

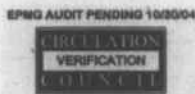
# OPINION

## THE CHRONICLE

ERNEST H. PITT Publisher/Co-Founder

ELAINE PITT Business Manager

T. KEVIN WALKER Managing Editor



Bennett President Dr. Johnetta B. Cole addresses the crowd at the recent fund-raising gala.

### BENNETT'S 'BELLE'

President Dr. Johnetta B. Cole has turned out to be Bennett College's "Belle" extraordinaire. She has almost single-handedly brought the financially strapped historically black all-female college in Greensboro back to life.

Using all of her years of experience in the education and political arenas to bring attention to Bennett, she has cracked the financial bind of the school.

During a "gala" black-tie event recently, she announced that the school had reached \$25 million of its total goal of \$50 million. With the help of the likes of former President Bill Clinton; former presidential candidate and Sen. Bob Dole; the great and awe-inspiring poet, playwright and actress Dr. Maya Angelou; and successful businessman Robert Brown, the evening was filled with dignity and a spirit short of nothing we have ever seen.

Bennett has taken in students from the Gulf area impacted by Hurricane Katrina. They were there - beautiful and proud. Bennett's choir sang - graciously and dignified. Dr. Angelou read a poem

- simple yet deep beyond comparison. Dr. Cole chatted with both Clinton and Dole; both solidified their commitment to her and to Bennett.

Bob Brown is a little giant with powerful connections. We will always know Mr. Brown as a person who has always said of himself, "I'm just trying to do God's work." We believe him, and our community is better off for it.

Bennett still needs \$25 million more in order to secure its future. We trust that our community will open its collective pocketbooks and help Dr. Cole in her efforts on behalf of a great institution. It must be done, and all of us must help her do it.

Judging by the crowd at the gala, who by the way, mostly paid \$500 a ticket and numbered probably 1,000, that other \$25 million will be a piece of cake. It was also supported by sponsors such as Wachovia, Food Lion, Diversity Inc., Dell, HSBC, Citigroup, Merck, Wal-Mart, and Fairway, to name a few.

We continue to wish Bennett and Dr. Cole, and all of her supporters the best in reviving the school.

### Millions More Movement

To the Editor:

On behalf of the Millions More Movement and the Local Organizing Committee (LOC), I want to extend to you an invitation to attend the Millions More Movement on Oct. 15 in Washington, D.C. This event will commemorate the 10th anniversary of the Million Man March.

The challenges facing African-Americans in particular and others in general call for a reassessment of the conditions we find ourselves in. Even before Hurricane Katrina touched land, disproportionate numbers of blacks and the poor were suffering from broken homes, broken minds, and broken spirits emanating from a string of broken promises and leadership that have failed to address these issues in a timely and effective manner.

There is no question that it is vitally important for government, local and federal, to rise to the occasion in ways that address issues of political oppression, economic exploitation and social degradation that have become an albatross retarding overall black progress. There is also no question of there being much we can do for ourselves while awaiting government to address our petitions.

While the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina will be felt nationally for decades to come and thus add to the already existing political, economic, and social challenges, it is the aim of the Winston-Salem LOC to put into place programs that emphasize key components such as unity, self-determination, collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity, and faith as we strive to minimize the stormy conditions that plague black people and maximize our resolve to make our communities a more decent place to live.

We look forward to establishing collaborative relationships with you, your organization or church, and other organizations with shared goals and objectives. These relationships will allow us to continue to work systematically with disenfranchised groups of people to help change lives by continuing to develop "social capital" in our communities.

Anyone wanting to attend the Millions More Movement may purchase tickets (\$50) from Special Occasions Bookstore,

## Letters to the Editor



Shabazz Restaurant, or by calling (336) 721-1616.

Min. Mikal Muhammad

### Pop Warner hoopla

To the Editor:

I've been keeping up with this whole Pop Warner Falcon issue and have been amazed at all of the "hoopla." As a teacher I stand in amazement that parents would put forth so much effort in setting things straight about a children's football game.

I've visited several football fields on Saturdays and I am a believer that children need extracurricular activities. However, I've been in the school system for over 10 years and I've never seen black parent participation at a PTA meeting like I see out on those fields. Often teachers are told that parents can't come to PTA or other school events because of football, cheerleading, basketball (etc.) practice.

If this much focus was put on education, character and good citizenship, then maybe you wouldn't have to write columns that need two-sided stories! I commend you on your fairness, but there is a bigger picture!

Stay Blessed,  
Carla R. Jackson,  
Fourth-Grade Teacher

### Equiano's story likely legit

To the Editor:

Professor Vincent Carretta's new book that casts doubt on the authenticity of Olaudah Equiano's remarkable autobiography (The Chronicle 9/22) is certainly a scholarly and sincere effort to shed light on the remarkable 18th century black sailor and author. Nevertheless there are many reasons to question Carretta's own conclusions.

Firstly, ships' muster roles of the times were notoriously unreliable documents drawn up by a ship's clerk, and usually not by the sailors themselves. Not only couldn't most sailors read or write, at the time most ships required the semi-legal services of "crimps" in the ports of call to fully man them.

Crimps were men who plied unsuspecting men with drink at dockside taverns and when the men were drunk to the point of near unconsciousness had them carried on board a ship that was about to sail. When the man woke up, he was far out at sea. Most men did not want to go to sea and this was the only way for a ship to gain its full complement of "hands."

The muster role document

was then filled in by a clerk who often guessed at names and places of birth. Though Equiano could read and volunteered to go to sea, that does not mean he had necessarily even seen the muster.

It is also possible that Equiano created a fiction of having been born in South Carolina rather than Africa to further legitimize himself as an English subject so that he would not be cast back into slavery as had happened to him before.

The Royal Navy had many blacks as members of ship crews. Sailing was virtually the only profession at the time where a competent black man would be as respected as a white man of equal skill, and paid the same. Black sea captains were not unknown during these years, and again, this was practically the only profession where a black man could exercise executive authority over men of any race.

There is no doubt that Equiano valued being an English subject as this accorded him greater safety than any other nationality.

William H. Longyard

Longyard is Career Center English teacher and author of the maritime history "A Speck on the Sea." He is currently working on a book about Equiano.

## It doesn't matter whether Bush loves us



Phill Wilson  
Guest Columnist

Post-Katrina, everyone's obsessed with whether George Bush cares about black people. Kanye West thinks he doesn't; Laura Bush insists he does. After all, the first lady said: "I live with him. I know what he believes."

Maybe Laura is right. Maybe W. loves him some black folk. But who cares? It's the wrong question. The president is not our father. The role of the government is not to be our friend. It doesn't matter if they care about us. What matters is their competence. Are they capable, for example, of mounting an immediate and effective response to a natural disaster that hits black folk especially hard? In the case of Katrina, the answer is a resounding no.

Dying people were left stranded - and worse. With guns blazing, the police in Gretna, La., actually forced hungry, thirsty, and desperate people back into the flooding city. Most of these people were black.

So what matters is not whether W. loves us or hates us. What matters is that he didn't deliver. As former President Clinton said in an ABC interview, "This is a matter of public policy, and whether it's race-based or not, if you give your tax cuts to the rich and hope everything works out all right, and poverty goes up, and it disproportionately affects black and brown people, that's a consequence of the action made."

But Hurricane Katrina is merely this administration's most spectacular failure. Under George Bush's watch, the number of poor



Rapper Kanye West says-Bush doesn't like blacks.

people in this country has surged by 4.5 million. There are now 37 million Americans - 13 million of them children - who are living in poverty.

A lot of people said Bill Clinton liked black folks, and maybe he did. But again, wrong question. Under the previous administration, poverty rate fell from 15.1 percent of the population at the start of Clinton's presidency to 11.3 percent at the end of it - still way too many, but moving in the right direction.

The Bush administration has announced an estimated \$500 billion in post-Katrina reconstruction plans. How does the president propose to pay for it? Canceling some of the tax cuts for the rich? Nope. Rethinking the \$5 billion a month we're spending in Iraq? Wrong again. Instead, he wants Congress to cut spending, which means further shredding the already threadbare safety net.

Bush has acknowledged the housing crisis the storm created. But one of his administration's long-standing legislative priorities has been to scale back rental assistance to poor families nation-

wide. In keeping with that goal, Bush's relief plan hasn't even noddled in the direction of distributing rental aid.

Meanwhile, apartment vacancy rates in undamaged areas of New Orleans were at 20 to 40 percent before the storm even hit. Analysts say we could house as many as a third of those made homeless without constructing a single new unit, but to do so we'd have to make those landlords take Section 8 vouchers - and properly fund them.

The reconstruction plan also keeps continuity with the administration's scorched earth attack on the health care safety net.

The budget currently before Congress would strip \$10 billion from Medicaid over the next five years anyway. Medicaid is one of the few resources African-Americans living with HIV have been able to turn to for treatment; weakening the system will make the already awesome racial differential in survival rates among people with AIDS grow even larger.

It was policies like these that totally ignored the needs of the

poorest among us that exacerbated the devastation of Katrina. And that brings us to the other natural disaster that the Bush administration has willfully ignored.

The stats are now familiar to everyone except the White House: There are more people living with HIV/AIDS today than ever before, and nearly half of them are black. Black people represent more than 50 percent of all new cases in the United States, more than 56 percent of the new youth cases, and 72 percent of new female cases.

What has Bush done about this carnage? He's cut funding for federal HIV prevention programs, recommended changes to the Ryan White CARE Act - the primary federal funding vehicle for AIDS services - that would drastically restrict what services are available to the poor black folks, and cut comprehensive sex education that has proven effective at slowing the epidemic, in favor of unproven abstinence-only curricula - which forbids any discussion of how to use a condom or avoid STDs.

We can spend all day speculating about whether these measures are being implemented out of some racist intent. That'd be a mistake. If you go to a car mechanic who disconnects your brakes and you are killed in an accident, are you any less dead if he did it because he didn't "care" about you or if he was just plain incompetent?

Natural disaster or public health disaster, mechanic or president, we need someone who can deliver. Competence matters!

Phill Wilson is founder and executive director of the Black AIDS Institute in Los Angeles. Wilson has been living with HIV for 23 years. He can be reached at Phillw@BlackAIDS.org.

Submit letters and columns to:

Chronicle Mailbag,  
P.O. Box 1636,  
Winston-Salem, NC 27102



Please print clearly. Typed letters and columns are preferred. If you are writing a guest column, please include a photo of yourself. We reserve the right to edit any item submitted for clarity or brevity. You also can e-mail us your letters or columns at: news@wschronicle.com.