmire?

"Since 1979, we have committed well over a billion dollars in El Salvador, and where has it left us?"
 -- Sen. Chris Dodd

By CLIFTON GRAVES JR.
 Chronicle Columnist

The cover photograph of the March 14 edition of *Newsweek* magazine offers an ironic and disturbing scene: a black American military adviser instructing a Salvadoran government soldier.

The irony is that the black adviser is training the Salvadoran soldier to fight to protect an oppressive and corrupt Salvadoran regime -- a regime supported economically and militarily by the very forces in these United States that have historically (and presently) fought to thwart the progress of the black military adviser's own people!



Graves

How long, Lord, how long?

It disturbs me, as it disturbed Robeson, Malcolm and King, that once again, black men are called upon to help other folk preserve "democratic" rights that these same men cannot enjoy in their own American communities.

Once again, just as in Korea, the Dominican Republic and Vietnam, black soldiers have been duped into fighting against the bugaboo of communism when, in reality, their true enemies are monopoly capitalism and right-wing politics -- enemies of not only the Salvadoran and other Third-World people, but of African-Americans and, indeed, most Americans, as well.

Thus, the *Newsweek* photo, in essence, presents to us a study in victimization; a black U.S. adviser and a Salvadoran soldier -- pawns in the proverbial chess game of money and power -- fighting to protect the interests of men who don't give a damn about "democracy" or "freedom" or "human rights."

They are probably a black Baptist and a Salvadoran Catholic brainwashed into believing that they are religiously obligated to guard against

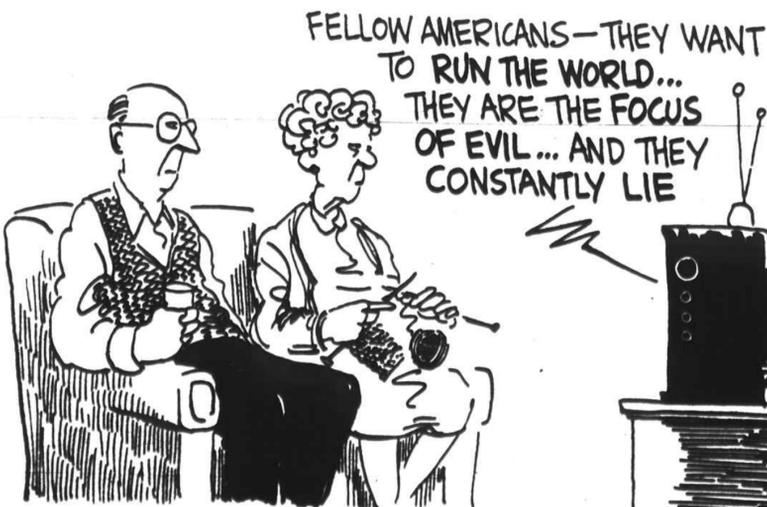
the spreading of "Godless" communism while "God-fearing" businessmen and politicians continue to rip them and their mommas off in Washington and San Salvador.

But surely, proponents of more aid to El Salvador might argue, the \$60 million currently requested by the Reagan administration is a small price to pay to keep El Salvador out of Marxist hands, and to prevent the so-called "Domino Theory" from occurring in Central America. Further, proponents contend, the monies requested are just a drop in the bucket compared to the U.S. aid to other "allies" such as the Philippines, South Korea, South Africa and Zaire (all notorious for corruption and oppression).

Finally, supporters of continued and increased involvement contend, El Salvador is not Vietnam, in that El Salvador's proximity to the United States makes it of vital strategic importance to American interests and overall Central American "stability."

Those spurious arguments notwithstanding, unless the American people take their collective head out

Please see page 6



The Helms Proposal

By VERNON ROBINSON
 Guest Columnist

A local black elected official once told me at a reception that supporting Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) is "treasonous."

Given the importance of Social Security reform to the black community, our community should at least consider "mass treason" and get behind some form of the Helms Social Security reform plan.

The black community has a keen interest in Social Security reform for several reasons. Black social security recipients, more often than not, rely on those payments as their primary means of support.

Social Security combines a regressive method of collecting taxes with an unfair method of paying out benefits. Lower-income individuals pay proportionately more of their income into the system than do members of the middle class.

Upon retirement, middle-income retirees live longer and hence receive greater benefits than do lower-income retirees.

Finally, since the Hispanic and the black communities are younger than the majority community, it will be the younger workers from these communities who will bear a disproportionate burden of endless Social Security tax increases to keep the system afloat under the current plan.

We have heard the many problems facing the Social Security System. The system is broke. Benefits are not guaranteed to the citizens who paid into the system. There are no provisions to pass the money paid into the system on to successive generations. Younger Americans face enormous tax hikes and many believe that they will never see any of the money they have paid into the system.

But what is the answer to these problems?

As the Social Security System has been elevated to the status of politically "sacred," few public officials have had the courage to step forward and offer realistic proposals that deal with the system's problems.

When the Reagan administration attempted to struggle with these serious problems, irresponsible members of the Democratic Party struck fear into the hearts of older Americans with lies that Ronald Reagan would take away their Social Security.

The American public patiently waited for the report of the Social Security Reform Commission but finds it sadly lacking. This bipartisan group had the opportunity to provide sorely needed leadership on this issue.

Instead, the commission's plan offers America more bandaids to cure cancer. This plan, which is perilously close to becoming the law of the land, offers me as a young American only the first of a series of unrelenting tax increases.

In contrast, the Helms Social Security Reform Plan would restore America's faith in the Social Security System by addressing the system's short and long-term problems. This

Please see page 6

Chronicle Letters

Segregation In Churches

To The Editor:

The article in your March 17 issue on the lack of racially integrated churches was of special interest to me as an integrationist.

It is a sad state of affairs that the hour from 11 a.m. to noon on Sundays is probably the most segregated hour of the week.

This applies to the religious fellowship of which I am a member, the Unitarian-Universalist Fellowship, 2873 Robin Hood Road.

However, that is not our fault. Our policy is openness to all, regardless of race.

As a member of our social-concerns committee, I extend an invitation to your readers to visit us at 10:30 a.m. on Sundays to see what makes us tick.

Joe Felmet
 Winston-Salem