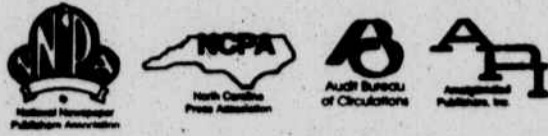


OPINION

THE CHRONICLE

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Minority contracting is Cavanagh's first test

Winston-Salem Mayor Jack Cavanagh says he wants to do more than pay lip service to the concerns of his black constituents. He wants the policies of city government to reflect those concerns. That's what Cavanagh says.

The fact that he met with a group of concerned black people almost immediately after taking office is considered by some to be an indication of his sincerity. It may be. We, however, believe the true test will be in how significantly policies do in fact change.

The first opportunity has already presented itself. During last week's meeting with state and local NAACP leadership, the city's commitment to contracting with black companies was challenged. After that meeting, both the mayor and the NAACP said that the Minorities and Women Business Enterprise program was one of the two issues left unresolved. The other was affirmative action.

For some time, blacks who want to make sure minority businesses have a fair shot at getting government contracts have had a problem with the way the M/WBE program has been administered. One legitimate complaint is that the program has been denied the management necessary to fulfill its purpose.

Since its creation in 1983, the M/WBE program has been reorganized. And during the evolution, time-consuming responsibilities have been added, support staff has dwindled, and respect for the program has waned. Cavanagh agrees with the NAACP's assertion that the implication, if not the reality, is that Winston-Salem has a half-hearted commitment to the program.

The latest report on the M/WBE program was released this week. The information contained in it substantiates the NAACP's allegations. Winston-Salem tracks spending in four areas: materials and services, construction and demolition, discretionary spending and subcontracting activity. Is it mere coincidence that in each category the city spends more money dealing with white women than black men and women combined?

In the materials and services category, for example, the city awarded less than 1 percent of the \$35.6 million to minority-owned companies. At first glance, the appearance is that 5.7 percent of those purchases and services were provided by minorities. The reality is that companies owned by white women got the lion's share. They garnered five times the amount of purchases made from black vendors.

A strong argument could be made challenging the notion that the city has a responsibility to recruit contractors and suppliers, black or otherwise. Some people believe that a successful company will actively compete for a share of the city's business. Since tax dollars are being used, however, it is reasonable to expect the city to do its best at purchasing from vendors and contractors representing all segments of the community.

Currently, the city is not doing all that can be done with the resources available. We're not suggesting that quotas or set-asides be used to increase minority participation.

The state Transportation Board is under a microscope right now because people with the power to make decisions on spending decided to help themselves or their friends and relatives. Few, if any of those alleged to have benefited from the debacle are black.

Before the state began its investigation into improprieties of individual board members, black legislators had asked for a study on why blacks receive only 1 percent of the \$5 billion the state spends on road projects. So there is some foundation to claims that blacks can be and have been excluded from lucrative government contracts.

Of course, the fact that state officials have been unfair in their dealings with contractors doesn't necessarily mean the same thing is also going on in Winston-Salem. But it does make the possibility a little easier to imagine.

The city has a program that, if structured properly, could make sure that minority firms know when bids are requested, as well as what the city requires of its contractors. Cavanagh has an opportunity to do more than talk about commitment. He could give this program what it needs and deserves: a director, not a coordinator stripped of respect by other city employees.

It is silly to expect the person who runs this program to also administer other programs, which take time away from the true purpose — creating equal opportunities for minorities and women in business in this city. It seems apparent that the city has mastered the task of doing work with women. Now it's time to live up to the program's name. The next move is the mayor's.



Patient rights need attention

To the Editor:

This letter is for females — Do you think male aides should bathe female patients without their consent? Should President Clinton add on to the Patient Bill of Rights a penalty for neglect and abuse? It is happening in some of our hospitals today.

Marie Stanley

Chronicle 'mighty darn good'

To the Editor:

I confess, I can no longer hold my piece. I am so impressed with *The Chronicle* — so impressed that each week I say that I'm going to write to you. But you know the deal; we do not always follow through.

Well, when I saw the front page cover on Art Milligan Jr, a man I deeply admire and respect, I said, "That's it, I'm going to write to the paper."

Please tell your staff that their work does not go unnoticed or unappreciated. I look forward to receiving *The Chronicle* each week because I know I will have a fundamental knowledge of the happenings in the Triad and elsewhere as well.



I've long since stopped placing only racial classification on this paper. True, we need an instrument that will reflect the positive contributions of the African-American experience, but *The Chronicle* is just a darn good paper. Period. Excellence is excellence no matter where it is found. Your coverage is good — vastly superior to many of the

papers I read elsewhere. What can I say? You guys are just mighty darn good!

I read every page, every week. Love your editorials and columns. Also, I enjoy especially your calendar of business and community events.

Ain't nothing like being informed. Hats off also to your reporters, writ-

ers, advertising (yes, I take note of the ads) and circulation people.

You are on target! So much so that I extended my subscription for an additional year. And know, as my Momma says, "every closed eye ain't sleep." We appreciate your great work. Press on.

John Raye

Breaking the Chains of X-mas

Vantage Point

Ron Daniels

The rush of X-mas is once again upon us. In the weeks from Thanksgiving to New Year's Day, consumers crazed by capitalist-induced consumerism will spend hundreds of billions of dollars, thereby bolstering the bottom line of giant retail establishments. In large measure the real meaning of Christmas as the birthday of one who came to liberate humanity from suffering and bondage has been buried by an almost obsessive commercialism. Christmas has become a prisoner of X-mas. Unfortunately, African Americans, an oppressed people still plagued by racism and economic exploitation, are also caught up in this counterproductive charade.

An oppressed people must be deliberate and purposeful about plotting their liberation. It should be clear, therefore, that Africans in America cannot afford to participate in and support X-mas. El Hajj Malik Shabazz, Malcolm X, called upon black people to achieve liberation by "any means necessary." One of the most important weapons at our disposal as an oppressed people in this capitalist, greed driven nation is our hard-earned, precious dollars — green power! By some estimates, black consumers now spend some 400 billion dollars each year, much of which goes to feed huge businesses/corporations, which are the pillars of U.S. capitalism — the backbone of this oppressive system.

Beyond a few jobs, these corporations contribute nothing to the social and economic uplift of black communities. Indeed, it is in their best interest to keep us in chains, slaves to a mindless consumerism that drains desperately needed resources from our communities to fill their corporate coffers. X-mas is an integral part of this scheme. I would venture to say that black consumer dollars constitute the critical margin of profit for most retail establishments during the X-mas season. In fact proportionately black consumers spend more than any other group during X-mas. And, since X-mas is the make-or-break season for retail concerns, the black dollar in effect is the major factor ensuring the profitability of these giant companies on an annual basis.

We must break the chains of X-mas if we are serious about our liberation. If the black nation can mobilize millions of men and women for the Million Man March (MMM) and Million Woman March (MWM), then we should be able to educate, mobilize and organize millions of captives

of X-mas to escape the plantation of self-destructive consumerism striking telling blows with a awesome weapon, which we have in our own hands — black dollars.

For years Bob Law, host of the nationally syndicated radio program Night Talk, has been urging Africans in America to utilize economic sanctions as a means of advancing our struggle. Simply stated, economic sanction is withholding our dollars from corporations and business concerns outside of our community for the purpose of investing those dollars in black businesses and community-based economic development ventures inside our community. For example, instead of spending \$1,000 on X-mas with retail establishments outside of the black community, you could make a conscious decision to spend \$1,000 with black businesses, or better yet, invest \$1,000 with one of the economic development ventures being organized by Dr. Claud Anderson's Harvest Institute.

In addition to the economic sanctions concept, I have been advocating a full-scale boycott of

"white Christmas," tied to the demand for reparations. Again, if we can mobilize millions of people for massive demonstrations like the MMM and MWM, we must use the same organizing skill, energy and resources to mobilize millions of people to use their dollars to target a specific political economic objective like reparations. There is no better time than the X-mas season to flex our economic muscle to strike a major blow for our liberation. I am still advocating a highly publicized, well organized and effective boycott of X-mas in the year 1999 to carry us into the new century/millennium forcefully pressing the demand for reparations.

An oppressed people must use any and all means at its disposal to achieve liberation. Africans in America must use green power to enhance our power/capacity as a people to liberate ourselves. We can withhold black dollars from oppressive corporations that undermine our potential for economic development and self-determination. We can invest black dollars in our own economic enterprises and strengthen our economic infra-structure. We have the power in our own hands to liberate ourselves. But we will never be free until we break the psychological chains that bind us to the very system that is oppressing us. Withdrawing our support from X-mas is a good place to begin the process of ending our bondage.

Response to Tragedy Must Be Positive

Guest Column

James A. Hefner

When a shooting incident occurred on the Tennessee State University campus recently, claiming the life of a young man, it helped to recall the truth, *We are not immune; therefore, we are not alone.*

We faced the choices many before us have faced — many after us will face them too. We could freeze, immobile in fear, or work together to find answers and prevent other tragedies. We could retaliate with anger and point the finger of blame at someone else, or we could act out of concern and compassion and turn our energies toward making tomorrow better than today.

Our students chose to participate by being part of the solution. They represent what TSU is all about: a commitment to thinking, working and serving, as our motto suggests. They affirmed another truth for me: *Action is contagious.*

The tragedy of that night turned positive in light of how our students acted when it occurred. They rallied

around each other first, staying up all night to comfort each other and begin to resolve their pain with the help of university counselors. First thing the next morning, they met with me to discuss campus security. They talked with candor and sensitivity and displayed a diligence and maturity that would make not only their families, but the citizens of Nashville and Tennessee — people who invest both tax dollars and private funds to ensure their success — proud. The following evening they held a candlelight vigil for the TSU family, a time to grieve, share our strength, and reflect on the inner values that enable us to grow and change.

TSU has enhanced its security in many ways in recent years. We hired a full-time crime prevention counselor two years ago. She conducts numerous educational workshops and special events, in addition to individual counseling with students. For some time, we have had officers who patrol the campus on bicycles and have installed

emergency phones throughout the campus. We initiated a neighborhood watch last spring, knowing that the partnership of TSU with the surrounding community will benefit all people involved. Each year we host the nonviolence rally following the city-wide march honoring Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and his principles of peace.

In the wake of the recent shooting incident, TSU has continued to expand its services to make the campus safer. Residence hall security officers, who previously came on duty at 10 p.m., will be on post a few hours

earlier, and we will be reducing, where possible, entry to each residence hall to a single location after dark. Students entering residence halls now must show their student identification cards to gain entry beyond the lobby. Guests must leave a picture identification at the entrance desk, which will be returned upon departure, in order to be permitted to go beyond the lobbies. Other security measures include searching residence hall rooms and student vehicles parked on campus; installing card-key entry systems in all residence halls, where budget allows; and

installing security booths or guard houses at strategic locations throughout the campus.

Obviously, we cannot insulate the campus from the world at large. The problems that plague our urban communities will find their way onto our campus. What we can and will do, however, is make it exceedingly difficult for either illegal drugs or weapons to remain on our campus, and make sure that those who are not enrolled at TSU (as was the case with the two men — one killed and one wounded) understand that message.

Now, as we move forward in the face of this tragedy, our primary concern centers on the safety and well-being of every member of the TSU family. TSU has enjoyed a rich heritage of talented and dedicated students. As I move about the campus, they stop me and share with me their dreams for tomorrow. My wish is that they

reach those dreams, and I will do everything in my power to see that their stay at TSU is both intellectually satisfying and personally safe. That wish extends beyond the bounds of the North Nashville campus where I reside with them, into our city, and ultimately into our nation.

I venture to believe you experience the same feelings as I do when you glance at the headlines, listen to the radio or watch the news. A shooting at Tennessee State University ... a stabbing at Brentwood High near Nashville ... a shooting at Pearl High School near Jackson, Miss. ... where does it end?

I don't know. What I do know from watching TSU students in the wake of such a tragic event is that the solution begins with us. They challenge us all to give positive action a try.

James A. Hefner is the president of Tennessee State University.