

THE CHRONICLE

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WINSTON-SALEM, N.C.

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W-S faces lawsuit and discrimination claims over canceled concert

BY TEVIN STINSON
THE CHRONICLE

A lawsuit has been filed against the City of Winston-Salem by a local promoter for their decision to cancel a concert that was scheduled to be held at the Winston-Salem Fairgrounds later this month. Representatives from Starr Entertainment say the cancellation cost them nearly a quarter million dollars.

Here's what we know: the Carolina Summer Music Festival, headlined by hip-hop artist Pooh Shiesty, Mulatto, and Moneybagg Yo was scheduled to be held at the fairgrounds on July 31. In the lawsuit filed on May 6 by Starr Entertainment, a local promotion company, representatives met with the city to discuss the availability of the fairgrounds to hold the event and by June 9, both parties agreed that the event would be held on July 31.

But all that changed just nine days later.

On June 18, Starr Entertainment received a call from the city who expressed concerns about the artists who were scheduled to perform. And on July 21 they received a letter from the city canceling the concert. In the letter the city wrote, "The city's Police Department investigated each performer's background and believes, based on publicly available information, that there exists the chance of violence and gang activity at the City's property in connection

with the planned concert.

"The city will not host an event, nor will it allow a private entity to use City property to host an event, if there is risk of violence to the attendees or to members of the general public."

Starr Entertainment has been promoting the Carolina Summer Music Festival since the date was confirmed on social media and the lawsuit alleges that because of the cancellation they have lost more than \$200,000 in non-refundable deposits. Attorney Jessie Fontenot Jr. who is representing Starr Entertainment said now that it is evident that the concert won't be held, they just want all the money back they have lost. Fontenot said when Starr met with the city on June 18 they raised concerns about Moneybagg Yo and an incident that happened in another state in 2016. In response Fontenot noted that Moneybagg Yo performed in Winston-Salem in 2017 without any issues.

"I think it's clear the city is treating this show and unfortunately the people who are most likely to be at the show differently than any other shows," Fontenot continued. "It's not as if the city has any valid concerns that the headliners were going to be jumping down from the stage and injuring people; so instead they're saying something specific about the people who are going to be at the show that gives rise to a threat of gang violence and activity and they



have yet to show any evidence that that was going to occur."

When word of the cancellation was made public, many people took to social media to share their thoughts about the decision made by the WSPD. Several members of Hate Out of Winston, a local grassroots organization, shared their frustrations on Facebook. In a letter written by several members of the organization and ad-

ressed to the city, they say canceling the only hip-hop or rap concert scheduled this year is discrimination.

In the letter Wes Fesler wrote, "...The City of Winston-Salem has cried wolf. The city has used the hackneyed, banal, and quite frankly threadbare stereotypes of associating hip-hop with concert violence. The fact of the matter is there is little to no data suggesting that

hip-hop concerts or its associated acts are more violent than any other form of music."

Fesler went on to raise questions about the city's willingness to regularly allow gun shows and rock concerts to be held on city property.

"This city which prides itself on being small but progressive is starting to look like a throwback to the '60s as in just a few weeks it is allowing C&E

Gun Show to come to the same fairgrounds on August 7th and 8th that it denied to the Black artists of Starr Entertainment. Is it because this is a largely white crowd? Have the vendors had their backgrounds checked? Has there been any connection made between them and violent supremacist groups? Does their whiteness alone mean that they are safe?"

Job Corps Scholars Program at WSSU offers free college courses and career certifications

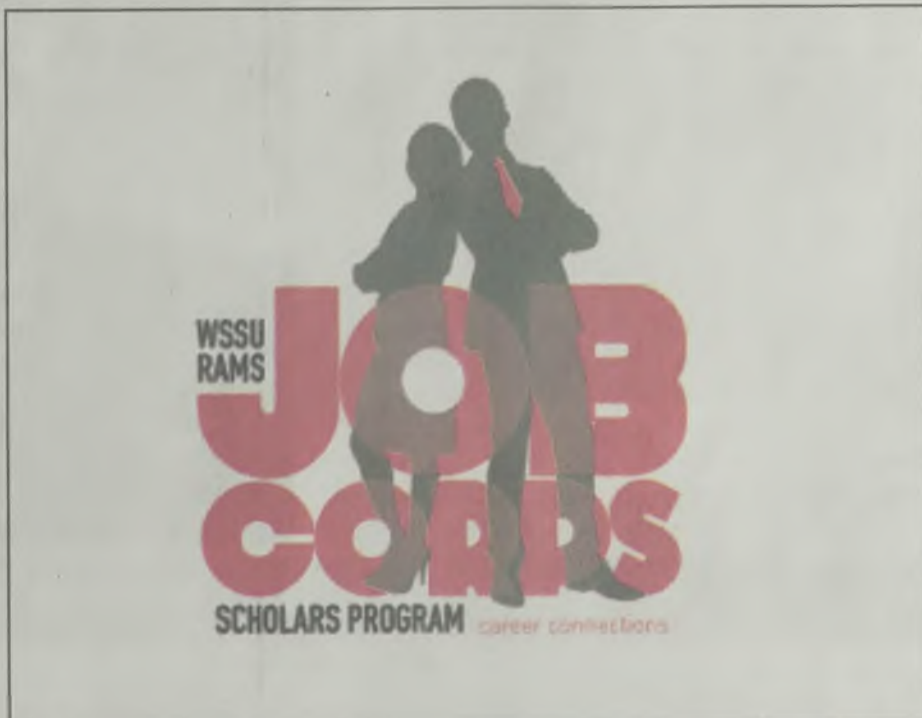
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Winston-Salem State University (WSSU) is now offering a new program

that allows participants to complete free college courses and earn career preparedness certification in the field of their choice.

WSSU's Job Corps Scholars Program is designed to eliminate some of the barriers to education and employment. The program is funded by a grant awarded by the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration and is unlike anything else offered by a four-year college or university.

Although similar programs are popular throughout the country and at com-

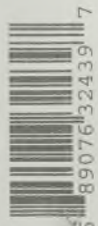


munity colleges, WSSU is the first four-year college or university in the state to offer a job corps program.

After completing the two-year program, participants will earn a certification in one of eight different areas: cybersecurity, computer programming, entrepreneurship, healthcare, law enforcement, legal services, management, or web applications. Participants will also have access to tutoring, career counseling, career placement, the opportunity to attend several different

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