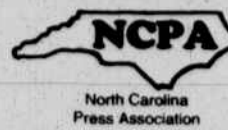


OPINION

Winston-Salem Chronicle

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Food for Thought

Much has been made of the federal jury's verdict and its ruling that ABC/Capital Cities must award Food Lion \$5.5 million in punitive damages. Indeed, the decision dealt a blow to investigative journalism. But exposés will probably continue to be standard fare on television news shows like "20/20," "Primetime" and "Dateline NBC." Interestingly, Food Lion never challenged the veracity or importance of "Primetime's" revelations. Instead, the grocery chain challenged ABC's investigative methods, which involved a reporter working undercover as a store clerk. Without a doubt, any viewer who saw the "Primetime" segment thought twice before buying meat at Food Lion. Not surprisingly, Food Lion's stock plummeted. But at least, shoppers were making informed decisions.

While Food Lion roars about its victory and ABC's attorneys prepare for an appeal, other problems plague grocery shoppers, chief among them skyrocketing food prices.

But in African-American communities, typically underserved by major supermarket chains, high prices go with the territory. Not only are supermarkets' prices sometimes higher and selections more limited in inner city neighborhoods, but often the quality of fresh meats and produce is far inferior to that sold at more affluent locations. Now that should be a federal offense.

Our Stories, Our History

This Saturday, the North Carolina Association of Black Storytellers brings tales and traditions to Winston-Salem. The festival, "The Art of Black Love," is scheduled for 6 p.m., Feb. 8 in Winston-Salem State University's Anderson Center. What better way to kick off Black History Month!

After all, in ancient Africa, storytellers were the first historians. In the days before written language, storytellers were revered. In tribal Africa, storytellers or griots (pronounced gree-ohs) not only told stories, but kept the village's history as well.

Endowed with long memories, griots still chronicle rituals, births, deaths, marriages, floods, disease and famine.

Griots also tell folk tales and fables that have been passed down by word of mouth. Griots created folk tales to explain natural occurrences. Thus, the tales' titles often pose questions.

Rich with wisdom, fables are designed to teach moral values and often feature animals as main characters. One of the most popular, Anansi the spider, is a great Ashanti folk hero, a wise, lovable creature who defeats larger foes.

Fairy tales are also folk tales. The African fairy tale, "Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters," tells how a kind peasant girl wins the prince's heart. Notably, the first fairy tale ever written down was Africa's, "The Tale of the Two Brothers," which was recorded in Egyptian hieroglyphics.

When Africans came to the Americas as slaves, they brought their stories with them.

Here, African descendants conceived "Br'er Rabbit" fables, fairy tales like "The Talking Eggs," and folk legends like John Henry.

From the ancient times to the present, successive generations have made African-American oral traditions their own. In Southern fields, slaves sang spirituals. Similarly, work songs set the pace for laborers in fishing, railroad and other industries. Turn-of-the-century poet Paul Laurence Dunbar captured the rhythms of rural life in catchy dialect poems. You could say, he was the father of rap.

In time, spirituals and work songs evolved into blues. Singers wailed about hard times and heartbreak. Come Sunday, gospel music rocked churches and set souls on fire. When blues gave way to jazz, vocalists had their say. Louis Armstrong talked over the music, and Ella Fitzgerald made scat her signature.

During the 1920s, Harlem Renaissance writers also danced to the music. Poet Langston Hughes paid tribute to blues, jazz and the working class. And novelist/anthropologist Zora Neale Hurston traveled back roads collecting black folklore.

And throughout our struggle, African-American preachers have delivered the word.

Martin Luther King Jr. took old time religion and spoke to his times. Freedom riders sang protest songs demanding equality.

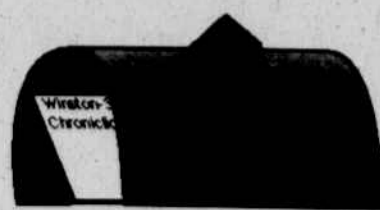
The civil rights era bred young poets who wrote of black pride and revolution: Nikki Giovanni, Haki Madhubuti, Amira Baraka, Sonia Sanchez and others. Artists like the Last Poets, Sweet Honey in the Rock and Gil Scott Heron set their verses to drum beats.

By the mid-1970s, party DJs were joining with MCs who rapped over rhythm tracks.

Before long, hip-hop jumped off and New York rappers picked up on the spoken-word vibe. Today, the sound has come full circle, merging hip-hop with jazz, gospel, blues, funk, reggae and African chants.

Modern-day griots often set their tales to music, playing African instruments — drums, shekeres and kalimbas. This weekend's storytelling festival promises both message and music. We commend the North Carolina Association of Black Storyteller for keeping this tradition alive.

But you don't have to join an association to be a griot. In fact, most families boast at least one great storyteller who enlivens gatherings with stories and anecdotes. Be forewarned, though: storytellers are prone to exaggeration. Sometimes, listeners can't tell where truth ends and fiction begins. But that's part of the fun. Pass it on!



Addressing the Nation

To the Editor:

The president's address during his inauguration was in a timely manner. Many are quick to criticize, but few are able to give resolutions to the common old problem, "the melting pot of America."

The president may not be a scholar of the ancient mysteries of evolution, but the hidden secret lost in the shaping and coalescing of America is in fact that we are all one. How we get from point A to point Z is determined by how well we improve the quality of life for all.

This will not be achieved by violence, rhetoric, demonstrations, or the ballot. It will be reality when we realize how important it is to change our limited perception of the world and ourselves.

We as a country have received rewards that have indeed been limited in stature. We see and hear continuous dissatisfaction, discontentment, despair, crime and homelessness. It's not a pretty picture, and for many fellow citizens, this is the only vision they hold close to their hearts. Therefore, America is a reality based on the collective thought forms of all of us in this melting pot.

Dare to be as the president encourages us to be. Dare to change tomorrow by changing our thoughts today. If our neighborhoods, our schools, our family life, our work force

are not what we desire; dare to fill our minds with thoughts that promise a reality of beauty.

This is not an impossible achievement. It starts with you, not your enemy, nor your bipartisan brother or sister, not the welfare system, and certainly not the president.

We can't run away from love. It is going to follow us to our endtime. Unite with this thing called love and dare to live your dreams!

Khalida Lovell
North Carolina

The Chronicle Mailbag

Our Readers Speak Out

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.

Elder urges guidance for young black males

To the Editor:

I am 85 years old, and I am writing in to the Chronicle because I have a concern. I am only a fifth-grade scholar, but I know that the newspaper is power. I have a question for the men of Winston-Salem: Where are the Big Brothers?

Young black males need more supervision and attention. I have seen news stories about the Million Man March. I often hear about big meetings in churches and in court about what should be done to help the situation of black men. But very little comes out of the talk.

Very little seems to be going on. We tend to leave God out of the situation. We think that worldly things will solve



the problem. I raised my children alone. I worked for R.J. Reynolds for 49 years, but I had to go to God every day to help me to make it.

Many of the young males are unemployed or are working on temporary jobs. I don't understand what is going on. Maybe we turn them out on their own too soon. They need more supervision to encourage them to study more and to become strong men.

Please let me know if there are some men who will step forward to help the young males.

Geneve B. Allen
Formerly of
Big Brothers/Big Sisters
of Winston-Salem

Something of Value

When Carter G. Woodson, the noted historian, inaugurated Negro History Week in 1926, he intended that it become an occasion for thinking about the facts, circumstances and meaning of African-American life in the United States.

Woodson acted out of political as well as intellectual reasons: In 1926, few whites, whether in the South, where segregation was the law, or in the North and West, where it was the custom, believed that African Americans had made or could make any meaningful contribution to America.

Although what was once one week has grown into the month-long observance of Black History Month, its fundamental purpose remains unchanged — and just as necessary — today.

That was brought home to me recently by the news that Howard University, the historically black university in the nation's capitol, has enrolled in its first-year class the largest number of winners of National Achievement Scholarships of any college in the country.

The achievement program honors exemplary black high school students who take challenging courses and rank in the top 10 percent of their high school graduating class. Howard out-paced Harvard, which enrolled 69 scholars; Florida A&M University, which enrolled 51; Yale, with 28; and the University of Virginia, with 23, for the top five spots in what has become a fierce competition among institutions of higher learning. Beneath them were such institutions as Stanford, Princeton, MIT, Duke, Johns Hopkins, and Georgia Tech. Significantly, five of the top twenty schools enrolling this elite corps of students were historically black colleges: Morehouse College enrolled 18; Xavier University, 12; and Spelman College, 12.

This is the first time in recent memory that Howard has appeared on this prestigious list of schools, and that so many black colleges and universities have been in the top twenty schools. For that they must acknowledge the example Florida A&M has set during the past decade in recruiting National Achievement Scholars: the Tallahassee, Fla., school has been in the top five since 1989 and twice ranked

first.

Dr. Janice Nicholson, Howard's chief undergraduate admissions officer, says that its achievement was the result of "a very concerted and comprehensive effort to move Howard into the first rank" of colleges and universities, and that it intends to be at the top of the list for National Achievement Scholars from now on.

That declaration drew a laugh from FAMU's director of public relations, Eddie Jackson, one that combined institutional pride with the vision of the competition's larger significance.



TO BE EQUAL

By HUGH B. PRICE

"Tell Howard we welcome them to the top of the ladder," he said. "We're disappointed that we're not number one this year, but we're happy to see another historically black school in that spot. But tell them, too, that their success has got us charged up even more. Watch out next fall!"

At one level, the meaning of this competition can be put three ways:

One is that some historically black colleges and universities are doing quite well competing with their predominantly-white and resource-rich counterparts for the top performing black students. This, in fact, constitutes a return to their historic mission of bringing together and educating a cross-section of black America.

The second is that some predominantly-white institutions are competing fiercely with their historically-black counterparts for high-achieving black students. They are aware that there is a broader and deeper strata of talent among young Americans they need to tap.

The third is that there are numerous young black boys and girls who are following what the novelist Albert Murray has called the "indelible ancestral imperative to do something and become some-

thing and be somebody;" and that the corps of high-achieving high school students among them knows that the range of colleges offering a top-flight education include a growing number of historically black ones, too.

All of America benefits from this either way you look at it.

But I think that Howard's breakthrough and the attention it has focused on the excellence of the young people they and the other colleges are enrolling has a particular resonance for what Carter G. Woodson had in mind for the consideration of

African-American life.

On the one hand, it reminds us that African Americans have sought with a poignant determination throughout their existence here to gain something of value

from their life in America.

And on the other hand, it underscores black America's proud declaration that it has contributed something of value to this nation, however much that contribution has been overlooked, and that it will continue to do so.

That indelible ancestral imperative goes on.

(Hugh B. Price is President of the National Urban League.)

Credo of the Black Press

The Black Press believes that America can best lead the world away from antagonisms when it accords to every person — regardless of race or creed — full human and legal rights. Having no person, the Black Press strives to help every person, in the firm belief that all are born as long as anyone is held back.