

Nobel Laureate Wole Soyinka speaks at local university

T. KEVIN WALKER
THE CHRONICLE

In his 1960 poem "Telephone Conversation" Nigerian-born poet/author Wole Soyinka examines how stereotypes and a lack of cultural understanding can cloud even the most routine aspects of human interaction.

The poem - which is about a "well bred" landlady who is more than a little flustered while interviewing a potential African tenant over the telephone - is typical

Soyinka: keenly written, relevant and brutally honest.

Forty years and a Nobel Prize later, Soyinka is still pushing for tolerance and understanding.

During Wake Forest University's Founders' Day Convocation Tuesday, Soyinka urged the hundreds of students and faculty assembled in Wait Chapel to embrace cultural and religious diversity.

"Even with seemingly settled democracies, what we observe is a contagious fear of being swal-

lowed up, of losing one's identity to another..." Soyinka said.

When such fears are allowed to breed, Soyinka says, they manifest into cultural squabbles, turf wars or, worst of all, ethnic cleansing.

And Third-World nations do not hold a patent on regional bickering, according to Soyinka.

To underscore his point, Soyinka cited recent clashes between the British government and Irish factions and to less caustic battles between American sports teams.

"It would be wonderful if cul-

tural diversity took no greater toll than such occasionally bruised partisan pride..." he said.

Soyinka's visit came during Wake Forest's Year of Globalization and Diversity, a yearlong celebration of worldwide cultural awareness.

As the world stands on the brink on a new millennium, Soyinka said now is the time for cultures to look beyond differences, petty or otherwise, and embrace one another.

"Let us prepare to celebrate the

Chinese or Tibetan New Year, the Buddhist millennium...and indeed any other watershed of the cultural and religious calendars of the world that serve to remind us that, no matter what routes we take towards the structuring of our spiritual intuitions, the goal is ultimately towards the oneness of our humanity," Soyinka said.

Soyinka also told the crowd that it was "refreshing" for him to read in a WFU publication that the Christian university is making a conscientious effort "to tackle

the ignorance and suspicion of its own society with regards to other religions."

Islam, Soyinka said, is the religion most often singled out for criticism and more apt to misinterpretations.

Soyinka pointed out that Muslim sects do not have a monopoly on religious-based acts of violence.

"Who is the most notorious fugitive on the landscape of the United States of America right at this moment?" Soyinka asked.

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THURSDAY FEBRUARY 4, 1999

Historic Four



Franklin McCain, of the Greensboro Four takes time to autograph pictures, as his grand daughter Taylor McCain, center, and Noell Massenburg, far left, looks on.

Sit-in leaders return for ceremony

By DAMON FORD
THE CHRONICLE

Franklin McCain, Jibreel Khazan (formerly Ezell Blair Jr.), Joseph McNeil and the late David Richmond weren't looking to become heroes when they sat down at the lunch counter of F.W. Woolworths in Greensboro on a chilly winter day in 1960.

They had no idea that their fight to be served at the segregated lunch counter would be a shot heard around the world.

The four returned to the campus of N.C. Agricultural and Technical State University Monday to commemorate their historic trip to the lunch counter.

It was a simple plan, born just a month before the foursome sat down on that cold February day. Dressed in their best, the four would sit down at the counter and order drinks.

"We were going to try out the Bill of Rights, the Bible and the Constitution to see if what was written was true or not," Khazan said.

Oblivious to what would happen, the four best friends set out for the downtown store on South Elm Street and were prepared for the worst: either being beaten by angry white patrons or spending some days - possibly years in jail.

"No I was not afraid," McCain said. "I was too damn

mad to be afraid. I had too much practice at being angry and what I went there in anger (about) was a quest for a little human dignity and little bit of pride and a little bit of manhood."

McCain, who now lives in Charlotte says the employees of the store were clearly uncomfortable when they sat down to order.

"The workers really didn't know how to respond to us because it was something that never happened to them before," he said. "They weren't used to black people coming up to the counter asking for service."

As expected, the four were not served but that didn't deter them. They pulled out receipts to prove

that they had purchased items throughout the store.

"Our argument was 'you've been serving us at 10 counters in the store and we come to counter number 11 and you deny us service - why' " McCain said.

By the second day word of what the four were doing had not only traveled around A&T's campus but had spread to other local historically black colleges. Women from the Bennett College joined in support at this time along with other A&T students.

On the third day three white females from Woman's College (now UNC-Greensboro) joined in

See Sit-In on A10

Battle leaves Caucus Blue

Stealth maneuver fails, but could lead to respect for blacks

By JERI YOUNG
THE CHRONICLE

Sources within the State House Black Caucus say last week's stealth maneuver to elect African American Dan Blue, D-Wake, speaker of the House has left its members fragmented.

Last Wednesday, Rep. Jim Black, D-Meck, was elected speaker by the narrowest of margins, 60 to 59, edging out Blue, who was supported by an unprecedented alliance between House Republicans and a portion of the Black Caucus.

Fifty-one of the House's 54 Republicans voted with six of the house's 16 black Democrats in an effort to overthrow Black. Two white Democrats also voted for Blue.

The 17th, Rep. Larry Womble, D-Forsyth, was at home ill.

Until the vote, most members thought Black's election was a done deal. He was the House Democrats' unanimous choice for speaker in their November caucus.

Black said there were no hard feelings and he doesn't plan to punish any members, including Blue or members who plotted his nomination.

According to members of the Black Caucus, the maneuver had been in the works for weeks. Members of the Caucus met at least twice in Fayetteville, before last week's vote in an effort to pressure House Democrats to name Blue speaker.

"I was in on the ground floor when it was known that the Democrats had regained control of the House," said Warren "Pete" Oldham, D-Forsyth. "We of course had discussions on who would be nominated speaker of the House. Members of the House were split. Some supported Black, others including myself supported Blue."

According to Oldham, during a meeting in Fayetteville, Blue admitted he didn't have enough votes to secure a nomination, and encouraged members of the Caucus to

support the candidate of their choice.

Most, including Oldham, threw their support to Black, but a few continued to try to build a coalition to elect Blue.

According to sources, a second meeting of the Caucus was held in Fayetteville the week before members were sworn in to discuss a strategy to elect Blue.

Oldham said he knew of the meeting but elected not to go.

"I told them at that time that I was no longer involved, I was supporting Black," he said. "I made my position clear long before last Wednesday."

Since last Wednesday, the atmosphere among black legislators has been tense. In a strongly worded press release issued last week, Rep. Milton "Toby" Fitch, D-Wilson, who spearheaded the effort, labeled caucus members, including Oldham, who didn't vote for Blue, "Renegade," and "Trojan Horses."

"Necessity is the mother of invention," Fitch said in the release. "It is clear black voters in this state are being taken for granted. Blacks and Democrats cannot continue in this present relationship without some major adjustments in the philosophy of party leadership."

According to sources, members of the caucus and Republicans reached a deal, guaranteed Republicans half the committee chairmanships, including a GOP-dominated local government committee. A Republican would also be elected as the speaker pro tem.

Oldham said he had "strong concerns" about the deal.

"Even if Rep. Blue was elected Speaker, we'd have a Republican Speaker pro tem," he said. "That's

See Caucus on A10

Local woman cheers at Super Bowl

By JERI YOUNG
THE CHRONICLE

Last weekend was hectic for Angel Cain.

First, there was the long trek from her home in Atlanta to Miami last Thursday. Then, there were appearances - more than she can count. She performed for millionaires and danced with party goers during a "Dirty Bird Bash." And on Sunday, while the rest of the world was stretched out in Lazy Boy recliners watching the biggest football game of the season, Cain was hard at work.

A co-captain of the Atlanta Falcons Cheerleading Squad, Cain, 28, spent Sunday in haze. She met superstar Cher and the

glam rock band Kiss. She watched as legendary R&B crooner Stevie Wonder sang his biggest hits before a live crowd that numbered almost 80,000.

For almost four hours, Cain smiled, danced, cheered and performed routines that dazzled the Super Bowl throng. And when the game was over and the Falcons lost 34-19 to defending Super Bowl champions the Denver Broncos, the squad was too excited to admit defeat. Cain and the 33 other members of the cheering team stayed on the field and danced with the Broncos cheerleaders.

"Not a tear was shed," she said. "We were just so happy to be there nothing could dampen our spirits. We went back in the

tunnel and cheered for our players. They were pretty upbeat, too. No one expected us to go this far. We really were just glad to be there."

And after a week with little or no sleep - the Falcons arrived in Atlanta on Monday and spent the bulk of the day as stars of the city's biggest ticker tape parade - Cain is still pretty upbeat. And was surprisingly wide awake on Tuesday.

"I guess it's just the excitement of the game," she said.

When she began with the Falcons, almost three years ago, being a cheerleader wasn't that big of a deal. Fans arrived at games with bags over their heads

See Cain on A10



Angel Cain, center, is a co-captain for the Atlanta Falcons Cheerleading Squad. The Winston-Salem native has been on the squad for 3 years.