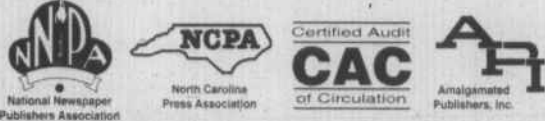


OPINION

THE CHRONICLE

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Black men

The NASA rover that just landed on Mars has been in the news a lot lately. Imagine if scientists from some other planet sent a rover or an alien representative to investigate this planet. What would they learn about African-Americans, particularly black men?

If they examined local news, they would be bombarded with news about Quincy Allen, a twenty-something black man who is charged with a shooting spree. Pictures of Allen in his orange prison jumpsuit have become as familiar as the Mona Lisa to local folks.

Two of the biggest national headlines last year focused on black men in peril as well. Kobe Bryant's mug shot was everywhere after he was accused of rape, and Michael Jackson (he is still black despite the Porcelana) has made much more news for allegedly being a pedophile than he ever received

for selling more albums than the Beatles.

The point is, black men are being portrayed to the world, and possibly beyond, as dangerous and sexually sinister. The danger is that there is no or too little balance to counter the negative stories about black men. Why can't Greg Williams (Page A-4) be the top story on CNN. He is a high school senior who has done everything right: studied hard and stayed on the straight and narrow. He is currently at the top of his class at North Forsyth High School.

When Williams and other African-American high achievers were honored on New Year's Day - at the Emancipation Proclamation ceremony, no television news cameras bothered to show up to document their achievements. Murder, we assume, is the only way a black man can make headlines in the Triad.



Responses to gay marriage piece



George E. Curry

Guest Columnist

Not surprisingly, I received a torrent of mail about a column I wrote a month ago expressing mixed feelings about same-sex marriages. Many of the responses were part of a national letter-writing campaign organized by the Los Angeles-based Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation. Of course, that doesn't make their opinions any less valid, and I've decided to use this space to share excerpts from their e-mails and letters.

"Like most gay people, I am able to comprehend, if not agree with, the trouble many religious people have with homosexuality, and the movement in this country to legally recognize our relationships. After all, I was raised in the Catholic Church, where I was taught how vulgar, how immoral, how disgusting, how repellent gay and lesbian people were. Imagine my surprise, my disgust, my shame when I realized that I was one of those people.

"...You hold our sex lives to

be immoral, which means that you hold our love lives, our relationships, to be immoral. You are fine if we keep that morality under wraps, in the privacy of our own homes. You just don't want to hear about it, you don't want to see it, and you sure as hell don't want your government or churches recognizing it as something positive, or at least neutral...What are we to do? Do you really expect millions of people in this country to remain silent about our lives, simply because you are offended? Do you expect those millions to meekly acquiesce to your demands for silence and shame?"

- William F. Tulloch

"You obviously were not lynched, and now you would not be killed for whistling at a white woman. You never lived that type of oppression that the African slaves lived. I, on the other hand, am still living in the gay Jim Crow era, and you are the one posting a 'Straight Only' sign....

"Many of us hide all the things that happen to us to protect our family members from shame. Families have lost members due to suicide because they couldn't be who they were without leaving town. Many gay sons are beaten by fathers and put in the streets. Mothers disown their daughters. We are chased and beaten, physi-

cally and emotionally by school bullies and religious nuts."

- E. Swinney

"I don't think that any struggle can be fairly compared against another, as each person is different. However, I think a degree of respect is necessary if equality is ever to be achieved. Maybe the gay rights movement cannot be compared to the black rights movement but there is one common thread - we are all human. All humans deserve equality."

- J. Terrell

"You say that it irks you that gays have the audacity to use the civil rights movement as a model for our civil rights, that you had no choice in being black. Well, sorry to bust your bubble, I had no choice in being black or being gay. How can you tell 10 percent of the population that they chose to be something that obviously is not accepted by the masses? Who in their right mind would want that type of ridicule? A masochist maybe, but not me and a host of others."

- Richard Kirkwood

"I am an out black lesbian who has been active in the lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender/queer/intrasex (lgbtq&i), the black communities, community

economic development and grassroot politics for over 40 years. I am an out black lesbian in a committed relationship with another black lesbian for over 24 years. As an out black lesbian couple, we have raised two great, straight adult children. Our children are highly successful, and they have given us five wonderful grandchildren. We have instilled in our children great sense of the black and lgbtq&i communities, profound beliefs and good work ethics."

- Cheryl Robinson

"Just as I'm sure you didn't wake up one day and decide you were going to be heterosexuals, most of us homosexuals did not wake up and decide to be homosexual. You must be how God made you. As a black homosexual man who God, in all His infinite glory and wisdom, made, He didn't make me to be less. He made me gay and He blessed me this way."

- Minister Hank Millbourne

George E. Curry is editor-in-chief of the NNDPA News Service and BlackPressUSA.com. His most recent book is "The Best of Emerge Magazine," an anthology published by Ballantine Books. He can be reached through his Web site, georgecurry.com.



Mayor Allen Joines

Mayor Joines

You may notice that there is rarely a week that a picture of Mayor Allen Joines doesn't appear in The Chronicle. We are not playing political favorites, but the mayor has become a fixture at community events and church programs. And since we are a community newspaper, we run into the mayor a lot.

Any politician could show up at one or two "black" events during election time, and many do, but it is safe to say that Joines is not faking it. He is more than two years into his term and has not let up on his community involvement.

On Christmas Eve, Joines took what many would consider a political risk when he showed up at a support rally for Darryl Hunt. He was the only white member of the City Council there. In a town

where many non-African-Americans still believe that Hunt is a murderer and rapist, Joines' appearance surely raised some eyebrows. Thankfully, though, we have at least one prominent white citizen in this town who is not afraid to stand on the side of truth and justice. We should all pray for more like him.

The black community has already fallen head over heels for Joines, which is a big accomplishment considering black folks can spot a slick politician at midnight while blindfolded. But Joines' popularity does not necessarily come from the fact that he rarely turns down invitations. His actions correspond with his words, and he has only one face that is always turned toward equality and righteousness.

Can't teach old paper new tricks



Ernie Pitt

This & That

Finally, after almost 19 years and plenty of blood, sweat and tears, justice is about to be served in the Darryl Hunt case. Those who stuck with Hunt are elated, and so am I. They prayed a lot, filed many motions, and that persistence has paid off. It also has revealed many other more sinister activities. Not only should the criminal justice system be overhauled, but the manner in which the daily newspaper contributed to the dissemination of misinformation should be criticized as well.

It strikes me as very odd that the daily newspaper - I don't call it the local daily because it is owned by Media General, whose headquarters is in Richmond, Va. - was able to time an eight-part series on the Hunt case just weeks before the new evidence was discovered and released, basically exonerating Hunt. Now, they are taking credit for having saved Hunt.

How ironic. Go back and look at how ultraconservative the daily's coverage was during the time of the investigation and the trial. They never questioned nor challenged the DA's half-baked theories, nor any of the other half-truths presented at the time. The daily paper needed nearly two decades and a plethora of scientific evidence before it



Darryl Hunt and his wife, April.

changed its tune, while the black community and this newspaper just used common sense to see the charges against Hunt were trumped-up from the very beginnings.

I suspect that the new DNA information may have been leaked to the daily so that they could clean up their act before its release. Don't be fooled. Why, all of a sudden, does an ultraconservative newspaper with a racist past care about people who look like you and me? You have to go back 20 years to see what The Chronicle did and how The Chronicle kept alive the urgings of those who supported Hunt. In fact, Allen Johnson, who is now the editor of the editorial page for

the Greensboro News & Record, won a Community Service Award from the N.C. Press Association in 1985 for The Chronicle's coverage of the case (Johnson was editor of The Chronicle at the time).

The journalism professor who judged the contest said, in part: "... The newspaper gave its readership the kind of coverage that readers probably did not get from other area media sources. In particular, much of the focus was on the defendant, and the newspaper operated properly within its scope to show his (Hunt's) side in the case...."

Johnson was the first member of the press to interview Hunt after his arrest. (Read

that interview at www.wschronicle.com.)

The daily's coverage back then reminds me of the case of Sheila McKellar, who was handcuffed, gagged and suffocated in a magistrate's office. The daily thought nothing of it because McKellar was a drug addict with HIV. It also reminds me of the case involving Carlos Stoner, a black man who was castrated near Washington Park. It was a hate crime that was kept hush-hush because the victim was allegedly homosexual. But did he deserve to be castrated and have his penis shoved down his throat? Were it not for The Chronicle, those incidents may never have seen the light of day.

We must never forget how mainstream institutions for profit and power have hoodwinked us. The view may be different now but the heart and soul are still the same. We must not forget our past, including the atrocities perpetrated against our community. We must look more favorably on our own institutions - making them stronger and more viable. There and only there is where we have influence and power. When the deal goes down, we must be able to depend on our own. It only makes sense.

God helps those who help themselves. Peace, love and grace during 2004. Amen!

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