

LETTERS/OPINIONS

Winston-Salem Chronicle

The Twin City's Award Winning Weekly

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Editorials

Missing the Point

It's a doggone shame that whenever black folks get together for any positive occasion, some folks attempt to portray it as something it isn't. The latest occurrence is this week's Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association Basketball Tournament, which is being hosted here through Saturday. This tournament, in its 49th year, is one of the oldest and most successful basketball tournaments in the land — black or white.

Unfortunately, mainstream media and a conservative black columnist at the daily newspaper here do not want to recognize it for what it is. Instead, they are attempting to remove the chief element — basketball — from the event. They are attempting to paint this occasion as one wherein between 20,000 and 30,000 black folks get together and drink and party.

Sure old friends will reacquaint with each other, fraternity brothers and sorority sisters will share tales. But for a columnist to suggest that "the tournament has very little to do with sport" and that "there will also be a few dalliances with spouses other than one's own" attempts to take away from the very thing that has made the CIAA Tournament successful in the first place. That, folks, is the fact that a fine brand of basketball is played by these 14 CIAA member institutions.



When the Atlantic Coast Conference attracts more than 40,000 to its annual tournament next month, will mainstream media report that it has little to do with sport? Or will they tout it as some of the finest basketball in the land. The latter, of course.

Well, CIAA teams play some pretty good ball, too. And they produce some pretty fine basketball players, to boot.

Bobby Dandridge (Norfolk State) was a starting forward on the NBA championship team of the Milwaukee Bucks in the early seventies. Earl Monroe (Winston-Salem State) led his college team to a national championship and went on to become one of the greatest players in the NBA with the New York Knicks and the Washington Bullets. Charles Oakley (Virginia Union) may win a championship this year with the New York Knicks. There are many others: Ken Bannister (St. Augustine's and the New York Knicks); Mike Davis (Virginia Union); Ralph Talley (Norfolk State); Mike Gale (Elizabeth City State). The list is endless.

Some potential NBA players will be on the hardwood this week, too: Brian Brooks (Bowie State); Corey Williams (Norfolk State); and Phenizee Ransom (Winston-Salem State).

Legendary CIAA coaches John McLendon, Leroy Walker and many others labored hard and against many odds in the Jim Crow South to make this tournament what it is today. And it is not fair to them or to this week's participants to belittle it.

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.

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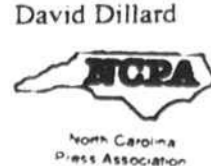
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Ministers Call for New Policy on High-Speed Chases

To the Editor:

The tragic death of Christopher Holman demonstrates the urgent need for a revised pursuit of policy for the Winston-Salem Police Department. The unfortunate and avoidable death of Christopher Holman, points to the fact that there needs to be a change in police mentality and methods when apprehending minor code violators. There is no question that Daray Hickman's violation led to young Christopher Holman's death, yet we also contend that the police have some culpability in this tragic loss of life.

Firm policies must be initiated in order to guarantee the safety of innocent residents, pedestrians and motorists on our busy streets and neighborhoods. We would hope that the police would not be more cavalier in high speed pursuits on the East side of Winston-Salem than the West. Police departments across the nation are recognizing the horrible toll of the lives of innocent citizens due to policies that encourage lack of judgement and insensitivity in pursuit of traffic or minor code violators.

We call upon our city officials and police department to join the rest of the nation in developing more enlightened pursuit policies. It is important that guidelines be developed which can be readily applied by officers in their performance of their duty. Thus the safety of our citizens may be guaranteed and the circumstances leading to the tragic death of Christopher Holman.

Rev. Ronald P. Davis
 Rev. Serenus T. Churn
 Rev. John Mendez
 Rev. Carlton Eversley

Reaction Disappointing

To the Editor:

On February 10th, I was fortunate enough to have been invited to attend a conference and workshop at the Benton Convention Center sponsored by the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools and the Mayor's Violence Reduction Task Force, along with the United Way of Forsyth County.

The workshop was titled "Together We Can," a part of the Safe Schools Initiative.

In attendance were representatives from the schools, community-service agencies, local police and sheriff departments, members of the Mayor's Task Force, probation and court personnel, students and concerned parents.

The workshop was both enlightening and alarming, as we shared ideas in an attempt to somehow get a grip on the problem of violence in our schools.

Because of the varied groups represented, a lot of us were made to understand some of the reasons and causes that have allowed vio-



Quincy Jones, left, and Berry Gordy converse during rehearsal for "The Jackson Family Honors" show in Las Vegas Saturday. Gordy will be presented with a Lifetime Achievement Award for his immense contributions to the pop culture.

lence to become a way of life in some of our schools.

Our moderator for the day, Linda Moore, from the Institute of Educational Leadership in Washington, D.C., was very knowledgeable on the subject and offered us food for thought in the way we should deal with the problem.

I am sorry to say there were only two things that marred the day: one was the early conclusion of the day's activities because of the inclement weather, which couldn't be helped, and the other was the actions of Urban League President Dee Smith.

Although Ms. Moore was conducting a workshop that she has done countless times, in the manner that she has found to be the most effective, it was not to the satisfaction of Ms. Smith.

After being summarily rebuked in her attempt to change the direction of the program, Ms. Smith proceeded to turn her chair away from the speaker. After about 10 minutes of talking to those seated at the table with her, incidentally while someone else was talking, she then got up and walked out.

If that is the way she reacts every time she doesn't get her way, then she should have stayed for the part of the discussion where we dealt with childish behavior and its consequences.

With her kind of leadership, the Urban League of Winston-Salem will most assuredly suffer and be unable to have any impact in solving this most pressing problem.

The workshop brought together a group of individuals who are concerned about the future of our children. Conspicuous by their absence were members of the Board of

Alderman and the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County School Board.

These two groups have conspired in their ineffectiveness to polarize this community along racial lines to the disadvantage of us all.

We have school board members who continue to clamor about the need for new schools in the towns of Clemmons and Kernersville that white children will not have to ride the bus for long periods of time each day. Well, ladies and gentlemen, black kids aren't fond of the bus rides either.

And our own Walter Marshall, the educator and protector of the weak, has done a grave disservice to

all the black parents who are trying to raise their children right by saying in essence, "Forgive the black male child for misbehaving because he has been raised to be aggressive."

In closing, I would like to say that I feel privileged to have been a participant in the workshop, and I look forward to its conclusion on March 1st. Also, thanks to Mrs. Butler and Mrs. Christolm for selecting me to be on the panel of parents.

And to County Commissioner Earline Parnon, you knew me all the time, because we share the same bond, an interest in our children.

Steven A. Floyd

About letters . . .

The Chronicle welcomes letters as well as guest columns from its readers. Letters should be as concise as possible and should be typed or legibly printed. The letter must also include the name, address and telephone number of the writer to ensure the authenticity of the letter. Columns must follow the same guidelines and will be published if they are of interest to our general readership. The Chronicle will not publish any letters or columns that arrive without this information. We reserve the right to edit letters and columns for brevity and clarity. Submit letters and columns to:

Chronicle Mailbag
 P.O. Box 1636
 Winston-Salem, N.C. 27102

To Imprison 3-Time Offenders for Life Won't Work

In baseball, when a batter gets three strikes, he's out. Real life is a lot more complicated, which is why the national drive to imprison three-time criminal offenders for life won't work.

It won't curb crime, but it will lead to an orgy of prison building and to massive injustices.

But the three-strikes-and-out steamroller seems unstoppable. Even the President, who should know better, supported it as a feature of federal anti-crime legislation. And many governors are trying to impose it in their own states.

It is a response to the popular fear of violent crime and to frustration that all the tough crime laws passed in recent years haven't curbed crime.

But the three-strikes formula is just that — a formula. And mechanistic, artificial formulas never work in human affairs.

One problem with it is: what is a felony? That's a critical question if you're changing the law to automatically imprison people convicted of three felonies for life.

For some heinous crimes, such as murder, rape, and kidnaping, the three-strike rule may not be needed since current law provides for long prison terms.

For others — the ones that most concern the average person, such as mugging and drug dealing — life sentences are of doubtful effectiveness since such crime are mostly committed by young people while they are young.

Removing them from society for a lengthy period of time is defensible. But a life term isn't. Stiff penalties for offenders would ensure that

such individuals are off the streets during the period of their active crime careers.

And by definition, younger offenders are those most amenable to changing and to rehabilitation efforts.

Looking down the road, I predict the three strikes-and-out movement will lead to a taxpayer backlash.

Once the prisons become clogged and scarce resources are poured into building new prisons to accommodate the huge influx of prisoners created by laws mandating life imprisonment and longer terms, Americans will recognize the monster they've created in their panic about crime.

In opposing quick fixes like mandatory life term, I'm not ignoring punishment's role in curbing crime nor the need for action to increase people's security.

Nor do I romanticize criminal elements who prey upon their communities. African American suffer most from violent crime, both on a personal basis and on an economics basis, since fear of crime acts as a deterrent to job-creating businesses in our communities.

But because I am very serious about the need to curb crime, I want to see us adopt realistic measures, not easy solutions that won't work.

I suspect the President understands that,

because while he backed three-strikes-and-out, he also spoke very eloquently about the need for community policing, expand drug-treatment programs, gun control, values, and jobs.

Tinkering with sentencing laws just helps people kid themselves about crime.

It's a lot tougher to organize communities to enforce solid values, to keep young people straight, to make school performance important to youngsters, to keep druggies out of our neighborhoods and to help people who are hooked on

TO BE EQUAL

By JOHN E. JACOB



drugs to get off them.

Doing those and the other hard things necessary to curb crime and violence will take individual activism by the "good" citizens of the community. And it will take investments by government on a scale sufficient to support those efforts and make a difference — investments a lot wiser than those earmarked for overstocked prisons.

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