

OPINION/LETTERS

Winston-Salem Chronicle

ERNEST H. PITT, Publisher/Co-founder NDUBISI EGEMONYE, Co-Founder

RICHARD L. WILLIAMS, Executive Editor

ELAINE PITT, Director of Community Relations

MICHAEL A. PITT, Advertising Manager MEL WHITE, Business Manager

Quelling a Brewing Storm

It seems that there is some dissension among the ranks at the Forsyth County sheriff's department.

Shortly before the election, some African-Americans became upset when they were told to canvas polling areas and encourage blacks to vote for Republican Sheriff Ron Barker. A few days later an African-American detention officer was fired for allegedly stealing two newspapers from a rack in the jail. Shortly thereafter, Sheriff Barker fired four more African-Americans!

Although Sheriff Barker has vowed to replace the fired African-Americans with workers of the same race, the discord was quickly being galvanized.

This week, Sheriff Barker attempted to put some spin control on the recent negative publicity when he announced the promotions of five people, four of whom are black. While Sheriff Barker says the promotions were not political, they surely ease some of the pressure he had recently felt from the media and from some dissatisfied members of his department.

In a workforce as large as the sheriff's department, there will be turnover, and with that will often come an anti-management sentiment.

That is unfortunate in Ron Barker's case. He has done a good job as sheriff, he seeks out fairness. We endorsed him in November and we continue to support him. More importantly, he deserves the support of the men and women in his employ.

Spirit of Kwanzaa

This weekend marks a special time of the year when families and friends reunite to share good food, goodwill and good fellowship. It is a time for love, and for sharing, and for remembrance.

And as we go through the customary gift-giving over the next few days, let us be reminded that the basis and the root for neither Kwanzaa nor Christmas is commercialization. For Christmas, the European holiday that commemorates the birth of Christ, that came much later.

For Kwanzaa, the African-American holiday founded in 1966 by Maulana Karenga as an alternative to Christmas, we hope commercialization never rears its head. Mr. Karenga believed Christmas had become over-commercialized. He believed this emphasis on the commercial aspect of Christmastide was forcing a lot of African-American families to feel disenfranchised during the holiday.

Kwanzaa, for that reason, concentrates on giving inexpensive, usually handmade items. This not only fails to place families in a financial pinch, but it also fosters independence.

African-Americans must work to keep to Mr. Karenga's dream of a non-commercialized (read: white) Kwanzaa.

Here is a list of local Kwanzaa celebrations:

December 26 — Umoja (Unity); sponsored by the Winston-Salem Urban League at Urban League

December 27 — Kujichagulia (Self-determination); sponsored by the Crawford, Hamlin and Jackson families at the Main Library

December 28 — Ujima (Collective work and responsibility);

sponsored by the Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity at Carl Russell Recreation Center

December 29 — Ujamaa (Cooperative economics); sponsored by the Piggott family and Winston-Salem Business at the Sims Recreation Center and Learning Center.

December 30 — Nia (Purpose); sponsored by Gateways Music Festival at Emmanuel Baptist Church

December 31 — Kuumba (Creativity); sponsored by Friends of the East Winston Library, the Arts Council, Winston Lake Family YMCA at the Y

January 1 — Imani (Faith); sponsored by Emmanuel Baptist Church, the Wade family and Kemet School of Knowledge at Emmanuel

Did You Know ...

That one out of every six dollars in the federal budget goes to pay the interest on the debt. The government overspends to such an extent that it now must borrow money to pay the interest on the money it borrowed previously. The result is that debt gets piled on top of debt and there are fewer and fewer tax dollars to spend on today's needs.

Early Start Program Has Much-Needed Benefits

To the Editor:

As citizens of Forsyth County and graduate students in early childhood education and development, we were dismayed to learn that many of the Forsyth County Commissioners-elect are waffling on whether to support the Early Start program approved by the School Board in September 1994 and unanimously approved for appropriations by the current County Commissioners. As a community, we must carefully consider the wisdom of pulling the rug out from under a potentially important program even before it has been allowed to prove itself.

Research unequivocally supports the financial and social benefits of early childhood programs. The Perry Preschool Program, for example, a 2 year, half day program in Michigan, targeting impoverished 3 and 4-year-olds, showed striking gains to the participating children and community. Participating children had high school graduation rates One-third higher and arrest rates and teen pregnancy rates 40 percent than comparable non-participants. Furthermore, participants were twice as likely to be employed, attend college, or obtain vocational training. The community enjoyed lower crime rates and lower expenditures on welfare and prison costs. Overall, it's estimated that the economic and social returns of this early childhood investment were seven times the cost.

Head start, another early childhood program, shows similar benefits. According to educators, Head Start children perform more competently than their peers on global measures of social and academic success, such as graduating from high school, placement in regular classrooms, rather than special education, staying in school and passing each grade. Head Start children also display more reflective cognitive styles and enhanced language development than do similar children without Head Start experience.

On bottom-line measures, early childhood programs also prove their worth. Forsyth County's own school finance officers said that it costs less per pupil to teach 4-year-olds than other age groups. Moreover, analysts say it costs 5 times as much to hold children back a grade than it does to provide remedial

dren.

Early Start is in its start-up phase. Annual costs per child will almost certainly decline as the program settles in. Our newly elected officials should show the good faith to see this experiment through before they prejudge its value to the community and to our children. In fact,

Early Start should be allowed to prove itself as part of Forsyth County's commitment to our youngest citizens—our very future.

Suzanne Hodges
Sharon Carter
Dave Moffett
Claudette Slayton

CHRONICLE MAILBAG Our Readers Speak Out

education to assure academic readiness. Thus, in our view, even if an expanded Early Start program required a modest tax increase, it would be well worth the community's continued investment.

Let's be clear that Early Start is not "merely" child-care or a simply family responsibility issue. Whether or not it jibes with our personal beliefs about the place of families, some families can not provide the kind of nurturing, supportive, challenging environment that assures the healthy development of our future students and citizens. Other families, such as the working poor, try their best to do so under harsh conditions and they need a helping hand. According to a 1992 study by the Work/Family Resource Center, almost 65 percent of children in Forsyth County under school age had working primary caregivers; 10 percent of these children over 2,300 children had no identifiable care arrangements. Demographic projections show that this situation will worsen throughout the 1990s. Almost 75 percent of women with school age children will be in the labor force and more than three-fourths of these will be single parents.

Many of these children, a majority of whom live in poverty, arrive at school educationally needy. We ignore this social fact at our own peril and at the peril of our young chil-

we'd recommend that the pilot project be expanded beyond its current 6 month trial period because we feel that a six-month long project won't show the full benefits of the program.

North Carolina has a lamentable history of start-and-stop educational reform efforts whose

Good Coverage

To the Editor:

I wanted to thank you for featuring our K.I.D.S. (Kids Involved in Doing Science) program in the *Winston-Salem Chronicle* on Dec. 1. I was able

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.

primary victims tend to be children—who of course can't vote.

We need to rise above the short term political horizons of elected officials of any party in order to see that Early Start will provide all of us, our children, families and the greater community, with the tools to sustain a healthy, productive county that we can be proud of.

Our government officials must be made to see beyond the next election. It is up to all of us who work with children to speak in their behalf and help our officials develop a long term vision.

to share the article with the K.I.D.S. participants at their Dec. 10th workshop.

As you might guess, the high school students thoroughly enjoyed the publicity!

On behalf of the Western Triad Science and Mathematic Alliance, I thank you and the *Winston-Salem Chronicle* for your support of local efforts in science and mathematics education.

I look forward to opportunities where we may work together again.

Jackie Mittelstaedt

African-Americans Must Defend the Integrity of Kwanzaa

Few things are sacred in capitalist America. Not even holy days like Christmas are immune from the corrupting influences of materialism, commercialism and greed. The real significance of Christmas as the celebration of the coming of the Christ child is virtually buried beneath an avalanche of extravagant/excessive gift giving and an orgy of profane and drunken merrymaking. So powerful is the commercial appeal of X-Mas that many poor and working people who can ill afford to go into debt succumb to the seductive lure of the season.

To the delight of the retail establishment, these hapless souls, including millions of black people, march on malls to surrender their precious dollars, providing the margin of profit, for the giant retail stores, for the entire year. For the retail establishment it truly is a season to be jolly.

Few things are sacred in capitalist America. Therefore, it is not surprising that Kwanzaa, the African American holiday which is celebrated by millions of black people, is now under siege by corporate America. America may be racist, America may be anti-black and anti-people of color, but above all America is pro-business and pro-exploitation.

Whatever it is - Black Power, counter culture, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Kwanzaa - if its popular, corporate America will seek to coopt it, capitalize on it and exploit it.

Kwanzaa, which is based on the harvest celebrations which occur in traditional African society, was developed by Dr.

Maulana Karenga of the US Organization nearly 30 years ago. Karenga, who is a proponent of cultural restoration as a prime dimension of Black liberation, conceptualized Kwanzaa as a means of reaffirming our identity and purpose as African people. Utilizing Kawaida, the doctrine of tradition and reason, which he also innovated, Karenga developed Kwanzaa around the Nguzo Saba, the Seven Principles of the Black Value System; Umoja - Unity; Kujichagulia - Self-determination; Ujima - Collective Work and Responsibility; Ujamaa - Cooperative Economics; Nia - Purpose; Kuumba - Creativity; and Imani - Faith. Hence Kwanzaa was designed to provide Africans in America with an occasion that had serious meaning in terms of the rescue and reconstruction of the race.

Though Kwanzaa is celebrated from Dec. 26 - Jan. 1 each year, it was not created in opposition to Christmas or as an alternative to Christmas.

Black people can chose to celebrate our own specific historic experiences as African people from the dawn of time to the present moment. Kwanzaa was/is conceived as a time when we can celebrate ourselves in the face of a global system of white supremacy.

Kwanzaa is not only a holiday of affirmation, it is a holiday of resistance; opposition to the cultural aggression and destruction of our people in a racist/oppressive society; resistance to the exploitation and domination of our people in a hostile society.

More importantly, Kwanzaa

is visionary and revolutionary. Kwanzaa advances a series of concepts, values and practices which prescribe how African people should live with each other in harmony of purpose and in a spirit of genuine familiness and community. In that sense Kwanzaa really provides prescriptions for how all human beings ought to live with and relate to each other.

However, any idea which awakens a downtrodden people and inspires them to affirm themselves and encourages them to struggle for self-development and self-determination is a dangerous idea in America. Kwanzaa is a dangerous idea because

danger unless we defend the integrity of our own holiday. Now that Kwanzaa had become popular there is a concerted drive to make it fashionable, marketable and commercial. In a capitalist society what better way to coopt or dilute a dangerous idea than to commercialize it, to join it, take it over, redefine it, and redirect it. There are now huge Kwanzaa Expos underwritten by major U.S. corporations. And, someone has even come up with the idea of a "Kwanzaa Claus!"

Few things are sacred in capitalist America, Hence, Kwanzaa is now under commercial siege. It is incumbent upon



VANTAGE POINT

By RON DANIELS

it challenges our people to reclaim our culture. Kwanzaa is dangerous because it challenges our people to oppose and create alternative to the amoral and corrupt value system which at the heart of this racist, materialistic and exploitive/oppressive system of white supremacy.

Kwanzaa is also dangerous because it is not some fringe idea.

It is celebrated by millions of Africans in America. This makes Kwanzaa a "clear and present danger" which must be coopted, diluted, diverted from its true propose or destroyed.

This is a warning to black America, Kwanzaa is in grave

African Americans to defend Kwanzaa from the pollution which is intended to render it ineffective.

This means teaching about Kwanzaa in our homes and spreading accurate information about the true meaning of Kwanzaa in the community.

And, at all cost we must resist the temptation to succumb to the commercialization and the selling of Kwanzaa by corporate America.

We must not be agents of our own oppression.

Kwanzaa is our holiday and we must defend it.

(Ron Daniels is a nationally syndicated columnist)