

OPINION/LETTERS

Winston-Salem Chronicle

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In Black & White

As family members continue to mourn the horrendous and brutal slayings of 10 young women allegedly killed by Henry Louis Wallace in Charlotte over the past two years, we agonize over the thought that perhaps law-enforcement officials did not aggressively investigate these slaying because all of the victims were black and not of "high society."

Clearly there were some common denominators that linked the killings early on and placed Mr. Wallace snugly in the puzzle: Mr. Wallace was the boyfriend of one of the victim's roommates. Police questioned him after Carolyn Love was reported missing in June 1992. But it wasn't until March 9, following the death of victim No. 8 Brandi Henderson that police saw a pattern. Mr. Wallace was arrested on March 12.

It is not surprising that law-enforcement officials did not pursue Mr. Wallace in 1992. Law-enforcement officials did not see the urgency to investigate Ms. Love's case.

We live in a country where the criminal-justice system is made up of white men, has always been antagonistic toward blacks, and is less concerned about blacks killing off each other. We also live in a country where police departments are made up of rogue white racists — male and female.

Because of those factors, law-enforcement officials unquestionably pursue black men — particularly young black men — more aggressively than they do white perpetrators of crimes. It is also a well-known fact that law-enforcement officials pursue black men with a much greater enthusiasm and aggression when they commit crimes against whites. There is always less enthusiasm when the victim of a criminal act is black. That enthusiasm wanes further when the victim and the perpetrator are black.

That explains why there are so many young black men connected to the criminal-justice system in some way. This is the way it is in almost every city in almost every state in the nation, including our very own. If it were not the case, then why are police so quick to call the March 13 deaths of Raymond and Teresa Graham a murder-suicide instead of launching a full-scale investigation. In America, whites believe a black life — or death — is meaningless; that blacks are no more than animals to be locked away in America's jails.

In Minnesota, for instance, blacks make up 7 percent of the population, but 48 percent of jail population.

Had Mr. Wallace committed the one category of crime — black-on-white crime — that gets this country moving, it is likely that the death toll would not have reached double-digit figures. But as it currently stands in America, black-on-black crime gets discussed; white-on-white crime gets overlooked; and black-on-white crime gets action.

Racial Healing

Sunday mornings — the day of worship — is clearly the most segregated day of the week in this country. But as the day approaches when we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ, it is a good feeling to see two Baptist congregations of different races come to together for the sake of worship.

It is a noble effort on the parts of First Baptist Church, an African-American church in East Winston, and Wake Forest Baptist Church, which has a predominantly white congregation, to come together and recognize the need for racial healing in this community.

The Revs. Wendell Johnson of First Baptist and Richard Groves of Wake Forest Baptist should be commended for the vision they showed in bringing the two congregations together. But if the fruits of their labor are to be truly realized, then not only will blacks and whites have to coexist on Sunday mornings, but Monday through Friday as well. This means that more doors of opportunity will have to be opened for blacks. If not, then the gulf between the haves and the have-nots will become greater and we all suffer.

Let's hope that the two churches' joint commitment to work together to construct a Habitat for Humanity house for an East Winston family will be an example for other individuals, agencies and companies to follow.

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. Having 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.

Outstanding Support for "Taste of New Orleans" Gala

To the Editor:

The children, staff and volunteers of Best Choice Center wish to thank the citizens of Winston-Salem for their unqualified support of our "Taste of New Orleans" Gala in late January. Our months of preparation and the enthusiasm of the supporters brought about an important and significant moment in the life of our fair city. Flow Motors and West Third Street Management were the sponsors of this wonderful event, but it is the children of Best Choice Center who are the beneficiaries.

Literally hundreds of volunteers helped up and more than fifty local businesses provide "in-kind" contributions of truly immense proportions. We had outstanding support from the corporate community which should be commended in these difficult times of "coming through once again." We also had great support from private citizens who became benefactors of Best Choice as Scholarship Sponsors.

About 300 people enjoyed the fabulous cooking of Chef John Folse of New Orleans at SECCA on Friday night. Our superb local chef, Don McMillan, prepared authentic Cajun style food for an additional 530 people on Saturday night at the Sawtooth Center and a huge crowd enjoyed the music of the Preservation Hall Jazz Band at the Stevens Center. We tried to have something for everyone and I think we succeeded very well.

And, last but not least, the proceeds of this event were far above our expectations. The \$40,000 that was raised is already being spent on the after-school programs at Best Choice Center. The program will continue and our thanks will continue as long as the need is there.

Winston-Salem take a bow! This is a truly special community. Your energy and enthusiasm are indeed infectious. Many. Many Thanks.

Ellen B. Hazzard
Chairman, Best Choice Center

Tobacco Tax

To the Editor:

As a participant in the March 9 bus trip to Washington, D.C., to protest a 75-cent federal excise tax increase on cigarettes, I was appalled at the latest news from our nation's capital. In their infinite wisdom, the Health Subcommittee of the Ways and Means Committee is seeking a \$1.25-cent increase in the cigarette excise tax.

The willingness of so many of political leaders to continually single out tobacco as a solution to health care reform makes me question both their wisdom and their compassion. Either they don't understand the devastating economic impact that a massive tobacco tax would have on the Southeast or they don't care. I don't know which alternative is more frightening.

I hope that everyone, whether or not they are directly employed by the tobacco industry, will call of write their representatives in Congress. We must make them understand that punishing the tobacco industry is not a politically acceptable solution to health care reform.

Those who choose to turn their backs on this issue might just find themselves caught in the cross hairs of Washington's next bright idea to "enhance revenue."

John W. Singleton Jr.

A Great Leader

To the Editor:

This is in response to a letter that appeared in the Editorial section of this paper on Thursday, Feb. 24, 1994. The article "Reaction Disappointing" was written by Steven Floyd in reference to a recent conference sponsored by several community organization, of which "D" Smith, President/CEO of the Winston-Salem Urban League, is a part of.

The undersigned writer take exception to the statements made about the demeanor of Mrs. Smith. First, he should have sought information as to her credentials. Second, he should have tried to ascertain if her leaving was deliberate or

if she had another engagement. Third, this newspaper should have investigated to ascertain if there was any merit to the allegations made therein. None of these things were done, therefore, allegations were made assassinating her character.

To say that . . . "there were only two things that marred the day: one was . . . and the other was the actions of Urban League President Dee (misspelled) Smith," was unfounded. Let us set the record straight for Mr. Floyd. Mrs. Smith left the workshop due to prior engagement which can be verified by her administrative assistant. She left after having informed persons sitting at her table. Floyd Davis and Florence Corpening of the United Way. If Mr. Floyd would recall, the presenter, Mrs. Linda Moore was also seated at the table with Mrs. Smith.

Evidently, Mr. Floyd does not know Mrs. Delores J. "D" Smith, and has not bothered to inquire about her skills, abilities and credentials. She is a well-educated, well-read, and well-informed African-American female who is up front about the concerns of the African-American community. She is very competent administrator, and has guided the Winston-Salem Urban League in a most professional manner. She has created and implemented new programs at the Urban League to help to entire community. She has conducted workshops throughout the state of North Carolina in cultural sensitivity and



Delores Smith

race relations. With her leadership, the Urban League has grown, and is gaining notoriety by her presentations. One may say that she is outspoken, but she stands by her beliefs and convictions. If she is wrong, she is the first to admit to being wrong. But to falsely accuse her of exhibiting "childish behavior" is totally without merit.

Mr. Floyd, we invite you to come by the Winston-Salem Urban League and see what we are all about. We further invited you to become a part of our workshop, "Bridging the Gap in Race Relations" and maybe then, you will have a different opinion of the Urban League, and its great leader, Delores J. ("D") Smith. We the staff of the Winston-Salem Urban League support "D" Smith 100 percent as an excellent president and leader.

Otto Gaither, Roy Hampton, Bonnie McCray, Mary McGriff, Alberta McMillian, Doretha Manning, B. Wellington Moseley, Athena Puryear, Cleopatra Solomon, Dorcus Thompson, Beulah Bunch, Mildred Solomon
Staff of Urban League

Needless Gap

To the Editor:

There is an historic district in East Winston known as Reynolds Town suffering from social and economic neglect. Reynolds Town is a cluster of homes bounded by Jackson Avenue on the west; Ferrell Avenue on the east; Tenth Street on the north and Temple Street 7th Street on the south. This past Saturday while driving through this area rounding up youngsters for the Save Our Youth Concert scheduled for April 8, a 12-year old of the Reynolds Town Youth Association said to me, "I don't want to sing but our basketball team needs a coach and someone that we can practice as a team." He said that his team could not get into a league and couldn't find a coach. He did agree to sing with the city wide mass

choir if I would coach his team. We, the parents of this association will continue to do what we can for our children, but we need some help over here. There is a needless gap in service to the youth of Reynolds Town.

Nearby, to the south, the East Winston Economic Development Commission refurbished Ferrell Court with improved housing and services. To the north from 10th Street to 14th Street, the East Winston Restoration Association caused the construction of new homes in sharp contrast to the deteriorating homes in Reynolds Town. West of Ferrell Street is the new shopping center. The old homes in Reynolds Town are decaying, but hopefully the African-American Summit will include this forgotten community in their plans to Save Our Youth.

Shedrick Adams
Reynolds Town Youth Assn.

False Image

The Parent-Teacher-Student Association Presidents for every middle school in the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County System decided that we cannot sit back and allow a false negative image of our middle schools to impact parents' decisions about whether to send their children to a public or private middle school.

As parents, we investigated and evaluated middle schools and made a conscious choice to send our children to public sector. We have seen those schools operate first-hand. Some of us have our second or third child presently in a public middle school, and we are unanimously convinced that our children are receiving a top-notch education. The middle-school administrations with whom we work are innovative and motivated. The teachers are talented and caring. The facilities and curriculum are good and continually improving. Our children receive good care. Ironically, each of us has observed the public middle schools because there is a great internal effort for improvement.

Middle school years are difficult—regardless of the school setting—because those years are particularly stressful adolescent years for children. No school is without some blemishes, but on balance, we strongly believe that the richness of the public school experience has been the best choice for our children.

Our experience and statistics show that parents who have confidence in the elementary and high school decide to send their child to a private middle school because of misconceptions about our middle schools. It is unfortunate for the children whose parents choose an alternative without giving the public schools a chance to show how good they really are. Some parents have never visited a middle-school campus, have never talked with the staff and faculty, and do not question the validity of the rumors that they hear.

The positive side of the middle-school experience does not make a

compelling news story and is seldom reported. The full story is that the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County School System does a fine job educating our 6th, 7th, and 8th graders. We wanted you to know that, without exception, every president of every middle-school PTSA believes that our children's school experience has been the right educational experience. We encourage you to find out about that experience from the faculty, administration, and parents with children in the public middle schools. We are confident that you will be pleasantly impressed with the truth!

Reg and Heather Whitaker, Vivian Garman, Bob & Carol Benford, Doug & Leila Punger, Rich & Sharon Guarino, Ressa & Tracy Alexander, Susan Branch, Linda Hale, Cathy Stepp, Debbie & Gene Dickey, Alice & Wally Cox, Betsy Lindsay, John & LouAnn Watson
Middle School PTA Presidents

Banning Cigarettes

To the Editor:

I am writing to express how I feel about banning cigarettes. There are other issues that face our nation that seem more important such as killing, rape, child abuse, alcohol and cocaine. People are killing each other every day and drunk drivers pose more of a threat to our lives than cigarettes. My wife was killed by a drunk driver. Why isn't there as much concern about those kind of issues? I'll tell you why it's not.

•Because black crime rate is highest, you allow it to continue since that means one less black to deal with in this country.

•Alcohol consumption is tolerated because the government controls it.

•Child abuse and rape have plummeted the news media like never before, yet there are limited defense to prevent these crimes.

Another consideration that no one seems to care about is the economic impact of Reynolds' employees losing their jobs. If these employees lose their security, the crime rate will increase, as well as unemployment and homelessness.

Smoking should be a decision made by each individual adult. The constitution grants us the right to make choices about our lifestyles. We will all die some cause eventually. So, if a person choose to smoke, being fully aware of the possibilities, it should be their right to do so. When a death occurs from an automobile accident, do you demand that the manufacturer discontinue designing that model? Think about the farmers and paper companies that will be affected if the tobacco industry folds.

In my opinion, all the negative publicity about cigarettes has been overstated and overemphasized, especially when there are more pressing issues that need to be addressed so that Americans can feel safe in this country. Something is sadly wrong with this picture.

Melrose V. Hall

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

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