

**Winston-Salem Chronicle**  
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## Playing Favorites

Although much has been made of drunken driving and this state's determination of late to get tough with DUI offenders, the "get-tough" part apparently has an asterisk with a footnote that reads: "... Unless you're a public official, especially a deputy fire chief."

Deputy Fire Chief Fred E. "Pete" Harless was stopped last week by Winston-Salem Patrolman Richard Carleton for crossing the center line on Country Club Road twice.

Carleton concluded, after conducting routine sobriety tests during which Harless could neither touch his nose nor walk a straight line, that the man was in no shape to drive and recommended that a sober companion take the wheel.

Carleton also, it seems, recognized who Harless was and became so intimidated by the situation that he radioed for assistance.

Which brings us to our first point:

Something clearly is amiss when an officer of the law becomes frightened to do his job because of *who* the party he has encountered is, not *what* he or she has done.

Second, however much we feel the need to get drunk drivers off our streets, we identify with a public that is becoming increasingly annoyed by and weary of the hypocritical charade to crack down on DUI offenders.

Third, the pat on the wrist which the Board of Aldermen's Public Safety Committee greeted the incident was not nearly enough.

In case our police officers, police chief and aldermen haven't noticed, deputy fire chiefs are just as deadly behind the wheel as any other citizen.

Finally, and quite ironically, Harless, whose job it is to save lives, should, of all people, have known better than to drive intoxicated, particularly when a sober passenger was available to do the driving instead.

Of course, had Mr. Harless been a black man straddling Highway 311's center line, we expect the outcome might have been different.

## For All Or Not At All?

In this land of "justice for all," justice often works in mysterious ways.

Or not at all.

Take the case of the Klan/Nazi shooting four years ago.

Though video tape chronicled the wanton massacre of five communist demonstrators by Ku Klux Klansmen and Nazis, an all-white Greensboro jury acquitted five defendants of murder charges.

Thus, two and one-half years later, it has taken a federal grand jury to determine that those dead demonstrators' civil rights were violated and to bring indictments against nine Klansmen and Nazis for what now is known infamously, but not inappropriately, as "The Greensboro Massacre."

We had the displeasure of viewing a Durham newsman's unedited footage of the carnage in Greensboro's Morningside Homes housing project, from start to bloody finish. It is a sickening sight.

What is more sickening, however, is the North Carolina courts' blatant, revolting ineptitude in handling the case, despite the magnitude and result of the wrongdoing.

A legal system that does not protect its citizens -- and, in fact, looks the other way when there is strong evidence of police complicity in criminal activity -- eventually may lose their respect.

It already has lost much of its effectiveness.

## The McGee Trial

William McGee and Michael Smith, the pair of Winston black men convicted of conspiring to traffic in cocaine, may see brighter days.

McGee has won a new trial in Caswell County while Smith's guilty plea has reduced his sentence to time already served.

Some implications of the case:

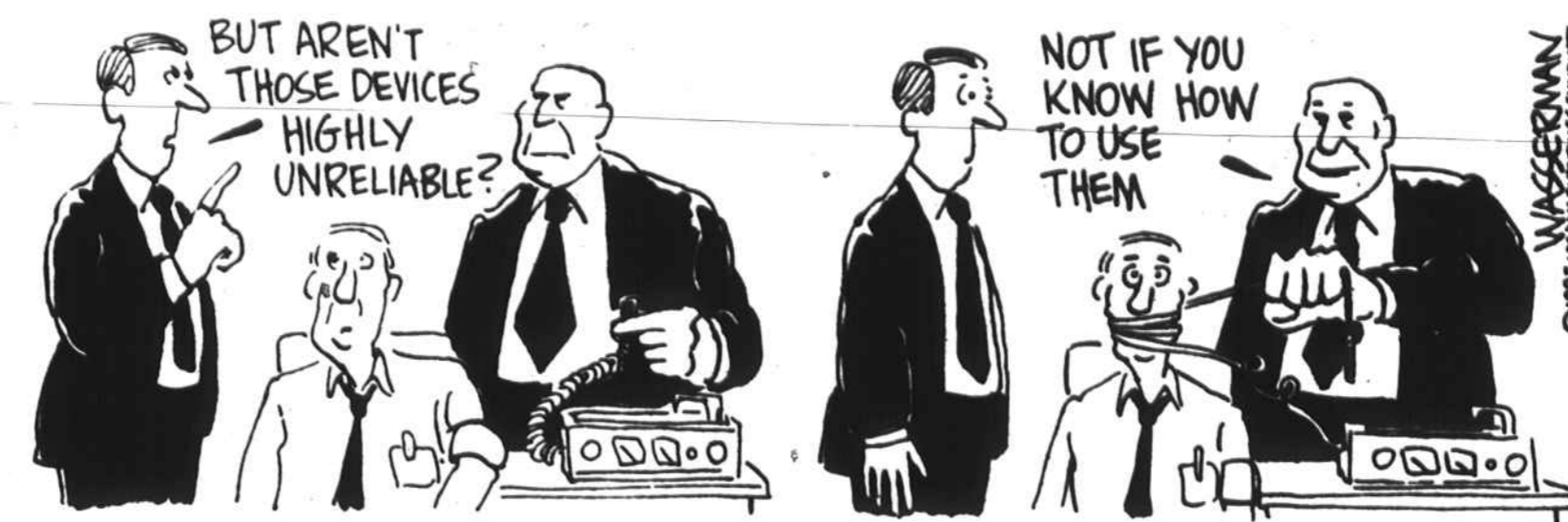
-- All public officials face a double standard when judged by their constituency. Unfortunately, black public officials are subject to quadruple standards, if you will, and are even more delectable game for the powers that be when the need arises to discredit or disgrace them.

Witness the FBI's attempts to attack the character of even the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. or, closer to home, Carl Russell's plight when he became too politically powerful for some folks' taste. Or former Assistant District Attorney Jean Burkins.

The obvious solution to such tactics is to obey the law, which not only is part of the responsibility the public entrusts its elected and appointed officials with, but just plain common sense.

There may be much more to the drug situation in Winston -- and supposedly upstanding citizens who are involved in drug traffic -- than may ever be told. According to those city's highly active rumor mill, that fact is general knowledge, though everyone appears to be reluctant to talk about it.

--Questions raised by police informant and undercover agent Ann Toms concerning the timing of the investigation and the choice of McGee and Smith as targets still merit some straight answers. And probably won't get any.



## The Heyday Of The 'Race Movie'

By TONY BROWN  
 Syndicated Columnist

When I started researching blacks in the film industry, I expected to find the perpetual exclusion of Afro-Americans from the silver screen.

Not only was I pleasantly surprised, but I found that the secret history of blacks in the movie industry is not a story of Hollywood; instead, it is a documentation of the birth and struggle of the NAACP and the strength of the nation's black newspapers.



Brown

During the month of May, my public television series will focus on the secret history of the rise and fall of the black movie industry. Yes, you read correctly -- a black movie industry.

And did you know that the backbone of this industry of independent black producers was the ability of the black newspaper to excite the black population to go and see Race Movies, as they were called? Some black press members also booked the movies in their respective cities to create the first national movie booking network that allowed an outlet for all-black cast movies.

The NAACP, only five years old when the granddaddy of cinema racism -- "The Birth of A Nation" -- was born, put Hollywood on notice that blacks were not going to passively be victimized.

"This is a heroic story," Dr. Thomas Cripps, historian and professor at Morgan State University, says on the television program. "In every city where the film was to open, the local branch of the NAACP was there -- filing suit, lobbying for laws against racial slander and setting out to censor it when they could by claiming that it would start riots, which it, in fact, did in a few places."

At one point, the NAACP even attempted, along with Universal, to produce a response to the racism of

"The Birth of A Nation."

Another expert on this era is Dr. Henry Sampson, author of "Blacks In Black And White" (Scarecrow Press), the best chronology around of the development of the Race Movie. He remembers as a young black lad in Jackson, Miss., going to see all-black cast movies at the segregated movie houses -- owned during those days by blacks.

Back then, before African-Americans were faked out by the promise of integration in movies, you could see movies with black cowboys, gangsters, doctors, concert violinists, Shakespearean actors, singers and dancers. Lena Horne, Paul Robeson and Sammy Davis made their screen debuts in Race Movies.

Dr. Sampson explains, "The historical significance of these early black films stems from the fact that, in many cases, they are the only existing record of the performances of many of the top black singers, dancers, musicians and dramatic performers in the 1920s and 1930s."

They also offered black actors the only opportunity to portray the full range of screen characterizations from buffoon to doctor, from waiter to owner, and all variations in between. For black audiences, black films worked well as a counter-irritant to the unflattering, stereotyped roles popularized in early Hollywood movies.

These movies came into existence because of the movie slaves that Hollywood had created out of black people: watermelon-eating coons and submissive rural blacks who knew their places.

Dr. Sampson, also a nuclear engineer and co-inventor of the gamma electrical cell, notes:

"Black people had a choice at that time. They could say, 'Well, I'm not going to see any of these shows' and boycott the movies, putting black performers out of work. Or black performers could have said, 'Well, I'm not going to do any of those shows. I'm not going to degrade myself.' Or you could say, 'Let's produce and let's act and portray ourselves in a form which is dignified

and try to eliminate all the stereotypes and all the things you see in white productions.'"

The black community chose the third approach. And black producers and companies sprang up in response to the demand of blacks for an honest portrayal of their lives. "The Realization of A Negro's Ambition" became the first black-produced, non-stereotyped movie in 1916. Noble Johnson, an actor at Universal, founded the Lincoln Motion Picture Co., the producer of the movie, in Los Angeles, where a burgeoning middle-class black community had developed.

Other black producers of Race Movies followed, of whom the most notable and enduring was Oscar Micheaux (mee-shaw). "Between 1910 and 1950, over 150 independent film companies were organized for the specific purpose of producing black-cast films for showing in segregated theatres of the South and de facto segregated theatres of the North," Dr. Sampson says. The rapid growth of this black industry, he adds, was due to the general acceptance of race movies ("race" was the term in those days for "black" and other black racial designations today) and "the rapid construction of theaters in those cities of the South and North which had large black populations."

The white theaters would not book these black movies and Hollywood monopolized the business, as today, from inception to production. But the lifeline to a black market, starved for its own reality, was the black-owned theatre, the black newspaper and the black producers who knew how to tell a race story.

This system collapsed -- along with strong, positive black images -- when we lost ownership (hence, control) of what movies are shown in our neighborhoods.

Today, believe it or not, there are very few black movie houses, if any.

"Tony Brown's Journal," the television series, can be seen on public television Sundays on Channel 26 at 6:30 p.m.

## To Mom From Thema, With Love

God couldn't be everywhere, so he created mothers.

Anonymous

By CLIFTON E. GRAVES JR.  
 Chronicle Columnist

Though my daughter, Thema, is 1½ going on 15, she has not yet mastered her verbal and writing skills. Therefore, she requested that her daddy write this tribute to her mommy, Sylvia, and share it with all of you:

Dear Mommy,  
 I would just like to thank you for all you have done for me these past 19 months (plus the nine months you carried me).

I realize that since we were born on the same date (Sept. 20) it was inevitable that us Virgos would have

conflicts. But I must admit that you have handled yourself well and controlled your temper -- most of the time.

Now, I realize that it irks you when I spray your expensive perfume on me, intentionally spill my cereal on the living room floor, or raise a fuss when you try to comb my hair. But, hey, mommy, I am just a little kid. Besides, Daddy doesn't seem to mind when I act crazy -- so why should you?

But really, Mama, I do appreciate all those mornings you awoke at 3:00 and rocked and sang me back to sleep. I appreciate all those days you stayed home from your job to take care of my bad colds and fevers. I appreciate you taking time to read those black history, biblical, and fairy tale stories to me. I appreciate you getting down on the floor and playing with me as if you were my age. And I really appreciate the way you still smile when you change my dirty diapers.

Now, you are not perfect like Grandmommy Mayme (Daddy's

mother), who buys me everything I want, and lets me do as I please. Neither are you as understanding as your mommy, Grandma Louise, or my great-grandma -- my namesake -- Haida.

But, I guess they don't have to put up with me 24 hours a day like you do, either.

So, for all the reasons above, I just want to say, Happy Mother's Day, Mama!!

I love you, in spite of your shortcomings! And when I grow up, I pray that God will bless me with all the beauty, love, understanding and patience that befit the African translation of my name "Queen."

For, if He does, then I can be just like you, Mommy.  
 Happy Mother's Day!!

Love,  
 Thema Haida Graves

Author's note: Thema (Tay-mah) is of West African derivation and means both "queen" and "hope."

## Crosswinds

# 'Ole Miss' Symbolism

From Sports Illustrated. University of Mississippi Chancellor Porter L. Fortune Jr. announced last week that the Confederate flag will be dropped as an official school symbol.

The main effect is that Ole Miss cheerleaders will no longer distribute Confederate flags to fans before football games. But there will be nothing to prevent fans from bringing in flags on their own because, said Fortune, "the university does not have the authority to ban the use and display of the Rebel flag by individuals."

Fortune's action angered many white Ole Miss boosters and students who see the Confederate flag as part of a tradition worth preserving at an institution whose sports teams, after all, are nicknamed the Rebels.

But many of the 750 blacks among Ole Miss's 9,500-member student body objected that Fortune should have gone further and also dropped such other symbols of the Old South as Colonel Rebel, the school mascot, the use of "Dixie" as the unofficial school song and the Rebel nickname itself. But Fortune did none of that and, even in the case of the Confederate flag, seemed reluctant to go much beyond saying that it had come to be seen by many as "a vestige of an earlier and troubled era."

It's difficult to understand exactly what distinction Fortune was drawing in dropping the flag but not other trappings of the Confederacy. The elimination of "Dixie" as a school song might mean that the band would no longer play it after every touchdown, as it does now, but students could

Please see page 5

## Chronicle Letters

# Furnishing Inspiration

To The Editor:

On behalf of the staff of Forsyth Court Volunteers and myself, I would like to extend to you, as well as the entire staff of the Chronicle, our sincerest appreciation for the fine article published on our agency. The quality of the pictures and article undoubtedly reflect the quality and competency of the people responsible for it.

Residents of Winston-Salem have witnessed the Chronicle's timely emergence from a fledgling organization to the popular and reputable firm it is now. A black-owned business that continuously upgrades its services, and, at the same time, endures the many obstacles encountered in the business world, is always a pleasure to see! I am honored personally to have been briefly associated with your staff.

I trust in earnest that the Winston-Salem Chronicle will continue to provide its excellent and needed services to the entire community. It is certainly an inspiration to the black residents of Forsyth County of which we are very proud.

I would like to close, Mr. Johnson, by wishing the Chronicle much continued success in the future.

James E. Garrett III  
 Coordinator of Volunteers  
 Forsyth Court Volunteers Inc.  
 Winston-Salem

Please see page 5