

Opinion

Freedom of Speech is the Issue Under Attack

To the Editor:

The Ministers' Conference of Winston-Salem and Vicinity loves and seeks the best quality of life for all citizens of Winston-Salem. Any controversy over how to designate the current quality of life should include the central principle that reasonable people can legitimately disagree as to how to make things better. Our conference has no unanimous opinion on this matter and neither does the city.

We believe what everybody should agree upon is the American constitutional guarantee of freedom of speech. People should be allowed to express their opinion, whether popular or unpopular. Citizens do not lose their democratic rights if they are also elected to public office. They should be allowed to exercise their freedom of conscience on either side of this question without being castigated as traitorous and treasonous to the well-being of our city.

Perhaps what's required in our community is more substantive dialogue on the issues raised here and less anger aimed at those who disagree.

Rev. Ronald P. Davis,
Rev. Kelly O.P. Goodwin
Rev. J. Ray Butler
Rev. Carlton A.G. Eversley

Poor Role Model

To the Editor:

I had been planning to pull for the Phoenix Suns against the Chicago Bulls in the National Basketball Association playoffs — until I saw Charles Barkley's commercial for Nike.

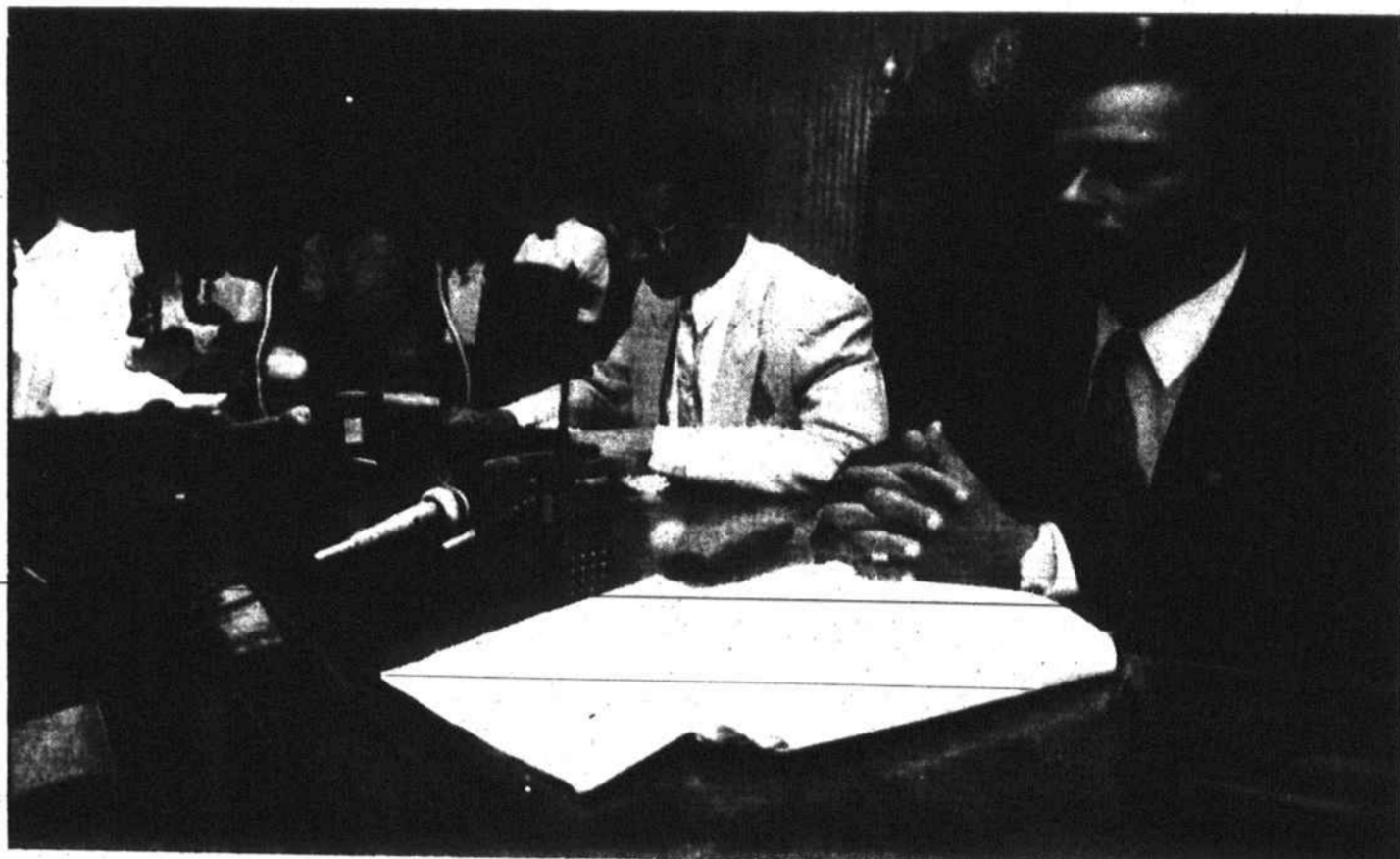
In the commercial, Barkley fixes a menacing glare on the viewer as he states emphatically that he is not a role model. He is paid, he says, to wreak havoc on the basketball court; and it is the parents' job, not his, to raise their kids.

Sadly, the wealthy executives at Nike and their advertising agency cannot be expected to be in touch with the real world.

Neither, it appears, can Sir Charles.

For their information, there are hundreds of thousands of American children in the real world who, through no fault of their own, are in desperate need of positive role models. They are especially in need of male role models.

To be sure, Barkley has no obligation to be a role model. Maybe he should not, or cannot, be one. But for him and Nike to capi-



Pro-Aristide senators Firmin Jean-Louis (center) and Robert Martinez at a Port-au-Prince news conference last week the two legislators called for immediate talks toward establishing a new Aristide government.

talize on the tragic social condition of so many American families in such a callous manner...

Well, it didn't quite shock me, but it certainly is pitiful.

Guess I'll pull for the Bulls and buy some Reeboks.

Bert Grisard
Big Brothers/Big Sisters of
Forsyth County Inc.

Reforming Electorate

To the Editor:

If Congress is serious about change — if it is serious about

to lack of sufficient funds. The American electoral process is not working as it should.

Partial public financing will return citizens and voters to the central role in elections by telling candidates they don't have to go to the highest bidder to compete. Public financing is the cleanest money in American politics. It is financing with "no strings attached."

To pay for partial public financing, we must limit the business tax deduction available to lobbyists.

Campaign finance reform must also crack down on PAC contributions. President Clinton's plan would limit PAC contributions to

appreciation to and deep respect for the Chronicle for its response to Salem College's incident of racial bigotry. You objectively reported the facts in your news story and perfectly drew the positive meaning of the story in your editorial.

Students, faculty and administration were shamed by the incident; as you said the perpetrator(s) "undermine everything that Salem has fought to achieve since 1783 when it educated its first African-Americans." We faculty were proud of our students who one after another publicly condemned this cowardly and hateful act, and expressed their solidarity with their

sister students who were Black. We were equally proud of our administration, our president, Dr. Thrift, and our dean of students, Dr. Farris, who immediately responded with outrage about the incident and support for the offended students.

As you implied, Salem College is taking another step into the modern age. For the first time we now have enough Black students that we can now have an act of racial bigotry! Be assured that we will stand fast, publicly and immediately, against such acts. Your objective and positive responses make it all the easier and more rewarding. It is a privilege for us to work with you for the advancement of our community.

Miriam Blackman
Elizabeth Bohl
The League of Women Voters

Thanks from Salem

To the Editor:

I write to express my deep

Sid Kelly
Salem College

CHRONICLE MAILBAG Our Readers Speak Out

reforming a discredited electoral system — it must support a strong and effective plan to reform campaign financing. The campaign finance reform plan proposed by President Clinton fits the bill and should be passed in Congress.

Our legislators cannot serve the public interest while beholden to special interests. If we are going to build a better health care system, reduce the deficit and protect our environment, the day-to-day influence of special interests on our legislators must be curbed. Congress must put the American people before big money contributors.

Candidates are lured toward special interest contributions which have strings attached. The challengers, are frequently prevented from running competitive races due

House candidates to 33 percent and Senate candidates to 20 percent of total spending.

Soft money contributions must be strictly regulated and the "soft money loophole" closed so that existing laws cannot be circumvented.

We need fundamental campaign finance reform to get the country's electoral process back on track.

VOICES FROM THE COMMUNITY

Alderman Larry Womble has come under attack recently for a letter he sent to the National Civic League, addressing issues that, in part, kept officials from naming Winston-Salem an All-American City. The Chronicle asked residents whether Womble should have sent the letter. Here are their responses:



James Blaine Russell, 35
Yadkin County DOT



Clara Stegall, 46
Dillard's department store



Donna Lineberger, 16
Carver High School student



Reginald McKinney, 27
R.J. Reynolds



Joy Shannon, 27
Supreme Cleaners

"If Womble would concern himself with inner-city problems and do a little more with black politicians he would see a different picture. He is using his anger in a way that is separating the city."

"I'm glad he did. I think he told the truth. He made people aware of what's going on in Winston-Salem."

"I agree that Winston-Salem is racist, but racism is everywhere. But as a city, things are getting better. I don't agree with him downing us, especially with us electing him."

"In some parts, there is a lot of racism. If we had gotten it (the All-America City award), I still would think we wouldn't deserve it."

"Yes, because it's true. We all should come together as a community."

Winston-Salem Chronicle

Ernest H. Pitt
Publisher/Co-founder

Richard L. Williams
Managing Editor

Established in 1974
Ndubisi Egemonye
Co-Founder

Elaine Pitt
Director of Community Relations

Michael A. Pitt
Advertising Manager

Mel White
Circulation Manager

Vipaporn Ratananincheri
Office Manager



Mayor Martha Wood at recent press conference.

Respecting the Police

Mayor Martha Wood was on target when she said residents should respect law enforcement officers. We couldn't agree more. Police officers put their lives on the line every day serving the city's residents.

But while her statement certainly should be heeded, her message would have been stronger had police Chief George Sweat accompanied the mayor at her City Hall



George Sweat

Chief Sweat has refused to talk to the Chronicle.

press conference two weeks ago. Many African Americans believe Sweat has little regard for the black community. He vehemently opposed

formulation of the Citizens Police Review Board; his department has had several violent and deadly run-ins with the African-American community; and he refuses to talk to the local black press.

Had Sweat been at the press conference with Mayor Wood, it would have sent at least a token message that he is concerned about blacks in this town, since it is the town's black residents who most often come in contact with the criminal justice system. If he had been there, it would also have given this newspaper its first opportunity in several months to question Chief Sweat about his police department. The Chronicle has not had that opportunity because, for whatever reasons, he has refused to talk with us. His comments, however, are often heard or seen on local television stations and in the city's daily newspaper.

Mayor Wood's message, coming on the heels of two shootings — one in which a white officer shot and killed an unarmed black man during a struggle — was not as powerful or meaningful as it could have been, simply because she stood alone that Friday afternoon at City Hall. Perhaps Sweat intended to send a not-so-subtle message.

If Sweat doesn't care about changing his image to the black community, then he shouldn't be afforded the respect of the black community. And since police officers are an extension of the man at the top, well... And instead of respect, when those officers put on their uniform and strap a firearm to their side, thanks to the chief's attitudes, they will not get respect. Fear, perhaps, but not respect. Respect, after all, is earned by consistently displaying integrity, fairness and forthrightness, and those qualities are highly debatable under Chief Sweat's administration.

Credo of the Black Press

The Black Press believes that America can best lead the world away from antagonisms when it accords to every person — regardless of race or creed — full human and legal rights. Hating no person, the Black Press strives to help every person, in the firm belief that all are hurt as long as anyone is held back.

How To Reach Us

Production Department
723-9026
Kathy Lee
Debroah Holiday-Belcher
Crystal Wood

Business Office
722-8624
Donna Conrad
LaCheryl Mitchell
Emma Jean Pitts

News Department
723-8448
Karen Hannon
Mark R. Moss
Deby Jo Ferguson

Advertising Department
722-8628
Cliff Hunt
Judie Holcomb-Pack

Circulation Department
722-8624

Walter Mickle
Todd Fulton

Vannell Robinson
Patrick Edmunds

Winston-Salem Chronicle