

OPINION/LETTERS

Winston-Salem Chronicle

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Pushing an Agenda

As 1994 draws to a close, there is one key issue that African-American community leaders and elected officials should place high on their agendas in 1995 that would enhance eastern Winston-Salem and put it on a little closer to equal footing with other parts of the Twin City: economic development.

Despite a few housing and retail developments that have sprung up recently in eastern Winston-Salem, the area remains greatly lacking in economic development.

One of the best ways leaders can immediately impact on this is through pushing an agenda that will get improved roadways in the area. Accessibility to an area through good roadways is pivotal to an area increasing its economic vitality. Ability to get in and out of an area is important to retailers and to shoppers.

One project currently on the table is the Eighth Street Connector. Community leaders should make sure that the project is well under way in the spring, as planned, and not put on the city's back burner. The \$6.5 million improvement would connect Martin Luther King Jr. Drive to University Parkway and would make it a lot easier for people in East Winston to travel to the Coliseum and other parts of the city. At the same time, it would make it easier for people to enter East Winston to shop at the Eastway Plaza and visit other areas of the African-American community.

An example of this is how maneuverability has been much more easier in that section of eastern Winston-Salem with recent improvements made to 14th Street.

Community leaders should also push to see that the plans are implemented for the Liberty Street Corridor, and that recommendations from the updated Hammer Siler George Study are carried out. They should see to it that funding is provided for many of the study's recommended projects.

The Hammer Siler George study recommends, among other things, holding meetings to educate the East Winston community about efforts that other areas of the city have used to enhance development. It calls for eliminating blighted areas; increasing middle-income housing; locating and helping to attract housing developers to build in East Winston; improving the quality of existing small businesses in the area; and approving loans for start-up businesses.

All of these projects require funding, and our community leaders and elected officials must hold city officials accountable for these projects during the budget process so that adequate money is set aside for them. They will not get funded if no one pushes them; and if they don't get funded nothing will happen.

If carried out, these projects will significantly improve economic development in eastern Winston-Salem.

Some of these projects are currently on the table of the planning board — many others need to be put there — and that's where they might just remain unless someone in the black community spearheads the effort to have the first loads of asphalt poured.

Decade of Development

Cleon Thompson's announcement two weeks ago that he was stepping down as Winston-Salem State University chancellor should not have been a complete surprise.

When he arrived in Winston-Salem in 1985, he told many close to him that he only intended to remain at the former teachers' college for 10 years. True to form, he kept his word.

The past 10 years has been a period of significant development and achievement for Winston-Salem State under Chancellor Thompson's leadership. The improvements have come in several key areas: student profile, faculty profile, curriculum and facilities.

When Chancellor Thompson assumed the role of chancellor, the student enrollment was at 2,425 and the composite SAT score was 612 for the freshman class. Today, those figures are 2,845 and 810, respectively.

He not only improved significantly on those figures, but as he leaves, the number of minority students has increased by 74 percent; the applications by freshmen have increased by 18 percent; the four-year graduation rate has increased from 9 percent in 1986 to 17 percent in 1994; and in 1986, WSSU conferred 218 degrees compared with 467 last May.

Chancellor Thompson also increased endowments, saw a revitalized nursing program during his administration and he placed greater emphasis on undergraduate research.

Since 1985, when Chancellor Thompson took the helm, WSSU has accumulated \$37 million in construction projects and land acquisition.

We wish him well as he leaves a much stronger institution than one he inherited.

Postal Workers Urge Electronic Media to Cover Story

To the Editor:

Over the last four weeks the *Winston-Salem Chronicle* has run front-page news articles concerning allegations of mistreatment and discrimination of current and former postal employees in Winston-Salem. It is our opinion that the *Chronicle* has shown bold leadership and concern by bringing to the attention of the community the adverse conditions of Winston-Salem postal facilities that are affecting the lives of many citizens of Winston-Salem.

We write to urge WXII to become involved by conducting your own in-depth investigation of Winston-Salem postal facilities. It is hoped that the news media of this city have a sincere interest in investigating and reporting news affecting all members of our community, and will respond to the cries for help from postal workers of this city.

There are many fine employees in our postal family who strive daily to serve our customers as best we possibly can and we respectfully request the assistance and involvement of WXII in addressing our concerns.

Bill Campbell
 Editor's note: This letter was written to the news director of WXII.

Apology to Matics

To the Editor:

It has been brought to my attention that I may owe Mr. Matics an apology for calling him a bigot. You can imagine my surprise! I merely said that it was narrow-minded to allow bigotry, slavery and/or racism to dictate one's moral values.

Bigotry is defined as obstinate or blindly having an attachment to a particular creed; an unreasonable zeal in favor of a party, sect or opinion; excessive prejudice; or intolerance. A bigot is a narrow-minded, prejudiced, and intolerant person.

I have not called Mr. Matics a bigot. I do not know the man. Please note that the character of a bigot is very dangerous in any person. You will know the tree by its fruit.

We have struggled for many years to overcome the scars and labels, which society has so chosen to bestow upon us. It seems that people will always complain about our disabilities when we are down and out. Then when we attempt to pick ourselves up, guess who's the first person to try to pull us back down? That's right... the same person. Then

comes the lie: "We don't do that in our system because we are an equal opportunity employment organization. The Bill of Rights and the Constitution govern our rules and regulations." Right? Wrong! We have a right to earn a decent living; to own property; to be treated as human beings; to raise our families in a decent environment; and to be respected the same as you. It is by the back-breaking labors of us common (everyday) people, that people in power have obtained status. Without us, where would you be?

What gives you the authority to change our rights as stated in the Constitution? We all have rights. What would happen if our positions were reversed. Should we treat as you are treating us? Even the Bible teaches us to treat others as ourselves. We respect your rights. Why can't you or should I say, don't you respect ours?

How would you like to have the table turned and have me/us to be the dictators over your future?

John W. Morant
 Greensboro

Holiday Shopping

To the Editor:

As the holiday shopping season advances, members of our organization, along with members of QULST (African-American group within Sara Lee Direct), and the William C. Sims Recreation Center are taking part in the national "Don't Buy War Toys" campaign. We hope that parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles will participate by thoughtfully purchasing toys that are fun and entertaining, toys that foster creativity and imagination in their precious children. We, as adults, have an enormous responsibility to instill the values in our children that will shape them for life.

What kind of message do we send to them when we give them violent video games and war toys as gifts? Violence is incompatible with the message of Christmas. Let's avoid unconsciously promoting violence to the children we love. Wishing you peace in your hearts, homes and neighborhoods this holiday season and the new year.

Ellie Collins

Slave History

To the Editor:

Kristin Goree who was welcomed in Senegal recently is

indeed lucky to be able to trace his ancestry back to Goree Island, the infamous slave island as was stated in an NNPA article describing his return. His name is very precious to Africans and African-Americans as it reminds them of the proud spirit of their ancestors. This is why I am perplexed by a statement in the article which says it was a slave owner who gave Kristin's ancestors their name. Since Goree does not know the story behind his name, this affirmation is not fact but mere conjecture and it ignores relevant history. In fact many Americans kept their names as much and as long as they could.

The Gullahs of the Sea Islands had African names well into the 1940s. The *South Carolina Gazette* lists 126 African names for the slaves from 1732 to 1775. In the archives of Louisiana, Dr. Gwendolyn Heddo-Hall found about 200 African names from 1727 to 1802. Even some "free people of color" held on to their names. In 1778, Paul Slocum, along with eight brothers and sisters, gave up his father's owner's name and took instead his father's African first name, Cuffee. As Paul Cuffee he would become a wealthy ship owner and the father of the Back to Africa Movement. The famous Marie Therese Coincoin, the founder of the Creole dynasty who owned the Melrose Plantation in Louisiana, always kept her African name, Coincoin (Kokwe), of Togolese origin. After she died in 1816, three generations of her descendants added Coincoin to their names.

In fact, history tells us that there was a strong will by many Africans to keep their names. Sometimes it was a true African name, sometimes as with the Goree and Senegal families (the latter in Louisiana) it was the name of the place they came from, still others kept the tradition of naming a child by the day on which he/she was born. Hence the numerous Mondays, Fridays, etc. In fact, Cuffee is the Ashanti name for boys born on a Friday.

In Kristin Goree's case there is little doubt that his ancestors, and not a slave owner, are the ones we must thank for all their resilience and pride. Today Goree Island is symbolically the place of origin of all the African-Americans who wish to reclaim their heritage and we are eager to welcome them back to their ancestral homeland.

Sylviane Kamara
 New York, N.Y.

Jesse, Bubba, Barry

To the Editor:

Republican Senator Jesse Helms of North Carolina, chair of the Foreign Relations Committee, says the President is so unpopular on military bases in that state that he "better watch out if he comes down here" and "better have a bodyguard."

These remarks were made on Nov. 22, the 31st anniversary of the assassination of another president.

They are more than just another brutalization of our public discussion. Many are the nuts roaming this country who don't need any encouragement. Jesse may have incited them.

Jesse does not apologize, but rather justifies the remarks by saying the president is a draft dodger who wants to put homosexuals into the military while cutting its budget.

Only presidents Jesse approves are safe in mutinous North Carolina, now apparently our banana state. But, though extreme and immoderate, Jesse is probably just pandering to Bubba.

Bubba doesn't want to face three facts: that Republicans like Danny-boy Quayle-as well as Democrats avoided the draft during Vietnam; that homosexuals are going to be in the military along with women, blacks, and Unitarians; and that, with the Soviets gone, the military has to downsize to reduce the deficit. Sorry, Bubba.

Bubba is not a nut, but nuts do roam.

In 1964, just after JFK's death, Barry Goldwater proclaimed to the GOP Convention that "extremism in the defense of liberty is no vice and moderation in the pursuit of justice is not virtue." Are Barry's and Jesse's remarks the two ends of a continuing thread of basic Republican thought? Congressional Republicans can say "No" by moving Jesse to another committee and by adding North Carolina to Kansas, Colorado, Hawaii, Alaska and Kentucky as states soon to lose another military unit or base.

Republicans are right about one thing: the need for a return to personal responsibility.

It means disgruntled students do not walk into class and shoot their teacher. It also means disgruntled Senators do not incite assassination of the president.

J.A. Hoage
 Severna Park, MD

Rapper Shakur Brings Bad Media Image to Blacks

Tupac Shakur, the 23-year-old rapper notorious for violent lyrics and frequent brushes with the law, was convicted of first-degree sexual abuse by a New York jury recently. The case is another in the series of young black males continuing their image of violence and crimes against society. The Manhattan court case also gave attribution to the protests of civil rights leaders against "Gangsta Rap."

The verdict against the rapper and his road manager, 24-year-old Charles Fuller, came down less than two days after Shakur was shot five times by three assailants outside a Time Square recording studio. Shakur was entering his recording studio with three acquaintances when three gunmen accosted them, yelled "Give it up," and grabbed a reported \$45,000 worth of diamonds rings and gold chains. According to police, Shakur lunged at one of the men and was shot five times in the ensuing struggle - in the hand, the head and the groin. Although Shakur underwent surgery at Manhattan's Bellevue Hospital, for injuries to his groin, hours later his mother - former Black Panther Afeni Shakur - came and checked him out. "Bellevue was not secure, and Shakur was afraid for his life," said Robert Ellise, one of his attorneys. Although he was

not present for the verdict against him, a heavily sedated Shakur appeared in the courtroom in a wheelchair, wearing a white bandage around his head.

Shakur has been arrested three times on weapons charges and convicted twice of assault, has the phrase "Thug Life" tattooed on his chest and was once interviewed on MTV with a 9mm pistol tucked in his waistband. He had a gunfight with two off-duty Atlanta police officers and an assault on a fellow rapper with a baseball bat. Although he has been publicly chastised by civil rights leaders such as, C. Delores Tucker and Dick Gregory, Shakur was flanked at his trial by his mother and actress Jasmin Guy of "A Different World." A sentencing date is yet to be set and Shakur's lawyer, Michael Warren, said he would appeal the case.

The sexual abuse conviction stems from an incident over a year ago in a New York City hotel room. A woman who Shakur had met in a Greenwich Village nightclub - and who had willingly performed oral sex on him on the dance floor - alleged that Shakur and several of his body guards had engaged in sodomy and forcible sexual abuse when she met Shakur several days later in his room at the Parker Meridien Hotel in mid-

town Manhattan. When police came to investigate the woman's allegation's of "deviant sexual intercourse" and "sexual contact by forcible compulsion," they also found a handgun and filed a weapons charge against Shakur. In one of the many strange twists to Shakur's lifestyles, one of the officers on the scene after Shakur's shooting, and his friends having called 911, was the same

lifestyle," states Olive Vassell, editor of the *Afro-American* newspapers' "Every Wednesday" publication. Statistics show that African-American youth are overwhelmed by violence. Many blacks say Shakur's antics showcase this negative aspect of black life in America.

Shakur's defense that the sex was consensual, and the initial actions of the victims, cast



BUSINESS EXCHANGE

By WILLIAM REED

officer who arrested him in the hotel. "Hi, Officer McKernan," Shakur reportedly said when he saw the policeman.

With Shakur being a best-selling musician and film star, many black leaders cite him and other African-Americans rappers, such as Snoop Doggy Dogg, with creating bad images for the black youth who are the principal consumers of such materials. In fact, many say that his ascendance in the rap world has been directly linked to his increasingly violent behavior off-stage. "It seems the more bad things you do the more respect you get in that music

another cloud on black female youth. He maintained during the trial that the woman had actually assaulted him. "Just because I don't want to be with that girl don't mean she has the right to say I did all these things she said I did. It was her who sodomized me." The jury found Shakur innocent of the weapons and sodomy charges. But it found both men guilty of sexual abuse, which is defined as nonconsensual groping and touching. The two men each face a sentence of 28 months to seven years.

(William Reed is NNPA director of communications.)