

OPINION/LETTERS

Winston-Salem Chronicle

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Educating Our Children

The dialogue concerning the education of our children has been long, sometimes terse, sometimes insensitive, sometimes racist and sometimes narrow-minded.

But we are beginning to see some light at the end of this tunnel. The debate has engaged the entire community. And that is good. We have come to see that no one individual or entity has the quintessential answer to this complex issue.

Instead, it is likely that the final school system's plan will look a little like everyone's plan. There will likely be some neighborhood schools that will not have precise black/white percentages within zones created to enable kids to stay together throughout their school lives. There is likely to be at least one Afrocentric school as soon as everyone realizes that Afrocentric does not mean anti-white or pro-black.

The Coalition on African American Education is providing exemplary leadership and foresight in seeking out examples of Afrocentric schools and bringing that information back for examination. They are exploring other afrocentric schools searching for a model. There is no need to reinvent the wheel here if it already has proven its worth. We commend them for that leadership and patience.

We are thrilled that the school board and particularly Donny Lambeth, has worked conscientiously to come up with a plan that can be supported by the entire community. We believe they are very close to achieving that. At least, some of the wild fires have subsided. We encourage the board to continue being sensitive to everyone's concerns. The process of trying to reach a consensus seems to be right. In other words, we're going about it in a way that gives everyone an opportunity to be heard.

We are encouraged that superintendent Dr. Donald Martin is excited about developing a relationship with Winston-Salem State University that will provide scholarships to students who agree to stay in Forsyth County to teach. We certainly need more African American teachers in general and more African American male teachers in particular. We believe more male teachers will have a positive impact on some of the discipline problems African American male students experience in the system.

Right now a lot of things seem to be falling into place. We hope the community rides this tide of commitment to solving the problem of educating our children...all of our children.

After Tragedy Continue Praying for the U.S.

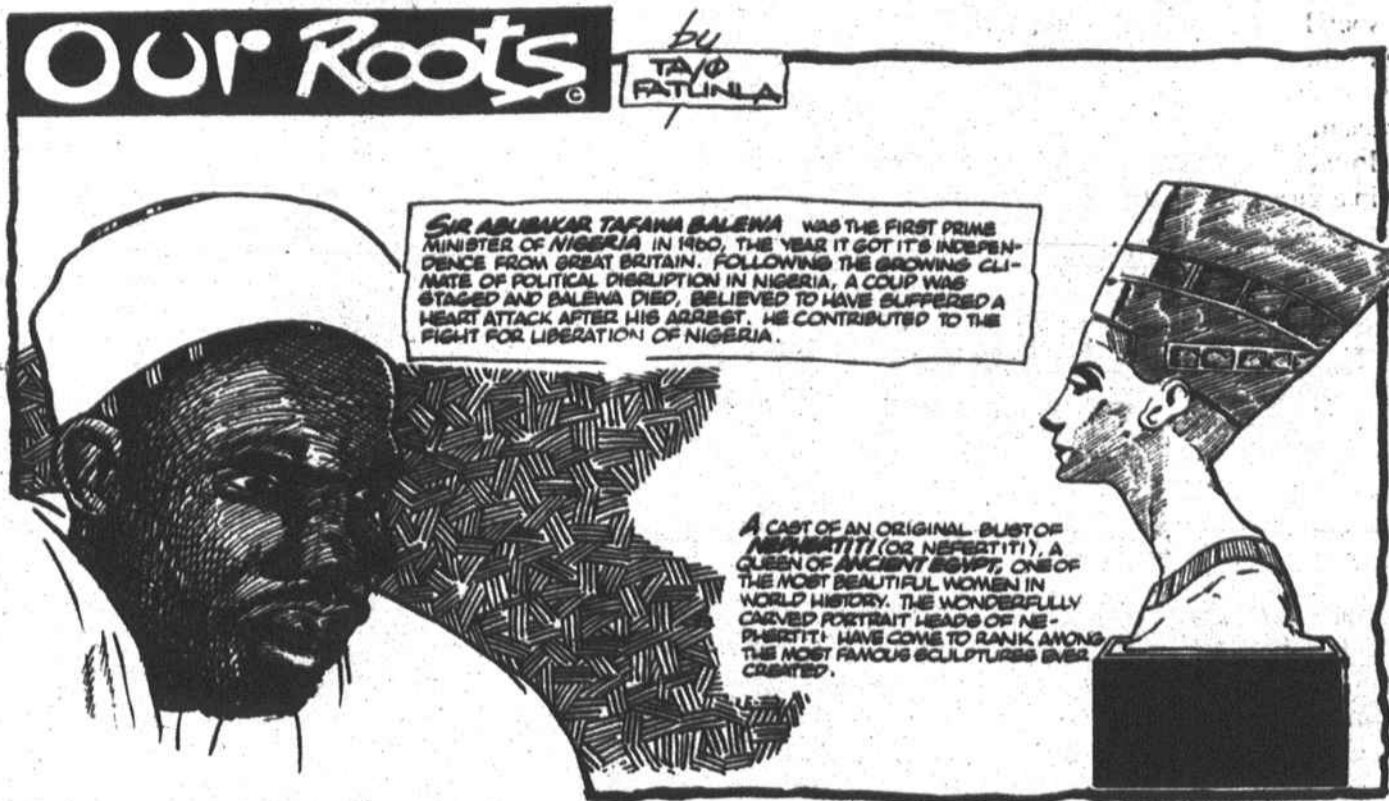
On Wednesday, April 19, a blast ripped through the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in downtown Oklahoma City. The blast occurred at the start of the work day, as parents were dropping off their youngsters at the day-care center in the federal building.

Officials called it the worst act of terrorism in the nations history. A car bomb exploding with the force of battleship guns tore away the facade of the nine-story federal building.

This was a devastating shock to the nation, as we watched the news coverage of collapsing walls and ceiling coming down in a gigantic rush of concrete, steel beams, shattered glass and other debris.

American watched the horrific television images of faces bleeding, dazed and hysterical survivors screaming and staggering through the streets in need of immediate emergency treatment. Many were killed in this blast and hundreds are missing.

Many of us have asked "how could this have happened in the United States?" This is a very difficult situation that we have. President William Jefferson Clinton declared Sunday, April 23, as the national day of



CHRONICLE MAILBAG

Our Readers Speak Out

mourning and flags continue to be at half staff.

President Clinton, the Attorney General, Janet Reno, and the Government have done an outstanding job in finding these "cowards" and bringing them to

justice.

We must continue to pray for our country and hope that we will never have to face another disaster of this magnitude.

April A. Jeter
Greensboro

Postal Problems

To the Editor:

The Articles written by your newspaper concerning the Postmaster of Winston-Salem has been past for sometime and its business as usual. The reason being is as follows;

William Henderson, now Senior Vice President, was the District Manager when Matics came to Winston-Salem as Manager, Customer Services. Henderson was District Manager

when Matics was promoted to Postmaster. Consequently, Ronald Campbell, our present District Manager and Henry Pankey, presently the Mid-Atlantic Area Director, are unable to correct the problem.

Secondly, two EEP complaints that have been filed are now on hold. Is it a cover-up? a whitewash? Could be, but most likely the (USPS) do not want EEO complaints settled too close to your articles.

Your consideration of the above is requested.

Thomas S. Perkins
Treasurer, W-S American
Postal Workers Union AFL-CIO

Classmate Search

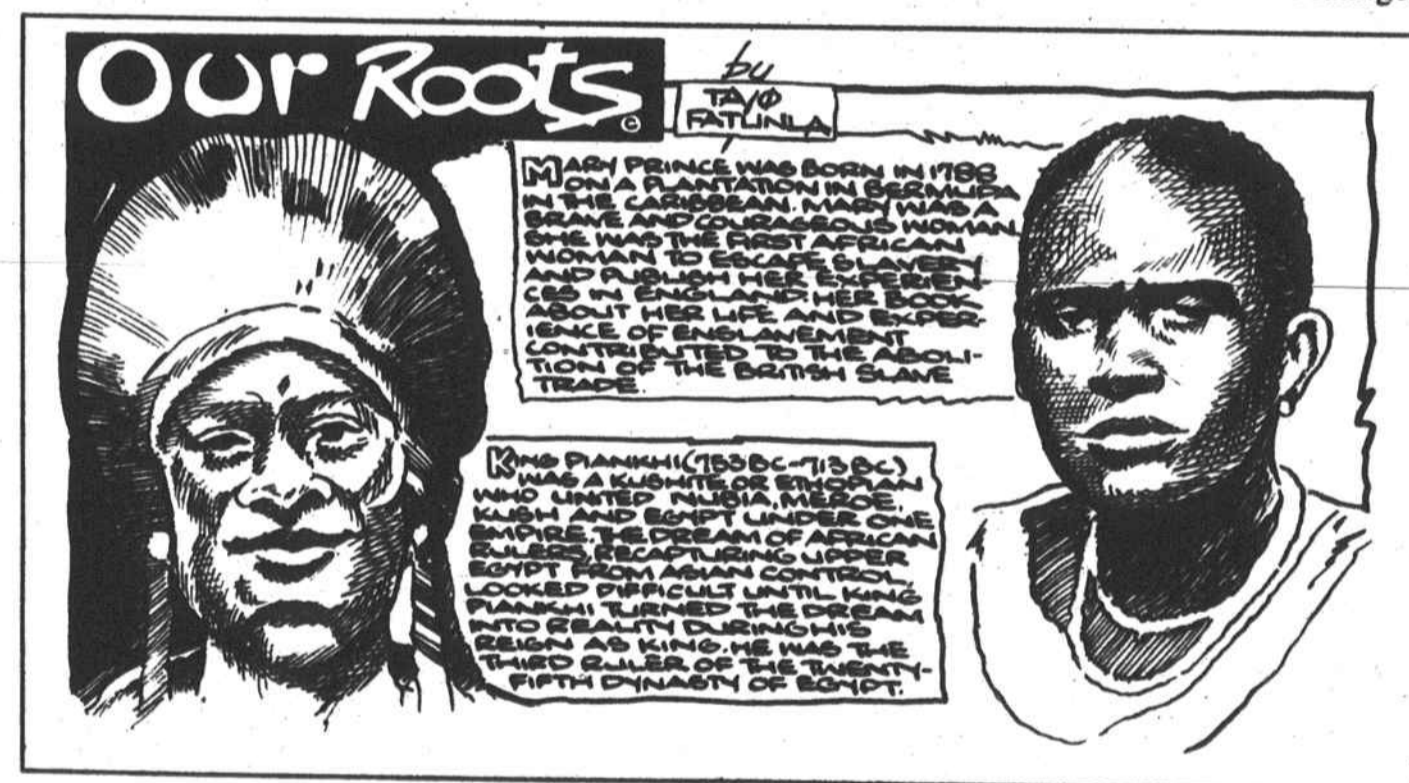
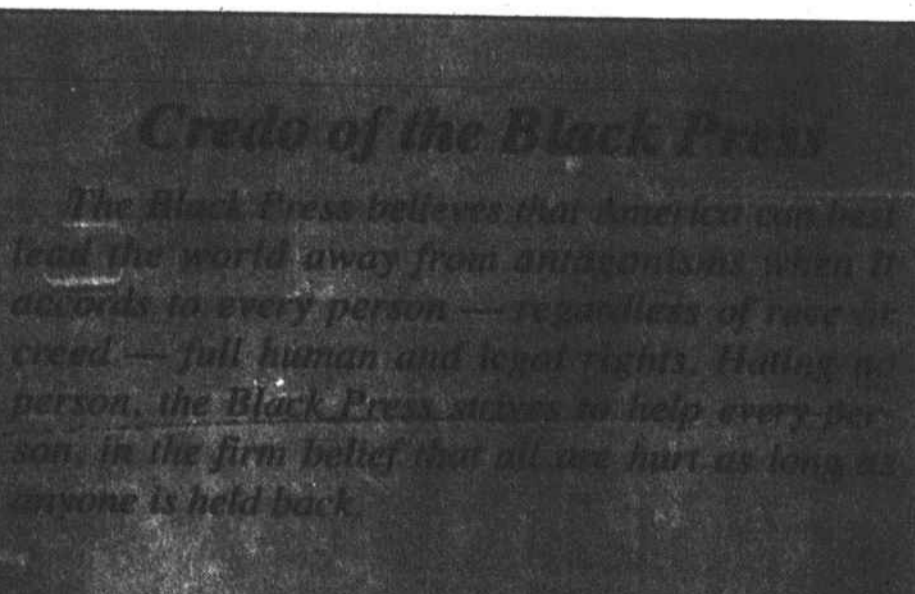
To The Editor:

I am looking for information about Russell Harwood whose (parent's) address in 1945 was: 321 W. 15th Street, Winston-Salem. Russell was a classmate who graduated with us from the U.S. Coast Guard Radio School, Atlantic City, NJ, 50 years ago this year.

In observance of the 50th Anniversary of our graduation, I am attempting to locate or find out what happened to, each of the 79 graduates. So far I have current information on 42 of the 79 who graduated.

Please reply to: Dennis D. Dowling, Rte 2, Box 381, Winamac, IN 46996; Telephone (219)946-3027.

Dennis D. Dowling



What is Obvious to African-America is Not Necessarily Obvious to Me

If you are an African American, you probably don't know what it is that I need to know about race relations. And I assure you that I, a white woman with a major interest in this subject, don't know what to ask. While this might seem like a total communication breakdown—an impasse so to speak, I hope that speaking openly about this problem will allow white people to own it and black people to acknowledge its presence. Unnamed problems can be easily ignored.

From my reading I gather that often people aren't very concerned about what white people don't know. Considering our country's history, I really can't say that I blame them for this attitude. Black people have been reading and talking about racial issues for so long that their very lives seem permeated by them. Seeing the racial element in life's situations and every striving to overcome its detrimental effects have been necessary for the survival of the African American.

White Americans have never been required to view racial issues in this manner. In fact, we often refuse to face these issues at all. We pretend that racism is not a real problem—or, at least, not an important one. By closing our eyes, we can make racial strife vanish. When we see nothing, we pretend that nothingness is reality. White people would love to see racial problems go away. Alas, our work never does itself!

To get ahead in our present society—and most people are concerned, at least to some degree, with getting ahead—we must be goal oriented. Most people want to see tangible results for their efforts. This is logical. If nothing will change, why put forth effort? Since energy is finite, why not channel it into a more profitable arena?

While these questions make sense, they do not tell the whole story. For taken to their limit, they imply that if we aren't sure we can solve a problem, we won't even try.

Presently I see white Americans adopting a more positive and

realistic stance.

White people are talking about race these days, and it's not just for show. Most conversations are held in the privacy of our own homes and offices—well out of earshot of black people. Under these circumstances, we say what we want to say. What I often hear has great potential. Maybe this interest in racial issues has been present for longer than I am aware. Perhaps I'm just more observant now and more attune to these issues. But the fact is white people are talking about racial issues.

Although sensitive white people want to understand racial problems, more fully, we really don't know how to go about it. Reading, often from a black point of view, gives us some insight. Gaining information in this manner allows us to save face because our vast ignorance is not exposed. We can approach biracial situations with a more educated view.

But here's the clincher! Black people often speak of racial issues in terms that are obvious to them, but these terms are unclear to white people. Much of the time we understand part of the issue. In fact, we often see several parts of the issue. But we find ourselves unable to put the pieces together into a unified whole. We sense that we are missing something, but we don't know what it is. Even if we have a relationship with a black person to whom we could ask the question, we can't.

Allow me to give an example. For approximately a year and a half, I have been reading books by African American authors so that I might gain empathy for black people in our country today. My reading has revealed one dominant theme: "the black experience."

Black people know that life's situations are shaped by racial components and racism.



GUEST COLUMNIST

By HELEN LOSSE

As I tried to comprehend this concept, I realized two things. First, there is no such thing as "the white experience." It just doesn't exist. And secondly, from personal experience I know that sometimes life's experiences are shaped by factors other

than racial ones. Yet I see myself developing empathy for African Americans. I can see their view—sort of!

My reading continues. In a book I read a couple of months ago, the authors—one black and one white—present a model for race relations set in an evangelical church in urban Chicago. One statement made by the black pastor, for me, hit pay dirt.

He said that black people want white people to admit that there is a racial ELEMENT in most biracial situations. He explained that the percentage of the racial element would vary in each individual case.

Eureka! I had found it! Black people were telling me that life has a racial element not that all of life is racial. Yes! I get it!

I'm not hearing this spoken often in a clear voice. Maybe some black people are explaining issues such as this, but few within my earshot are. I'm listening, but I'm not hearing (without considerable research) that situations in America today almost always contain racism as ONE of their major components. What is obvious to the African American is not necessarily obvious to me.

(Helen Losse is a student at Wake Forest University)