

# OPINION/LETTERS

## Winston-Salem Chronicle

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### Equity of Opportunity

Dorothy Graham-Wheeler is interested in the much-talked about, proposed program for at-risk 4-year-olds as much as anyone. And for good reason.

Mrs. Wheeler runs the Best Choice Center on Highland Avenue, and she sees first-hand the myriad of problems many of the children, who are from 5-15, bring to her highly regarded center.

The problems of those children underscore the need for the program to be implemented in the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County school system. The school board, which has begun to study the proposal should move on it post haste.

Our children are growing up ill-equipped. Several school systems across the country have implemented the 4-year-old program. One, Manassas Elementary School in Woodbridge, Va., began seven years ago.

One of the teachers, Ritchie Carroll, said the program has been an overwhelming success. Carroll, who happens to be the daughter of Mrs. Wheeler, said the program gets the children "ready to learn." The intent, she said, is to give them the "equity of opportunity to learn." Part of that is familiarizing them with what they will be faced with when they enter kindergarten at age 5.

Many of these children come from households where the parent is a high school or junior high school student, and there is a need for some intervention. Without it, not only will these children be lost at age 4 and 5, but likely for a lifetime.

### The Waiting Game

Last month, some of this city's more forward-thinking residents and leaders got together and compiled — after much deliberation — a federal grant application that, if awarded, would make a sizable portion of Winston-Salem an enterprise community.

Now that the process has been completed and the application rests in Washington, the waiting process has begun in earnest.

Members of the East Winston Community Development Corp., the city staff and several concerned citizens who provided much-needed input into the document are sitting on pins and needles hoping that Winston-Salem will be one of 104 communities nationwide — 15 applications from North Carolina were submitted — to win the grant, which could be as little as \$3 million and as much as \$100 million.

These grants will allow cities and towns to find ways to deal with issues like poverty, unemployment, lack of health care and education.

The urban enterprise community application includes the long-term goals of economic self-sufficiency and neighborhood revitalization. This strategic plan also highlights partnerships to marshal and sustain human and financial capital.

Winston-Salem — as indeed the entire Triad — is on the cutting edge technological-wise. Although many businesses are downsizing, many others are relocating here bringing more jobs in the area.

There is a dire need for employers and employees in eastern Winston-Salem, where the unemployment rate more than quadruples that of the city at large.

If the city is granted community enterprise status, more jobs will be created in that area and there also will be more opportunities for residents to find work in other parts of the enterprise community. It will also create opportunities for minority entrepreneurship, and equally important, it will create hope in much of the area's disenfranchised that the African-American community is not always getting the short end of the economic stick.

The designation will entail creating jobs for the unemployed, improving benefits and pay scales for the underemployed and attending to the health care needs of the elderly and the working poor.

Gov. Jim Hunt occasionally visits Winston-Salem and he understands the problems that this city and many others in North Carolina face. He supports Winston-Salem's application bid.

"Winston-Salem residents know that by joining together they can make their communities better places to live," Hunt said.

If the city gets the designation, we will be well on our way.

## School Board is Not Self-Serving to Ask for More Pay

To the Editor:

Before the people of Forsyth County leap to an ill-advised, cynical conclusion and confuse the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County school board's altruistic efforts to hire a superintendent as something sleazy and self-serving, they must look closely at the real issues surrounding the search to determine for themselves if the board's request for pay was justified or just another selfish way for a board to manipulate the system for personal gain.

As a member of the board, I have no problems with public criticism when the public is well-informed on the issues; however, the public has been misinformed because the media have not been entirely truthful.

To reach an objective decision as to whether the board's decision was reasonable, the people must first determine what constitutes a reasonable time frame for a part-time board to fulfill its political obligations to the people. Next, they must determine whether a superintendent search is a matter that can be dealt with as a routine agenda item or a matter that requires special sessions and extra time beyond that which has been defined as reasonable. Finally, the issue of compensation must be weighed and compared

with the alternative of hiring a head-hunting consulting firm at four or five times the cost of our compensation request.

Since our main objective to save money and take on the burden of the search ourselves has been questioned, the public must examine the expanding rules that consultant firms play in the day-to-day function of local governments. Otherwise, no

at the formula they use to pay themselves. Furthermore, the Forsyth County commissioners hire consultants to do some of their work. Consultants make a living manipulating part-time elected officials inability to meet public expectations. In addition, the commissioners have the authority to set their own rate of compensation, which is twice that of school board members and they

board's policy on the issue of concern. This board felt so strongly about the public having to pay for an untimely superintendent search that we added a clause to Dr. Martin's contract, which reads: "The superintendent agrees to pay or reimburse the board for its actual expenses to advertise recruit and select a new superintendent of schools; provide, however, that the

## CHRONICLE MAILBAG Our Readers Speak Out

point of reference can be established and confusion will prevail.

Personally, I equate the search for a superintendent to that of a special session of the state Legislature. Items that cannot be attended to during regular sessions must be handled during special sessions. Our legislators are paid for their time and no one seems overly concerned

also enjoy other perks, such as separate telephone lines in their homes to take care of the board's business.

Am I upset with citizens who are concerned about the dark and shady side of politics. Absolutely not! Nevertheless, I do believe that the only way that a citizen can gauge the true values of a governmental body is by examining that

superintendent shall not obligate to pay a sum of more than \$20,000." The clause further stipulates that any untimely termination of his contract would result in his having to pay a sum equal to 15 percent of his remaining salary. Is this action indicative of self serving board?

Walter Marshall  
School board member

### 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.



### Thanks to Art Milligan and Housing Authority

We would like to thank Art Milligan, director of Winston-Salem Housing Authority, for his financial support of the Happy Hill Garden Reunion. You are a man with much class and caring. You believed in the program we created for the community.

Our ancestors gave us our rich heritage.  
Our families gave us life, love and comfort.  
Our Maker gave us each other.

And you gave us great joy by celebrating these gifts with us. Thank you for your contribution to the Happy Hill Reunion Weekend.

— Ben Piggott, Rock Biting  
Happy Hill Garden Reunion Committee and  
William C. Sims Recreation Center.

## We Must Find Ways to End Violence in Our Communities

The hero drives an expensive car and brandishes a gun. Perhaps he implies that he sells drugs and he calls women "hos and bitches." He's a gangsta rap video star and he's listened to by millions of children and young people.

Day after day we see stories of the violence engulfing our cities. Some of us even live those stories. Violence is destroying a whole generation of young people who are not only the victims or the killers, but those who are afraid to leave their homes after dark and even mothers who are said to put their babies to sleep in bathtubs in the hope that stray bullets cannot reach them.

Violence is enslaving those who live miles away in suburban communities remote from the inner cities of America. Because the reality is that children in suburban communities are caught up in the fervor of violence as well. Because the reality is that more and more tax dollars are being used to incarcerate the perpetrators of violence and to pay the astronomical health costs of many of its victims. The reality is that every American is enslaved by violence in some way and we'd all better get busy doing something about it.

Several African-American women Congress are doing just that — they are getting busy and doing something about the violence and negative images found in gangsta rap music. In the process they are taking on the multi-billion dollar entertainment industry and beginning an important public debate.

Both Congresswoman Cardiss Collins and Senator Carol Moseley-Braun have sponsored hearings on violence and demeaning images found in popular music today. Not surprisingly, they found that many music videos depict violence and crime. Not surprisingly, they found many are demeaning to women. Not surprisingly, they found that the addition to violence found in all of American society is a part of rap music culture as well. "We are a society infatuated with violence in a clinically obsessive way," testified a representative of the American Psychiatric Association. Not surprisingly, they found that there is a relationship between exposure to violence and

childhood development.

A symposium held recently by Congressman Tom Lantos of California on violence and video games heard many of the same kinds of testimonies. Indeed, those middle-class suburban parents who think their children are escaping the violence need only to look at some of the video games their children play. Games where women are hunted and hung on meat hooks. Games where captives are beheaded or have their hearts ripped out.

Both the hearings on violence and gangsta rap and those on violence and video games have focussed attention on the entertainment business and the epidemic of violence this nation is suffering. It is estimated that the video game industry earns \$10 billion a year worldwide and that hip hop music, including gangsta rap, generates nearly \$1 billion, or close to 10 percent of the total U.S. music market every year. Without counting the movie industry or the television industry's revenues from movies featuring violence, violence is big business in America.

Thankfully, some of those in the record industry and video game industry also are concerned and there are efforts underway to develop ratings systems for video games and rap music. Already some radio stations across the country, many of them African American owned, have refused to play gangsta rap music. But some critics question how vigilant a self-imposed rating system really will be.

Thankfully, some are beginning to talk with parents to try to make them more aware of the content of the music their children listen to constantly or of the video games they play everyday. But far too many parents remain ignorant or just don't care about what their children watch or hear.

Finally, the hearings are raising important

questions about how music reflects the culture in which it is created. The reality is that as awful, as demeaning, as frightening as the lyrics of gangsta rap music may be, they are only reflective of the economic and social breakdown of the cities in which these young people live.

Music critic and author Nelson George testified at Congresswoman Collins' hearing that this music is a consequence of the long-term lack of employment, the isolation from middle class values and the concomitant adopting of street-values, the contempt for authority, the celebration of male bonding and the rampant consumerism of all of U.S. society.

Similarly, Congresswoman Maxine Waters testified at Senator Moseley-Braun's hearing that gangsta rap was born of the frustration and hopelessness, the raw energy and alienation among



### CIVIL RIGHTS JOURNAL

By BERNICE POWELL JACKSON

inner city youth. She challenged America to listen to the message of these young people, who have been isolated and alienated.

Clearly, we must find ways to end the violence in our communities.

We must get rid of the guns, we must get rid of lyrics, music videos and video games which glamorize violence and desensitize our children to it.

We must find ways to get parents involved. But if we are truly to be successful, we must find ways to give young people hope — hope that they can get jobs, hope that they are valued by society, hope in the future.

There are no fast and easy answers or quick fix solutions.

(Bernice Powell Jackson is the executive director of the United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice.)