

FORUM

Facts regarding Winston-Salem State distorted?

I write to correct the record regarding articles concerning me which appeared in the May 7 and May 14 editions of the Winston-Salem Chronicle. The writer's reporting



along with distortions of fact are alarming and repugnant to the journalism profession. As well, these articles constitute a gross disservice to Winston-Salem State University, its alumni and your readership.

The author of the articles purports to be a sportswriter, however, it is clear that he lacks competence in writing about matters pertaining to higher education. Although he has written numerous stories about me and Winston-Salem State, Sam Davis has so far shown no interest in meeting with me to discuss areas of interest in order to better inform his stories. The pattern is familiar: a phone call from a Chronicle reporter is received just before the deadline after the story has essentially been developed. This means we are expected to give a quote for

a story already written thereby providing legitimacy to an article which more often than not is based on rumor, hearsay or lies. Such was the case in both of The Chronicle's recent articles about me.

7 May 1998 Article. These are the facts:

1. Exercise equipment purchased by me from Nordic Trac was delivered to the Chancellor's residence, a state owned facility, by state workers who maintain it along with other state buildings. Following a review of the matter, the Office of the State Auditor considers this closed.

2. No university employee has ever chauffeured me for private business on state time.

3. The issues for discussion being called by our Faculty Senate are just that: for discussion. After a meeting with the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, it is customary for the Faculty Senate to meet with me. That meeting will take place this summer at which time we will address their issues.

14 May Article. These are the facts:

1. I did purchase a large screen

television with State funds from a furniture account designated for the Chancellor's residence. Because of its intended uses, I also have a telephone, a fax machine, a computer line and other equipment which enable me to conduct official business at all times from the Chancellor's residence. Each of these items is accounted for on the State's fixed asset inventory.

2. It is a complete fabrication that I ever used an employee to pick up laundry or to use a taxi. This is not only untrue, but ridiculous. March 4, the date which Mr. Davis alleges certain violations, was a Saturday. For most of the time we have lived in the Chancellor's residence we have not had a housekeeper. In any case, that person would not normally work on a weekend.

Some of what I read in both

articles is so ludicrous that it does not merit a response. We are newcomers to this community and, frankly, it is disheartening to see African Americans constantly displaying self-hatred and internal oppression towards one another.

All of this is reminiscent of what the old folks called "crabs in a basket." The Black community is facing its most daunting challenges ever: high unemployment, high infant mortality rates, a high teen pregnancy rate, a high number of AIDS cases and on and on ad infinitum. Must we waste valuable time fighting each other? Is this the very best we have to offer? I know we can do better. I pledge my support to bring out the best in Winston-Salem State University, its students, faculty and alumni.

Alvin J. Schexnider is Chancellor of Winston-Salem State University.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

DR. ALVIN J. SCHEXNIDER

Use surplus for the right things

The N.C. Supreme Court has ruled that the State of North Carolina must return \$1 billion to some 250,000 retirees. This will take a big bite out of the \$1.2 billion surplus our legislators wanted to use to provide health insurance to children, give teachers and state employees well-deserved pay raises, and finally eliminate the food tax in North Carolina.

Oh, I almost forgot. The Republicans also wanted to give some tax relief to our poor little rich cousins.

The court ruled that state retirees as well as federal retirees were illegally taxed on their retirement income and that they must be compensated. Retirees who reside outside the state and the estates of deceased retirees will receive cash payments. Those federal retirees who remain in North Carolina will likely receive a tax credit, meaning, that they won't get all of their money for some time.

The lost revenue will cost the state approximately \$100 million per year in expected collections from retirees. All of these changes

in the state's projected budget suggest that many programs won't be funded as anticipated. But this shouldn't mean that we must stick it to poor folks again.

Pay raises for teachers must be a part of the budget if we expect to retain and recruit high quality teachers in our school system. State employees too often are asked to shoulder the fiscal burden of revenue shortfalls in the state budget and that's not fair. We definitely want to insure our poor children and doing away with the food tax would be a benefit to us all.

Our free market system guided by the invisible hand, has produced wealth upon wealth in America. One of the more notable tenets of the free market system is that it subsidizes economic behavior that it wants to continue and it taxes economic behavior that it wants to curtail or diminish.

Now, I am fully aware — in a personal way — that many of us need to eat less and lose some weight. But I'm not so sure that taxing food is the right vehicle to

use in getting that message across.

This is not a new argument — we've been visiting and revisiting this food taxation question for the past 37 years. North Carolina col-



Jones Street

Val Atkinson

lects approximately \$180 million, or 2 percent, of its budget from food taxes. If we abolished the food tax, any lost revenue would be more than off-set by the savings to families. If we eliminated all food taxes it would save a family of four approximately \$80 a year.

Eighty dollars might not seem like a lot of money to our rich cousins, but to a poor family that spends as much as 50 percent its income on food, the repeal of the food tax would be a much-needed

blessing. The food tax is a regressive tax that has its greatest negative impact on those with the least ability to shoulder the burden.

If the General Assembly abol-

ishes the food tax, I promise that I will do my part to eat less and lose weight. I will embark on a self-tempered weight-reduction program and will encourage many of my friends to do the same.

We appreciate the state's concern with our weight. Losing weight is good for most of us, but enough is enough. Let's stop taxing food in North Carolina. There are other more sensible and less expensive ways to encourage weight reduction.

Cocaine law unfairly targets black women

By DAVID LOWE

Are pregnant women child abusers when they use alcohol or drugs? The U.S. Supreme Court may have to wrestle with this issue soon.

On March 19, the New York-based Center for Constitutional Rights petitioned the Supreme Court to reverse a decision last October by the South Carolina Supreme Court.

That decision, in South Carolina vs. Whitner, affirmed that child abuse applies to the behavior of a mother while the fetus is in her womb.

South Carolina is the first state to uphold the criminal conviction of a woman who has taken drugs while pregnant. The law is wrong because it singles out poor black women and because it violates their right to privacy.

In 1989, a group of prosecutors in South Carolina, in cooperation with the police and public hospitals, decided to start punishing pregnant women who test positive for cocaine

types of birth defects, far more than any recreational drug. Tobacco is also particularly damaging, as is poverty, malnutrition, stress and exposure to lead.

The issue in South Carolina vs. Whitner is not a pregnant woman's right to take drugs. The issue is whether African Americans are accorded the same constitutional rights as everyone else. The issue is whether the state can intrude in the reproductive lives of women. It is already illegal for women to use cocaine. The police can prosecute them for that. They don't need to pile on child abuse. Treatment for their disease, rather than criminalization, will help to make their lives whole and productive.

People around the country await the U.S. Supreme Court's decision. In Jefferson Parish, La., District Attorney Paul Connick Jr. is considering punishing a woman for abusing alcohol during her pregnancy. Police in Grand Isle, La., arrested Lori Ingram for negligent homicide. A medical examiner concluded there was a "strong likelihood" that alco-

hol and drugs caused her baby to be stillborn. If Connick decides to prosecute Ingram, he leads us down a slippery slope that could punish women for engaging in lawful activities.

Meanwhile, Malissa Am Crawley, one of the women petitioning the U.S. Supreme Court, sits in a South Carolina jail. Crawley, a mother of three healthy children, is currently serving a five-year sentence for testing positive for cocaine during pregnancy.

At Crawley's hearing, Judge Frank Eppes remarked, "I'm sick and tired of these girls having these bastard babies on crack cocaine and until they change the law, the law they gave me, it said I could put them in jail." Eppes provides a good reason why the Supreme Court needs to strike down this law.

David Love is a staff member with the Center for Constitutional Rights in New York and a co-producer of the television documentary "Disorderly Conduct: Are the Police Killing Us?"

PUBLIC NOTICE

The Quality Education Academy is preparing to write the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), P.L. 101-476 Plan and Project. The Project describes the special education program that this agency proposes for federal funding for the 1998-99 school year. Interested persons are encouraged to review the Plan/Project and to make comments concerning the implementation of special education under this federal program. All comments will be considered prior to submission of the Plan/Project to the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction in Raleigh. The IDEA Plan/Project is open to the public review for comments on May 28, 1998 in the Office of Dean Crystal Pearson, 5012-D Lansing Drive, Winston-Salem, NC 27105, between the hours of 8:00am - 5pm.

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THE CHRONICLE

The Choice for African-American News
USPS 067910
617 N. Liberty Street
Winston-Salem, NC 27101

The Chronicle was established by Ernest Pitt and Ndu-bisi Egemonye in 1974, and is published every Thursday by The Chronicle Publishing Co., Inc.

The Chronicle is a proud member of
Audit Bureau of Circulation • National Newspapers
Publishers Association • North Carolina Press Associa-
tion • North Carolina Black Publishers Association •
Inland Press Association

National Advertising Representative:
Amalgamated Publishers, Inc., 45 West 45th Street,
New York, NY 10036 212 / 869-5220

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