

OPINION/LETTERS

Winston-Salem Chronicle

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A Listless List

If the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County school board cannot see that it has selected a less than stellar list of candidates for the position of superintendent, then our board is in more of a quagmire than we think. The list of semifinalists, and ultimately finalists, for the job to run a school system with nearly 40,000 school children clearly raises serious questions on the motives of the current school board.

And with this list of candidates, the board and its screening committee should be questioned on several fronts.

First, how can the board ensure that it has selected a diversified pool of applicants if it does not even know the race of those applying. Second, the school board has been too secretive in the selection process, charging board member Walter Marshall to raise the issue of whether some of the discussion should have been held publicly.

And finally, this school board should not have the charge of finding a superintendent anyway. All nine school-board positions are up for re-election in November. Also, one incumbent lost her seat in the primary election. We wonder what input she has had in the selection process.

What we have, in effect, is a secretive, lame-duck school board charged with the task of finding a superintendent, at about \$100,000 a year, for the fifth-largest school district in the state. It does not make very much sense for the board to have that charge — especially from a cast of characters who over the years have displayed very little cohesiveness or consensus-building and have wallowed in partisan politics. Parents and the community at large have a right to be wary. But with a school board that does things so secretly, it's difficult to keep a watchful eye.

Pathways & Partnerships

They said it couldn't be done! They said that African-Americans' voices would not be heard. They said blacks did not know enough about the process to provide meaningful input. They said the "power structure" would not change its traditional ways of doing things. WELL, THEY WERE WRONG!

The city, the East Winston CDC and the African-American community came together, agreed on their disagreements and produced an enterprise-community document that differed dramatically from the one presented last week. A tremendous effort was put forth by several individuals in merely one week's time to perform the major surgery that was apparently needed on the first draft.

The city and the county now have the foundation for a plan that can carry well into the next century. We encourage all local government bodies and community organizations to endorse the plan. But read it first. It is painfully honest and provides food for thought for all well-meaning citizens of Forsyth County. We especially encourage the school system to adopt the letter and spirit of the plan.

We now feel our city has just as good a chance as anyone else in the nation of receiving the enterprise-community designation, which would be a boom for the community. Even without the designation, the plan is still workable if the same will, spirit and attitude is used in the implementing as was used in developing the document. In fact, it would be a shame if this new momentum in a new direction with a new spirit and a new attitude were lost. No obstacles can be larger than the ones faced in acknowledging our weaknesses.

We congratulate all involved and offer the following suggestions for moving forward:

* Create a smaller, pamphlet-sized synopsis in common language and take it back to our communities — black and white — for education on the content of the plan. Involve every church, club, organization and group and obtain commitments from each to work in earnest on one aspect of the plan.

* When the Enterprise Community Board is formed, ensure that all board members are elected rather than selected. Install a true democratic process in formation of the board. Let the city, county and foundations place more than one candidate in nomination and let the residents of the enterprise community decide. To elect one group and appoint another is another example of doing it the old way.

* Finally, let the neighborhoods put forth a written proposal for what they want for their neighborhoods. The concept of "from the bottom up" — we prefer from the inside out — must be carried through to the ultimate primary beneficiaries: the neighborhoods. Stimulate the neighborhoods to action and innovation as Washington has stimulated the cities. We have only seen the tip of the iceberg in terms of will, spirit and talent in the enterprise community. Empowerment and pride should be goal number one in implementation. Giving birth to a new attitude, a new philosophy, a genuine new beginning is painful. Now that we have faced some of the pain, let the true healing begin.

Some Info in Coverage of Gaines Classic was Wrong

To the Editor:

Thank you very much for your coverage of the Fifth Annual Bighouse Gaines Spring Classic. We appreciate your willingness to help us publicize this event. However, we must correct some rather glaring factual errors by your contributing writer, Samuel G. Puryear Jr.

First, and very importantly, Mr. Puryear indicated that this event is sponsored by the Winston-Salem Foundation. It is not. The Gaines Classic is sponsored annually by the Winston-Salem State University Foundation.

Next, Mr. Puryear reports that this event "far exceeded \$18,000." While we appreciate Mr. Puryear's optimism, had he made official inquiries with our tournament committee, he would have discovered that the actual proceeds were of a much more modest nature.

Lastly, we feel it crucial that we clarify another misleading statement in Mr. Puryear's article. Proceeds from this event do not benefit the university's athletic department nor are the designated for any specific sport. As indicated on all promotional materials for the Gaines Classic, proceeds from this event benefit the university's athletic scholarship fund. Again, had Mr. Puryear taken the time to interview any member of the tournament committee, this fact would have been clarified.

Again, we appreciate your newspaper's efforts to provide us much-needed coverage. We point out these errors only in the interest of insuring the credibility of the

Bighouse Gaines Classic, which everyone involved has worked diligently to maintain.

The 1994 Bighouse Gaines Classic Committee

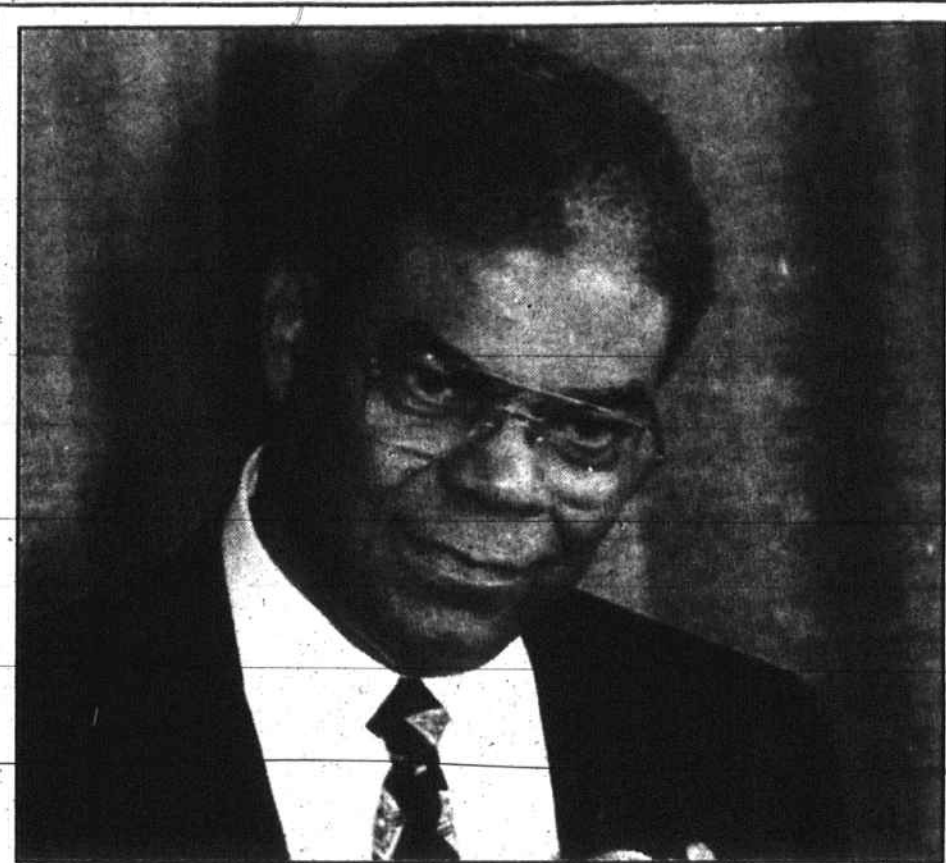
Drugs No Glamour

To the Editor:

This letter is in response to the May 19 issue pertaining to the probation officer who responded to "Alex" issue.

It was not to glamorize drug dealing, but to enlighten you on how things are on the other side. I was not encouraging no one or nobody, because every man has his or her own problems. If there were no crimes or drug dealers, you would be working somewhere else, correct? That's how it all started.

Obviously, you picture me as a hoodlum and very disrespectful young man, and I might visualize you as an oppressed officer, but that's not the issue what you think about me, because that does not put food on my family's table. The only thing that will help thousands are



Dr. Lonnie R. Bristow of San Pablo, Calif., addressed a news conference in Chicago Sunday. Bristow, chairman of the American Medical Association board, was voted as the AMA's first black president-elect Sunday. He will take on the largely speech-making role of president a year from now.

CHRONICLE MAILBAG

Our Readers Speak Out

better jobs than community service (that's free). There wasn't a problem with drugs till Afro-Americans were getting a part of the share. There wasn't a problem till youths

were living lavishly. I may be a candidate for federal prison, but until we see a difference in the community things will have to stay the same, and drug dealers, as well as myself, know the consequences and risks that we take, along with the money. And special thanks to the Winston-Salem Chronicle for printing my side of the story.

"Alex"

Our Children Still Have Hope. Do We?

According to statistics, the media, and even some African-American adults, our children's chances for survival are disheartening. An overwhelming majority (83%) of black adults surveyed in a recent black Community Crusade for Children poll agree that these are tough times for black children. But what the poll also revealed is that our children are more hopeful than their parents and other adults. Their idealism and optimism has prevailed over some of the worst circumstances and conditions black children have faced since slavery.

Black youth report that the times they live in are pretty bad. When asked to think about serious problems they and their peers face, they said their biggest concerns are:

- *kids having guns(70%)
- *drugs (68%)
- *violence in schools(66%)
- *dropping out of school(64%)
- *gangs(63%)

Nearly four in 10 say violence is the number one problem facing them today. More than half say they worry about themselves or a family member becoming a victim of violence.

Despite everything they worry about, our children remain hopeful and they are setting their sights high. Three-fourths of our children still believe that if you work hard and try your best, you can be successful and have the kind of life you want. They talk about going to college, about having families of their own, about becoming doctors and lawyers and teachers. One girl in the survey said, "In five years I'll be in college

majoring in forensics."

We can take a lesson from our children. We cannot resign their futures to the crisis at hand. While we must be realistic about the obstacles they face, we must help our youth struggle against the paths that will lead to their destruction rather than their success. As a community, we know that the demons are real:

67% of black adults believe half of all black children will become teenage parents;

65% of black adults believe half or more black children will be denied important opportunities because of prejudice;

62% of black adults think at least half of black children will have their lives destroyed by drugs;

44% of black adults think at least half of black children will get involved with gangs.

Many parents expect the worst, seeming to feel it is only a matter of time until their child becomes a victim. In fact, 82% of caregivers and 77% of black adults say they worry a great deal about their own children or children they know becoming victims of violence. When asked to speak about the situation in their community, 64% consider violence and 72% consider the presence of guns to be a serious problems.

Black adults also fear the influence of drugs and gangs and even that their children won't grow up to be adults. One father revealed the

effects of that fear, not only on himself, but also on our children. "There was a time when I thought I didn't have a future. I know what it feels like," he said. "When I was coming up, I always thought my life expectancy was about 45, but to be 14 and 15 and think you ain't going to make it to 19 — that's real serious."

We know our children are in trouble. But rather than surrender to the gangs and drugs and hopelessness, we must embrace our children's hope and give them the love, support, and guid-

CHILD WATCH

By MARIAN WRIGHT EDELMAN



ance they need to achieve their dreams. As adults we must concern ourselves with the problems that face our youth and we must be realistic. But let's not rob our children of their dreams in the process.

Black adults and children agree that times are bad. But our children haven't given up on us. Let's not give up on them.

(Marian Wright Edelman is the president of the Children's Defense Fund, a leading voice for children, and a leader of the Black Community Crusade for Children. For information about the Crusade, call 1800-ASK-BCCC)

VOICES IN THE COMMUNITY

This week, the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County school system will name a superintendent from a list of six white male semifinalists. Chronicle staff intern Beth Glen asked city residents if they felt this area would be receptive to a black superintendent. Here are their responses:



Carl Miller

"The community is probably too conservative for that right now. The fact that we had to fight so hard to get blacks on the school board indicates that there would be resistance to considering a black superintendent regardless of his qualifications."



Charlie W. Fields

"Not at the time being because there is too much prejudice in this city. They don't like to see blacks in high positions."



Dorothy B. Jordan

"Yes, because we certainly need a black one and we have some people who are above and beyond qualified. We're a growing community and we need the youth to see a positive role model in a black superintendent."



Donnie James

"We need to be receptive because it would give a lot of black students a more positive attitude and someone to look up to."



Millicent Lemon

"I think the city should be ready, though I'm not saying that it is, because we have enough qualified people in this system to fill the position."