

EDITORIALS

The Charlotte Post

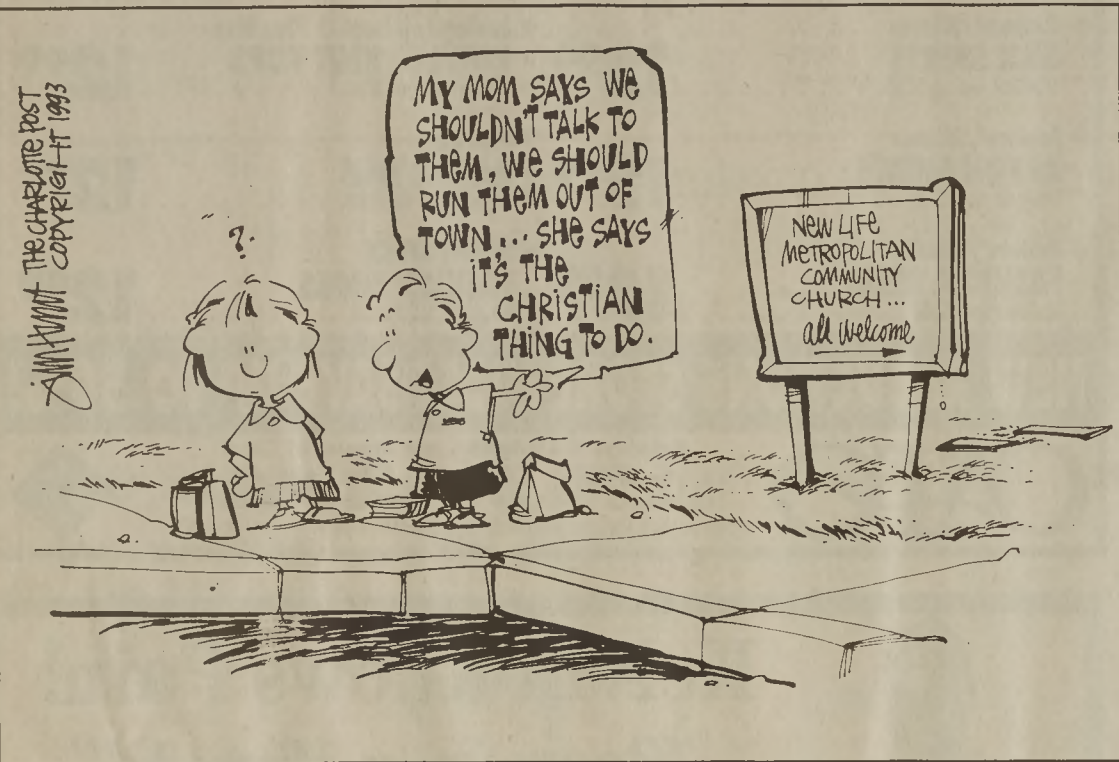
The Voice Of The Black Community

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Government can't fix crime

"We've got to get the Legislature back for a special session. Somebody has got to do something about his crime thing. We've just got to put a stop to it."

That is my friend Joe talking. He holds the members of the General Assembly responsible for our rising crime problem. He wants them to come back to Raleigh and fix everything.

In case you don't remember Joe, he is the same guy who was complaining last summer that the General Assembly had hung around Raleigh way too long. I remember his saying then that nobody's property or livelihood was safe as long as the Legislature was in session. Back then Joe was saying that the Legislature messed up everything that it touched.

But now Joe wants them to come back to Raleigh, and, in a few days of courageous action, eliminate crime.

How I wish that it could be done! There are some things that would be helpful: More resources for courts and prosecutors, more prison beds, more policemen, restrictions on the ownership and use of various weapons. These things would help a little bit. But you and I know that they wouldn't work miracles.

And then there would have to be other things done to make us think that the legislators really meant to strike a hard blow against crime: Mandatory lengthy sentences for all types of crimes, more death sentences, automatic this and automatic that, and other things that look good but may actually take away from the ability of real crime fighters to marshal the state's resources to fight dangerous criminals.

And the General Assembly would have to consider more innovative proposals. Somebody, for instance, would suggest the use of National Guard troops to help safeguard urban areas.

(Some of us laughed at similar suggestions by mayors Myrick and Pratt. But there may be something to the concept of an organized citizenry answering a call to arms to respond to a common enemy. If we leave the ordinary



D.G. Martin

citizen unorganized and alone to face his fears of crime and violence, what choices does he have? Build walls and fences. Buy guns. Train dogs. Hire bodyguards. Retreat into despair so confusing that he no longer sees the difference between shooting a criminal who is invading our home and shooting one who is running away. More organized citizen participation might save us from individual angry stupidity.)

And the General Assembly would throw money at other attractive "solutions" that are really money down the drain.

All this done in special legislative session might give individual legislators license to say, "I voted to allocate many millions of extra dollars to fight crime. I understand your concerns."

Maybe it would get you and me and Joe off their backs - for a little while. But the truth is, for all the legislators might do, we probably wouldn't notice the difference.

The other day, my minister, in a sermon on another topic, said, "The problem is that we don't know what the problem is."

We do know some of the ingredients of the crime problem. We are surrounded by them - family breakdown, urbanization, total mobility and the resulting loss of responsibility for those who live and work around us, drugs, joblessness, hopelessness, race, and insecurity.

"A problem well-stated is a problem that is already half-solved," someone told me last week. But, as a community, we can't yet state our problem with crime in a fashion that points towards its solution.

Before we rush our legislators to solve our crime problem, let us be sure we know what the problem is. And let's get the problem well-stated - before you and I and Joe push the General Assembly into a special session.

D.G. MARTIN is vice president for public affairs for the University of North Carolina system.

Would Reagan support Powell?

By James Alsbrook
SPECIAL TO THE POST

Was Ronald Reagan sincere when he recently invited Colin Powell to California, gave Powell the Reagan "Freedom Award," and said he would like to see Powell in the White House as president?

Many people are not aware that this conservative, two-term ex-President Reagan who opposed most civil rights laws evidently changed, now saying he would like to see a black man in the White House as President.

The implications of Reagan's "Powell for President" statement are enormous.

We know Reagan made the statement because he wanted to influence the political direction of this nation. Whether the statement was made with sincerity and in good faith is conjecture based on one of these three theories:

Theory No. 1: Assume Reagan was sincere. If this is true, he endorsed Powell because he knows victorious military leaders are popular at all levels of society. Also, he knows the present Republican leaders having potential presidential support lack the promise of victory in 1996.

But Powell has more than 30 years of outstanding military service and has that "over and above petty politics" air and is popular. The Democrats and the Republicans of Virginia - each party - is asking him to run on its ticket for the next vacant seat in the U.S. Senate. Reagan knows people like Powell's communication skills, his mainstream personality, his charisma, his modesty, his brilliant military record. Reagan believes Powell would win the presidency for Republicans and be a good and strong leader.

Theory No. 2: Assume Reagan was not sincere. If this is true, Reagan endorsed Powell because he has a "hidden

agenda" and wants to keep Powell from divulging information that would discredit the Reagan administration just as the Watergate affair discredited Nixon. Powell could severely damage Republican hopes for a 1996 presidential election victory.

Reagan knows Powell has received offers of between \$4 million and \$6 million to write his autobiography including his memoirs.

Reagan knows that the "clean" and credible Powell could include in his forthcoming book a hailstorm of damaging facts that would further sully the Reagan image and further injure Republican election hopes in local and national politics.

Theory No. 3. Assume Reagan is sincere and believes Powell would be the white conservatives' Uncle Tom robot and slunky like Clarence Thomas.

Which is correct?

JAMES ALSBROOK is a syndicated columnist.

Our fight against violence

By Fess Bradley
SPECIAL TO THE POST

Living in America in the 1990s, one would think that white-on-white violence does not exist.

It certainly does not come blaring across the television screen. One cannot find it in newspaper headlines. There are no stop the killing movements in the European-American community. President Clinton goes to a black church in Memphis and to a Hispanic church in Los Angeles to address the issue of crime and violence. Why doesn't he raise this issue in the same tenor before European-Americans?

After all, over 30,000 European-Americans have been murdered in this country in the last three years. The overwhelming majority of these European-Americans were murdered by other European-Americans. In fact, records indicate that 80% of all crimes committed against European-Americans are committed by their own people.

White-on-white violence is primarily a problem that affects lower class European-Americans - the white invisibles. When images of crime and violence are being projected, they don't exist. When images of poverty and welfare are being projected, they disappear. Their class status has relegated them invisible.

Whereas class status explains some of this, the double-edged sword of white supremacy must be examined to explain the rest. Dr. Amos Wilson says, "there is a need for the dominant elements of white America to maintain their pristine self-image, to perceive themselves as faultless and superior to Africans who they oppress and exploit." Consequently, they must deny and distort the reality of "their past criminal and immoral behavior" and the contemporary criminality of their power structure and of their lower classes. One result of this is that the social problems of poor European-Americans never get addressed. They are sacrificial lambs of the white power structure and its "pristine self-image," yet they still adhere to the tenets of white supremacy. Are African Americans supposed to believe that the white power structure will do for us what they will not do for their own poor?

On the flip side of that double-edged sword,

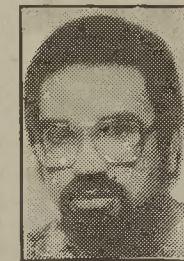
white supremacy holds as one of its qualifying myths that African Americans, particularly black males, are inherently criminal. Thus when images of crime and violence are being projected they are overwhelmingly projected as African (nationally and internationally). This qualifying myth is also used to deny our humanity, and to deny basic human rights to Africans on a world-wide basis.

Consequently the African struggle against crime and violence is more definitively a human rights struggle. It must neutralize the white supremacy dynamic, particularly its ability to define us as inherently criminal, and its ability to create conditions which induce black criminal behavior. Empowerment is a fundamental component of any human rights campaign. It should be clear that this is not what Clinton and other European-American officials who infrequently "show" at African American anti-crime programs have in mind.

The African American struggle against crime and violence has been waged at the grassroots level. However, we now see that some black elected officials and traditional leaders from the civil rights community are finally moving to "break the betrayal" of their deafening silence on this issue. This group can contribute something, but the masses must be aware that they usually represent the go along to get along crowd (transactional leadership). Their forte is wheeling and dealing, and all too often these deals shortchange or sell out the masses. To win this struggle, transformative leadership must become the dominant element in African America. Maulana Karenga defines these leaders as those who have the "self-conscious capacity to provide vision and values, program and practice that not only satisfies human needs, but transforms people in the process so that they can become self-conscious agents of their own liberation."

Transformation is not an easy process, however given the oppressive conditions that African people have continuously faced over the past five centuries, it is our only choice if we are to realize salvation and liberation.

FESS BRADLEY lives in Charlotte.



Bradley

Reducing crime requires united response

By Joel Nwagbaraocha
SPECIAL TO THE POST

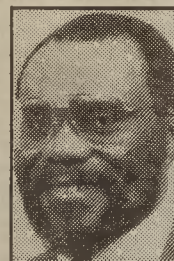
Over the past three years, more than 7,500 violent crimes have occurred throughout the nation's colleges and universities. Some of these crimes include rape, robbery and murder. On Nov. 25, our celebrated day of thanks, Barber-Scotia College became a part of the grisly statistics of crime.

On the morning of Nov. 25, five men shot Shontel Wright to death outside his college apartment. Mr. Wright was an aspiring 18 year-old-freshman, who like so many other youths, desired to accomplish his dreams of greatness through higher education. Those dreams will never be fulfilled and his life goals will never be accomplished, for Mr. Wright's life ended as a case of mistaken identity.

As Barber-Scotia searches for answers, one reflects whether Mr. Wright's death is a coincidence, or is it a reflection of the vast ills of society. One can only conclude that the pervasive mechanisms of crime on college campuses is a reflection of our society. From 1981 to present, serious crimes such as homicide, rape, robbery and aggravated assault increased over 50 percent at the national level. Most disturbing is the growing number of young people who are victims of homicide, particularly as a result of gun-related crimes. According to The National Center for Health Statistics, over 40 percent more teen deaths occurred from firearms than diseases. The Centers for Disease Control reports that gun related deaths for all teens have escalated over 80 percent from 1985 to present.

Deaths among black males between 12 and 19 has nearly tripled during this same period. Sadly, in this 12 to 19 age group, gun-related homicide rate for black males was 11 times the rate for white males. Gun-related homicide is the leading cause of

death for black males in this 12 to 21 year old category. Dr. David Satcher, the incoming director of the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta, has gone on record



Nwagbaraocha

that the Centers will begin addressing violence in America as a social illness. As Barber-Scotia College begins its healing from Mr. Wright's tragic death, the college is looking for answers and solutions to the plague of crime that has hit all of the nation's colleges and universities. Barber-Scotia College is coming off the sidelines and is taking a leading role in addressing crime.

Barber-Scotia's target on crime zeroes in on developing more effective relationships with the surrounding neighborhoods through strengthening families, churches, and schools. The solution calls for the development of an Urban Development Community Network that will instill a greater sense of community and a system of social control; thus allowing for more socialization of youth. The implementation of this network in conjunction with the George Shinn Leadership Development Center programs and the Shontel Wright Scholarship Fund for disadvantaged youth majoring in criminal justice will enable us to engage in prevention oriented work with neighborhood residents, establish programs, resources and opportunities for youth, and work to improve cooperation and collaborative actions between the community, police and the college.

As the mission of Barber-Scotia College mandates, actions must be made to improve the overall quality of life, including better health care, better housing, more recreational facilities and

greater opportunities for job training and securing meaningful employment. It is strongly felt that the aforementioned strategies are needed and can be successful.

However, the work to be accomplished demands a high level of commitment and guarantee of resources from the college and both the public and private sectors. It is also believed that an effort of this magnitude is required in order to interrupt this cycle of disorder and crime.

We cannot begin to address the magnitude of social ills plaguing this nation, including gun-related deaths if we are not willing to make a commitment to prepare the young people to become productive, economically self-sufficient adults. Many people have grown impatient of elaborate community forums and discussions.

We must ensure a better quality, more meaningful educational experience for all youth, especially those in disadvantaged environments. I am not suggesting that we at Barber-Scotia College only answer to the communities' and nation's problems, nor will it be the answer for all our youth. However, it is a place to begin, and it is something that we will do. To ignore the problem will cost our community and nation millions of dollars, and as Mr. Shontel Wright's fate, it will cost young lives.

JOEL NWAGBARAOCHA is president of Barber-Scotia College in Concord.

"Many people have grown impatient of many elaborate community forums and discussions."

Barber-Scotia College
President Joel Nwagbaraocha