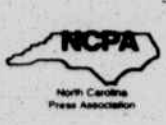


OPINION

THE CHRONICLE

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Kudos for NAACP board

From the Call and Post, Cleveland

The NAACP has taken the unprecedented step of demanding the resignations of four prominent board members in order to protect the integrity of the organization. We commend NAACP Board Chairwoman Myrlie Evers-Williams for initiating this action to preserve the reputation and moral authority of the historic civil rights organization.

The resignations of the board members were demanded after facts came to light that their continued membership on the board would have been detrimental to the organization. Hazel Dukes, because of a guilty plea to taking \$13,201 from a sick woman; Bobby Bivens, for being arrested for owing \$20,000 in child support payments; James McGhee, after pleading guilty to charges of embezzling \$38,517 from a client; and the Rev. Henry Lyons, who is under investigation for alleged mishandling of funds belonging to the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A.

The NAACP National Board, by and large, has been a good one over the years. However, there was, at one time, an entrenched group that appeared to be more concerned about their own self preservation than the future of the organization. It is refreshing to see that Evers-Williams and a majority of the other board members are weeding out the "old guard," and demanding integrity and excellence from their membership. That is the first step needed to insure that the organization remains vibrant, relevant and effective.

Violent crime not disappearing

From the Tri-State Defender, Memphis, Tenn.

Although government statistics were recently released to the public stating how violent crime has dropped in the nation, we as a people must not be satisfied with those numbers.

Why? Because crime rates in African-American communities are still many times greater than those in other American neighborhoods.

Those rates of crime in the African-American community involve, among other things, assaults and murder.

Some criminals have become so bold that they have gone into churches in the African-American neighborhoods to rob the people who worship there.

Equally ridiculous, in some Memphis communities, drug traffickers are reportedly so bold that they will approach people demanding to know what the individuals are doing in the area.

Drug traffickers don't own the street, or any neighborhood. They and other criminals do not have a right to question people who are entering or leaving an area.

Drive-by shootings, whether they come in the form of shooters riding bicycles or in cars, continue to claim the lives of people of all ages in the African-American community. Many of the killings are gang-related, and that is one of the main reasons these groups are not good for us or our communities.

Various social observers have noted that for many youngsters gangs are like surrogate families, which is very sad; gangs cannot begin to do any of the great, positive and wholesome things for youngsters that a good family and home can do.

A considerable percentage of the drive-by murders have claimed the lives of people who were not in gangs. Those victims were simply innocent casualties.

The list is relatively long. For example, some of the people were murdered in drive-by shootings while sitting in their own homes, babies were shot in strollers, and countless other individuals were killed while entering their apartments, going to the store, on their way to school, etc. We must not allow ourselves to sit idly by while our communities are turned into blood baths. We must continue to work with the police, the sheriff's department, state troopers and any other officials on any level of government who can help us reduce violent crime in our neighborhoods. But more importantly, we must work diligently with our young people, because the majority of violent crimes in the African-American community is committed by youths.



Don't kill Wildflower Gardens

To the Editor:

The city of Winston-Salem is quickly growing around the unique area known as Emily Allen's Native Wildflower Gardens. The diversity, even the existence of this carefully preserved area is now threatened by hurried development.

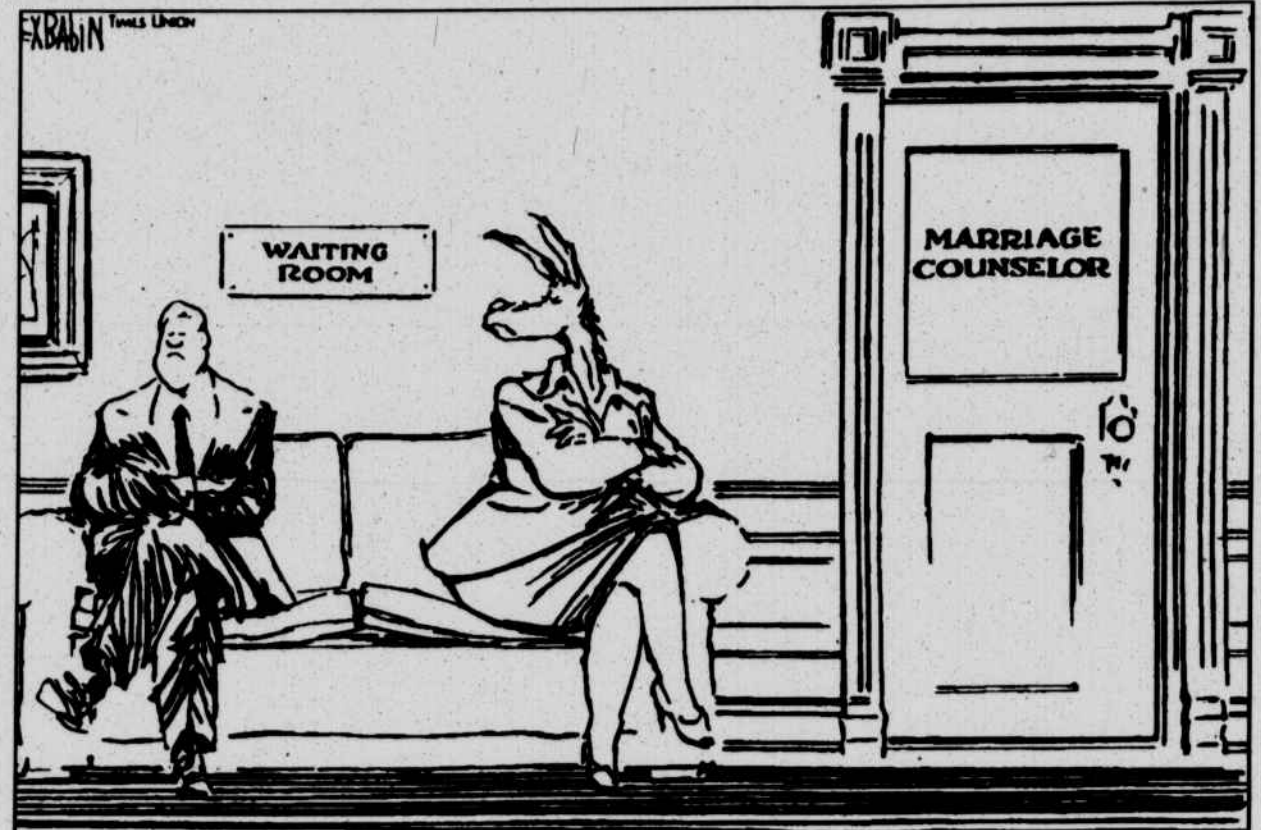
I ask the aldermen to consider what approval of the development projects along Fairlawn Drive will involve. Remembering that the flora in the Gardens cannot be replaced, how will you explain to the professors and students of Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem State University, and Salem Academy and College that you allowed development without studying the whole issue of hydrology? Without the proper water-flow, the Gardens will die, ending the live studies now uniquely available in this area.

People wanting to study these plants now come from universities around this country and around the world because they are not available elsewhere. Aldermen, how will you explain to them or to the garden club members from your own ward that this site was not protected?

Engineering of water run-off has a poor record in the area of the Gardens. When Silas Creek extension was built, engineers made mistakes in calculating water flow, and repeatedly flooded a house on Edgebrook Drive. Such errors cannot be tolerated in so sensitive an area as the Gardens. Ineffective planning of the Fairlawn extension has already caused die-backs in the Gardens, and that was further upstream than the currently proposed development.

Only two days before the Planning Board meeting did the developers bother to meet with Mrs. Allen to explain what they plan to do directly up-stream from the Gardens. No data have been collected concerning current run-off rates during storms of varying intensities, or of the stream's natural flow rate from the spring which feeds it. Even so, the engineers claim they can send storm water from two developed tracts through these gardens without affecting the stream and the rare flora dependent on it.

Developers worry about getting a plan approved quickly because their financing bond will expire in January if plans are not finalized before then. This should not be an issue for our aldermen. We have only one chance to develop this area correctly. If the developers did not start planning to take care of



the water issues when they began six months ago, that is their fault. For nearly nine years, ever since Sunnynoll was proposed, it has been a matter of record that this city is concerned about run-off from the steep hills of the area, and concerned about protecting the Gardens in particular.

We all know the rule of the six P's: proper prior planning prevents poor performance. Aldermen, allow time for studies of the current seepage patterns, current run-off rates, and counter-proposals for storm water diversion before allowing any development to proceed. After nine years of inactivity, a reputable developer has been found, but remember that better plans can be made either by these people or by others.

— Ann M. Heller

Ignoring racism is bad strategy

To the Editor:

Most well-meaning, non-racist white people are not comfortable responding to a Klan rally in their community. They look to people whose judgment they trust and to community leaders for guidance.

This past weekend Winston-Salem was annoyed by this group of child and spouse abusing idiots who gathered at the Hall of Justice to rant and rave. Fortunately, a diverse group of ministers announced they were holding a prayer vigil across the street in response. There was no response

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. To ensure the authenticity of the letter, you must include the name, address and telephone number of the writer. 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, NC 27102. E-mail address: wschron@netunlimited.net

(or appearance at the vigil) from any of our local politicians besides Larry Womble. The Human Relations Commission felt the best strategy was to ignore the event.

Given the mixed and non-messages, it is not surprising most people stayed home. As a community we need to be more proactive in opposing racism and violence. More people need to hear what Larry Womble, the Rev. Carlton Eversley and others have to say. We need our business leaders, non-profit and elected officials to join with religious leaders to send a clear message to the bigots where the vast majority of this community stands. The problems of Klans, armed cults and militias should not be ignored. The "good" Germans tried to ignore the Nazis 60 years ago. That strategy doesn't work.

— Bert Grisard

Mayor-elect should resign

To the Editor:

Mayor-elect Jack Cavanagh has, without a doubt, captured the attention of the people of Winston-Salem, in a way that is certainly not the norm. Whatever his intention or "unintention" was in capturing our attention, he has rendered himself a mayor-elect with a negative effect. As far as this citizen is concerned, it would be in the best interest of the honorable citizens of this city for our mayor-elect to resign before the swearing-in. This is the only way to "heal the process." There are some things

that just cannot be fixed, and this choice in bad judgment is one of them.

Editor's note: This letter was written before Cavanagh was sworn in.

— Albert R. Anderson

Hang on to your benefits

To the Editor:

It is appalling to this writer the fact that our president has signed into public law a bill that is detrimental to all veterans of these United States. The bill states in effect that if a veteran has not registered since Oct. 1, 1996, and does not register by Oct. 1, 1998, at a VA hospital, he will lose "all his medical benefits for the rest of his life." This includes care at the Virginia Veterans Care Center.

This action was taken by our president earlier this year and was done in such a manner as to render the action offensive to all veterans. To make it worse, the VA cannot notify veterans of this action. It is disseminated by word of mouth or by letters to the editor. Thus this letter.

I for one served my country faithfully for 20 years and was promised health care as an incentive for remaining on active duty. I will not sit idly by while our president and other elected officials slowly but surely whittle away what benefits we veterans have left.

— James O. Flint
 Commander, Post 30
 The American Legion

Colored and White in the Fair Store

I have many memories of growing up in Lake Charles, La., in the 1950s. Nestled on the Gulf Coast, 30 miles from the Texas line, Lake Charles is an industrial city, the fourth-largest in the state, with one of the busiest ports in the country, where my father worked as a stevedore. It was on Lake Charles' docks that my father honed his skills as one of the most effective and respected labor negotiators in the International Longshoremen's Association.

I remember going downtown with my parents to shop at stores like Muller's, the largest department store in town, and Podrasky's, where we got new shoes, and Hoffer's, where my father bought clothes for me and my brothers. But it is the Fair Store which has the haunting memories.

The Fair Store was a department store that was smaller than Muller's. Muller's was top shelf. On occasion, I went to The Fair with my mother to buy things like jeans and underwear. Although they were ubiquitous at the time, what I remember most about the Fair are the water fountains at the back of the store with "colored" and "white" signs over them. I suspect that I recall them so vividly

because it seemed odd to find colored and white signs denoting anything in a store that calls itself Fair.

Memories of the two water fountains have been uppermost in my mind recently as I try to comprehend and explain to my children why we are living in a city where the Ku Klux Klan gathered recently and where confederate license tags are almost as common as the colored and white signs of my youth in Louisiana. As a professional educator who has spent the bulk of his life helping young people of all races and ethnic groups achieve their goals and maximize their potential, it is equally disconcerting to witness what appears to be social and political retrogression of alarming proportions.

Let me hasten to note that I am not at all naive about the times we live in and the historical antecedents to our current challenges. As a college student, I protested and participated in voter registration drives and went to many a counter to see if I would be served. A college-mate of mine died after being served a poisoned cup of coffee, in order to prove that the simple rights most of us now take for granted should be



Guest Column

Alvin J. Schoxneider

available to him. I was simply one of the lucky ones, but I have never forgotten the supreme sacrifice of my friend who died on the lonely battlefields of northern Louisiana while we were at Grambling State University.

In time the colored and white signs disappeared and the lunch counters were cleared and we sang "We Shall Overcome" thousands of times. I went off to Vietnam after a brief stint in the private sector and returned to the United States to enter graduate school. There, amidst my formal studies, I found time to reread books I had not fully appreciated as an undergraduate. One in particular, W.E.B. DuBois' *Souls of Black Folks* has followed me the same way as the Fair Store. In this extraordinarily prescient study written at the turn of the century, DuBois writes, "The problem of the twen-

tieth century is the problem of the color line."

Today, nearly 100 years after Dr. DuBois' observation, we are about to enter another century with race as the preeminent social challenge of our time. The president of the United States has empaneled a commission of distinguished citizens to lead a national dialog on race even as we grapple with domestic issues and rapidly changing global conditions that may challenge the quality of life of all citizens.

What to do? I am no expert on race relations any more than any other citizen. Frankly, I suspect that I may have inadvertently offended a few well-meaning friends and associates who over the years have incorrectly assumed on the basis of my background and position that I am the race relations expert. I am committed,

however, to providing first-rate leadership as an educator and to creating an environment of mutual respect among people of all races and ethnic groups. As an institution of higher education, Winston-Salem State University has a role to play in this arena that is no more or no less than that of any other institution of higher education. We will continue to do our part to educate students, faculty and staff to appreciate and value diversity.

Equally important, we have a responsibility to ensure that our students and faculty recognize that for our nation and our economy to be strong, we must compete not only with graduates of colleges and universities in South Carolina, Texas and Oregon, but also with graduates of colleges and universities and technical institutes in Korea, Japan, Germany and Brazil. Our failure, for whatever reason, to provide equality of opportunity for all our citizens diminishes us all and compromises our ability to compete in the global economy.

Our nation's social security system is an excellent case in point. To the extent that we fail to maximize the number of workers who earn decent wages and con-

tribute to the fungibility of the system, it will falter, as economists have reminded us for at least a decade. If this happens, we may see a return of the colored and white water fountains, but with a lot more people, black and white, on American soil, drinking from them.

Our future, the maintenance of our standard of living as we know it, may well depend on our ability to turn the corner on race, so to speak. A brief review of what has been happening in our cities may be instructive.

Whereas in the 1960s author James Baldwin could write an angry, pessimistic book entitled *The Fire Next Time*, in the 1990s sociologist William Julius Wilson would write a scholarly, detached treatise simply called *What Happens When Work Disappears*. To a frightening degree, America's largest urban areas have become reservations for the nation's poor, the unemployed and the underemployed. Seemingly, we have become inured to the homeless, a 1980s creation mind you, but also a group whose vast numbers include poor blacks, poor whites and poor Hispanics. Within each