

## On the plight of black branch libraries

■ The writer is the branch manager of the East Winston Branch Library.

**GUEST COLUMN**  
By TIM JACKSON

Branch librarians in black communities are faced with enormous problems.

They must contend with expressways running through the heart of the black community, redevelopment, street people, lack of adequate security, sluggish circulation, different collection needs, the use of the library as a community center and low attendance at branch programming.

Too often the branch library that is serving the black community attempts to imitate the services of branch libraries in white middle-class neighborhoods.

A letter expressing these concerns was sent to administrators and librarians across the state. The response to this letter was overwhelming in terms of branch librarians wanting to come

together to solve these problems collectively.

Librarians from around the state responded by calling an organizational meeting of librarians who serve the black community -- the first such meeting in North Carolina.

Among the concerns expressed at the meeting was the fact that some librarians could not order black books unless the other branch managers of that system agreed to the purchase.

Other librarians expressed concerns about programming.

One librarian had involved 20 mothers in a reading program, and now those mothers are reading to their children. Unfortunately, this librarian's supervisor talked more about that particular branch's low circulation

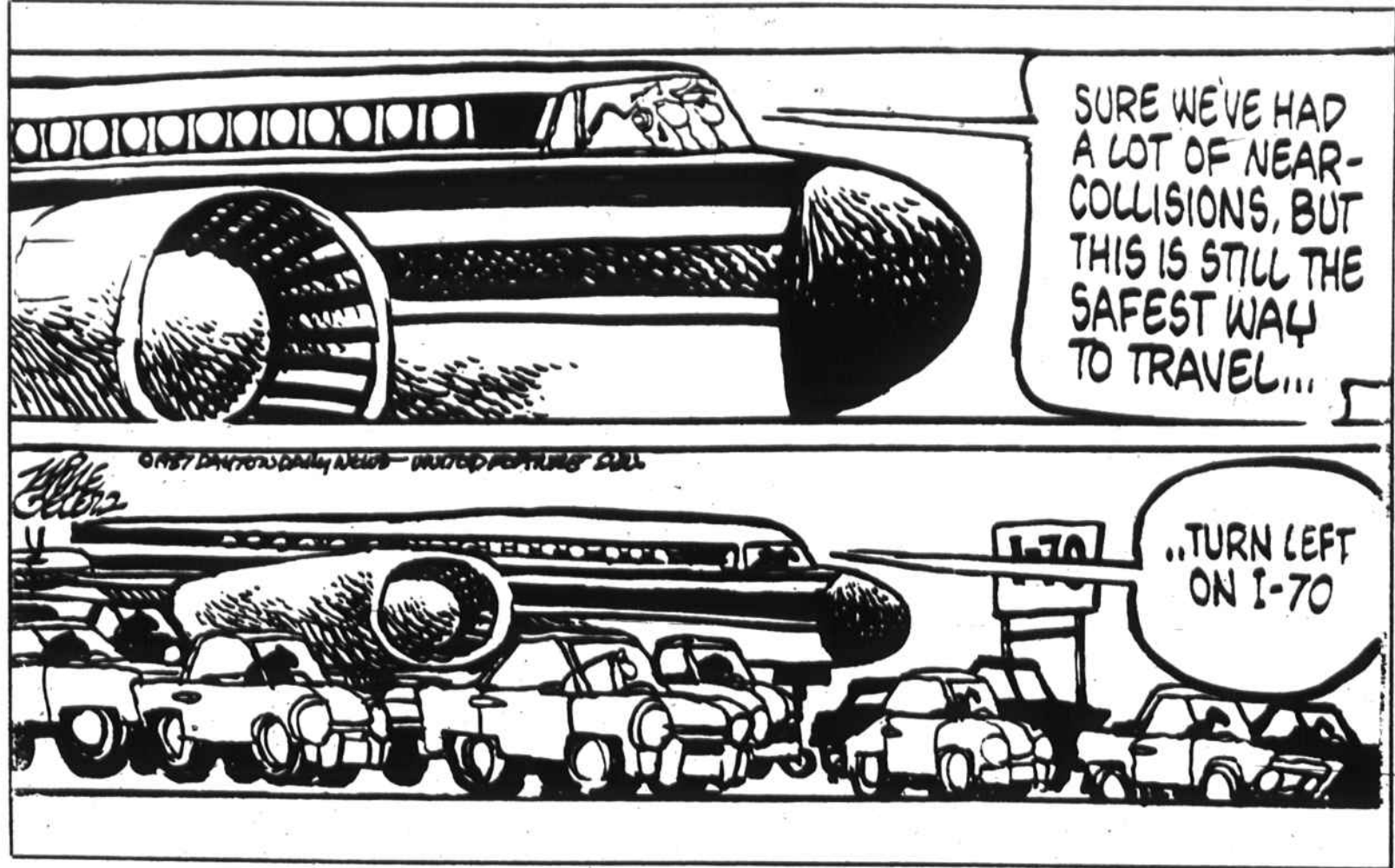
than about the outstanding accomplishment of getting mothers to read to their children.

Still other librarians were deeply concerned about the merger of a rare book collection into one system's main library's collection.

Book circulation is a major concern for many branch managers in black communities, both around the state and across the nation. Many public branch libraries in the black community have gone out of existence simply because of non-use and low circulation.

Now we must ask ourselves this question: What is the role of the branch library, especially in a changing society, within the black community?

For the East Winston Branch Library, it is to become a community center for informational



reading, recreational reading and related cultural activities. Also, it is to provide both reference and general materials in the most frequently requested subjects -- such as health, family life, child care, public and current affairs, science, literature and the arts -- and, finally, to give the best possible service within the current limitations of budget, staff and time.

Another concern that branch managers have in the black com-

munity is the approach to assessing the informational needs of library users. There is a unique difference between white library users and black library users.

At the East Winston Branch Library, many of our black library users tend to read newspapers, magazines and non-fiction books, while our white library users read novels, biographies and best-sellers. White library users tend to check out books, while black users pur-

sue research interests and make use of non-print materials.

Of the two types of users, whose value is to be given the highest priority? They both are equally important.

In the weeks to come, I will look further at the plight of the public branch library in the black community. For now, this is one black public branch manager's opinion. What's yours?

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An independent, locally owned newspaper

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## Praising whites and chiding blacks: What gives?

To The Editor:

The *Winston-Salem Journal* has over the past few months published two letters by black readers, containing accolades of praise for the white community and criticism for black leaders.

I find it hard to believe that these views are reflective of blacks' opinions in Winston-Salem and America at large. Or does the *Journal* refer to the *Chronicle* when it comes to more believable opinions and perceptions of blacks?

No doubt whites like to pacify their consciences with such grateful, humble philosophy.

As a Swiss national, I grew up never considering myself racially -- and seeing what white stands for, I prefer to remain raceless.

To see white Americans denounce Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. as a communist and rally with men in sheets -- Klansmen -- is stunning. The all-around reaction of whites, especially the press, is lame and defensive.

It appears that racism is perceived to be primarily the problem of blacks (blacks taking a definitely illegitimate citizenship status in the mainstream's eyes) -- even in the eyes of some blacks who are enjoying some of the comforts a wealthy supnation has to offer. They are few, and

### CHRONICLE MAILBAG Our Readers Speak

they enjoy those benefits thanks to people like Dr. King and Rosa Parks -- people who were willing to march and put their existence on the line for the greater good of all humanity. I'm not surprised that Mr. Smith has to endure name-calling; I'm surprised that he is not afraid of worse.

Equality should be a given in this great country. It should be a matter of national pride to mobilize everything and everybody to achieve this.

Equality can only thrive here if those people who consider themselves white start putting a greater priority on being American -- and stand up for all Americans.

Even though only 17 percent of Americans are black, 40 percent of the 55,000 who died in the Vietnam War were black Americans. And about 40 percent of those serving in our armed forces are black.

It is my suspicion that this is so because it is so hard to secure employment in the much-cited private industry. I can't fathom that such a large number of

"communists and agitators" would be willing to die for this country -- and I am sure if it weren't for the social laziness and timidness of the mainstream, this country would have ceased to be a racist society by now.

I have the fortune to work for an employer with sound integrity now, in an environment free of harassment, but I have met numerous white male executives who cry about the advantages given to minorities and women, and on closer examination these complaints seemed to grow out of the recognition of their sad incompetence and the fear of vaster competition.

Racism is the worst and most destructive expression of inadequacy, and its goals are diametrically opposite to the goals stated in the Constitution.

I would like to add that I see racism as an illness afflicting the entire nation, not merely the infamous South.

Marlis Soltermann-Nattiel  
Winston-Salem

### Good Impressions

To The Editor:

On a recent Friday evening, I

had an occasion to watch "North Carolina This Week" on UNC Channel 26 in Chapel Hill. Seeing you (Allen H. Johnson) as a panelist on that program particularly impressed me with respect to your views on topics of current interest to our community, including AIDS, teen-age pregnancy and other aspects of our education system.

I believe I speak for others in the black community who feel and believe that you represent their views on these issues.

I am also impressed and wish to congratulate you on the fine stories which you as executive editor of the *Winston-Salem Chronicle* cover from time to time. It is rewarding to see you take positions on matters of importance not only to the black people in our community but to others across the state of North Carolina.

Again, I wish to congratulate you and wish you much success as you continue to enlighten our citizens through the news media.

Larry W. Womble  
Southeast Ward Alderman

## Jacob

From Page A4

led to a worsening of social problems and to a new appreciation for the positive role government can play. The failures of an unbridled marketplace are leading people to understand the need for long-term, job-creating private-sector policies. And the negative results of secretive foreign policies are leading to new respect

for open, more democratic procedures.

So 1987 may see the beginning of a shift in national sentiment that could lead to important reforms in our national life and a better deal for the poor.

John E. Jacob is president of the National Urban League.

## Payne

From Page A4

watch a television show about women which had a female host.

The female challenge to Donahue is now raging -- but not without its curious sidelights.

Oprah Winfrey, in a vacuum, is the answer. She is sharper than Donahue, wittier, more genuine and far better attuned to her audience, if not the world. But America is not a vacuum, and looming up to haunt the limitless talents -- and perhaps the future -- of Winfrey, is the specter of race.

By simply being black, Winfrey has attracted an enormous following Donahue never tapped. But in white-dominated television, this reality for Winfrey is fraught with both pluses and minuses.

Early in her national network debut, blacks criticized her for catering to the white women in her studio audience.

"I hear this a lot," she told Jill Nelson of *The Washington Post*. "I hear that I don't hug the black people the way I hug the white people, that I go to the white people in the audience first."

"First of all, there are more white people (in the audience). There just are more. I could not survive with this show if I only catered to black people, I just could not! I wouldn't be where I

am if I did. That's not what it's about."

Others have criticized Winfrey for not employing enough black staffers and citing performance "excellence" as the reason.

The harshest, and perhaps the soundest, criticism is the charge that Winfrey's role, at bottom, is to play the reassuring black Nanny to her dominant white female audience.

She fed this image recently when responding to Mike Wallace of "60 Minutes." Like a maid interviewing for a live-in domestic job, Winfrey denied repeatedly that she is, or cares to be, attached to any man.

Her image as a fat lady also seems designed to fit Oprah Winfrey's view of what her white audience expects of her.

"Weight has been a way of sheltering my own sense of power," Winfrey told *The Washington Post*. "It makes people more comfortable with me and in many ways me more comfortable with other people."

Writer Jill Nelson observed that "as her ratings increased, so did her size." Ms. Winfrey seems to know that it is the other way around.

Les Payne is an assistant managing editor at Newsday.

## Desegregation case still consumes activist's life

By MARGARET HABERMAN  
Associated Press Writer

CHATTANOOGA, Tenn. -- Black activist James Mapp has fought for civil rights since he was a teen-ager, and he doesn't plan to change now that his 27-year role in an often-bitter case to integrate the public school system has ended.

Mapp became a leading figure in the protracted struggle to remove racial barriers in local education when he filed a lawsuit against the city Board of Education in 1960.

"Racism is a part of my life," said Mapp, 59. "I can't get rid of it just by holding my hands and wishing. You have to work. I've been constantly acting to rid the system of discrimination."

U.S. District Judge R. Allan Edgar dismissed the suit in December, finding that the school board had met all the aspects of a desegregation plan approved in 1976 and noting that the case had lingered in court long enough.

Mapp and his attorneys agreed not to challenge Edgar's ruling because most of the grounds to appeal already had been decided by higher courts.

"From the standpoint of the pressures of the case, it's a relief," he said of the case's conclusion. "However, it doesn't mean that the fight is over for someone like me. It's just changed arenas."

Mapp, who has had a storefront insurance and real estate agency on the city's Martin Luther King Avenue for more than two decades, said segregation is still apparent in the 23,700-student school system, which is about 51 percent black.

Not only do schools of nearly all one race exist, but course offerings and school materials are not equally distributed between whites and blacks, he said.

The school board, which no longer will be monitored by the court, has contended that predominantly black or white schools have been caused by living patterns of city residents and not prejudice.

"The past vestiges of discrimination are not eliminated, and I think it is incumbent upon the white and black communities to come together and see that they are eliminated," said Mapp, who has eight grown children.

"The job hasn't been done,"

he said. "I won't only be keeping an eye on the school board, but I'll actually be working to seek change once and for all to end the vestiges of discrimination."

Mapp said the unfair repossession of his grandfather's farm in Mayfield, Ga., by a white man in 1937 started him on his course of battling racial inequity.

"The white man insisted my grandfather owed him something and took the farm," he said. "There was no court or lawyer he could go to when a white person was involved. That had ... some bearing on me. I intensely dislike segregation."

He joined the Youth Council of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People at Orchard Knob Junior High School in 1941 and wrote letters denouncing discrimination to a local newspaper as a Howard High School student.

He also is a two-time president of the NAACP branch in Chattanooga and has protested racial injustice in housing and government.

The desegregation case originally was filed when education officials rejected a plea by Mapp and some friends to allow

their children to go to a nearby all-white elementary school.

At the time, the children were being bused to black schools and losing half a day of classes, he said.

"I wanted my kids to get a full day of education. They were going from 8:30 in the morning to noon," Mapp said. "I wanted them to get what was being provided for white kids."

"We initially gave the school board 48 hours to desegregate the system. That was how naive we were," he said with a laugh.

The suit, which Mapp estimated has cost about \$1 million to pursue through the years, has sparked threats, sugar in the gas tank of his car and the bombing of his empty house in 1970.

He also said he has lost business because of his involvement in the case, but added that the lengthy effort was worthwhile.

"I feel very good about the progress made since then, but it's just not enough," Mapp said. "The court never eliminated segregation. It only acted on certain selected schools. I want to do what the court refused to do."