

The Charlotte Post

Published weekly by the Charlotte Post Publishing Co.
1531 Camden Road Charlotte, N.C. 28203

Gerald O. Johnson
CEO/PUBLISHER

Robert Johnson
CO-PUBLISHER/
GENERAL MANAGER

Herbert L. White
EDITOR IN CHIEF

Assassination of the black female's image

By Earl Ofari Hutchinson
NATIONAL NEWSPAPER PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION

Dr. Mae Jemison made history when she became America's first African American woman to fly through space on the Endeavor shuttle mission in 1992.

Following a routine traffic stop in Houston four years later, Dr. Jemison again flew through space.

A Houston police officer body slammed her to the ground, twisted

her wrist and arms and slapped handcuffs on her. The officer claimed that she resisted arrest for an outstanding traffic warrant. Dr. Jemison denied it.

In that brutal moment, Dr. Jemison was not a celebrated black woman praised by the president and applauded by the public for her contributions to the nation's space program but a "gangsta." It was a harsh reminder that to much of



Hutchinson



Jemison

America, black women, like black men, have also become a menace to society.

The massive media depiction of black men as "at risk" and "endangered" masks the damage that gender and racial stereotypes wreak

While much of the media enshrined the stereotypes of black men as lazy, violent, crime prone, sexual menaces, black women were typed much the same way.

on black women. The roughhousing of Jemison mocks the popular myth that black women are not considered as physical threats and economic competitors to white males. They are.

In addition, they share the burden of all women of being politically and economically marginalized and socially devalued.

Black women have never been accorded the protection and "privileges" of white women in America. There is bitter truth to the old line that the only time black women are ever called ladies is when they are cleaning ladies.

While much of the media enshrined the stereotypes of black men as lazy, violent, crime prone, sexual menaces, black women were typed much the same way. The heavy dose of racial and gender stereotypes rests solidly on these deeply ingrained myths:

•Hypersexuality. During Senate hearings on the Clarence Thomas' Supreme Court nomination in 1991, white male senators savaged Anita Hill. Hill was not simply a victim of partisan politics. She reinforced the image of a sexually promiscuous, deceitful black woman.

In the rape trial of boxer Mike Tyson, attorneys tried to paint Desiree Washington as a woman out for money and sex.

Washington and Hill were trapped by the slave mythology that black women are sexually loose and promiscuous. The image of the sexually immoral woman puts black women at risk in law and public policy. Police, prosecutors and the courts in many cases ignore or lightly punish rape, sexual abuse and assaults against black women.

•Devalued lives. Between 1980 and 1985, the number of black women murdered exceeded the number of American soldiers killed in Vietnam in 1967, a peak year of the fighting. By 1990, homicide was the No. 1 killer of young black females. A black woman was 10 times more likely to be raped than a white woman and slightly more likely to be the victim of domestic violence than a white woman.

The media often magnifies and sensationalizes crimes by black men against white women and ignores or downplays crimes against black women.

•Welfare and single parenthood. Nearly two out of three welfare recipients live in a suburban or rural area, stay on welfare less than four years, have one to two children, and are white. There is no evidence that poor black women make babies in order to live luxuriously at taxpayers' expense. Even if they wanted to, no state has maximum benefit levels that allow recipients to exist at the official poverty level. The national average monthly payout is \$373.

The twin myths persist that black teens have a monopoly on "illegitimacy." They don't. In 1993, the typical single mother was a white, well-educated working woman. Sixty percent of out-of-wedlock births were to white women and 70 percent to women older than 20 years old. The number of black unmarried girls having babies, though still disproportionately high, has sharply dropped since 1992.

Gangsta rappers, some black filmmakers, and comedians reduce black women to "stuff," "Bitches," "Ho's" and "MF's." Their contempt reinforces the slut image and sends the message that violence or mistreatment of black women is socially acceptable. Despite lawsuits, protests and boycotts by women's groups, "gangsta"-themed films and rap music continue to soar in popularity. Hollywood and the record companies rake in small fortunes off them.

Black women are blamed for many of the crisis problems in American society. They are accused of emasculating and taking jobs away from black men. Their special needs and problems are often ignored by many feminist and women's organizations. The remedy is an intensive, active media and public campaign to make sure that black women such as Mae Jemison and all others will not continue to be seen and treated as the "other" menace to society.

EARL OFARI HUTCHINSON is author of "The Assassination of the Black Male Image" and "Beyond O.J.: Race, Sex, and Class Lessons for America."

The fight for affirmative action

GERALD O. JOHNSON

As I See It



Affirmation action is under attack from various special interest groups who are determined to see it come to an end.

If recent battles are any indication, then it is safe to say they will win the war. When the question to end affirmative action was put before California voters as a proposition, it passed.

The sentiment about affirmative action is it creates a reverse discrimination atmosphere and we should do away with it altogether. I caution people who feel this way by giving them my version of what affirmative action is really about. To do this I only need to turn to sports.

Up to the late '40s, people of color were not allowed to participate in professional sports. Because colleges and universities were segregated, athletes of

color were given little exposure in the mainstream media. The exclusion of athletes of color had nothing to do with ability or qualifications. They were not given the opportunity to participate.

One by one, each of the barriers started falling. A lot of us know the Jackie Robinson story. A lot of us know the story of Bear Bryant, the legendary University of Alabama football coach, who watched his nationally-ranked all-white team get trounced by the University of Southern California and their black running back Sam "Bam" Cunningham. Bear Bryant started recruiting black players soon after that game. We all remember the 1966 NCAA Final Four basketball championship that pitted the all-white University of Kentucky team against all-black Texas Western (now Texas-El Paso). These historical athletic events as well as many others played a major part in breaking many of the racial barriers both in and out of sports. Interestingly, but not acciden-

tally, sporting events became marketable. Television was coming of age and saw the opportunity that existed. More and more money was poured into sports and a strange thing started to happen. Winning was no longer a nice thing, it was a necessary thing. How you played the game was important only if you won.

Coaches at every level were and still are required to win. Their jobs depended on it. This caused coaches to go after the best players to fit in with their team philosophy. Interestingly, affirmative action is not an issue in this environment. The players are put on the field and asked to perform. The best performers become a part of the team.

Again, affirmative action is not an issue. Race is not an issue. The best people make the team.

Several basic points are clear in this environment:

• Participation is open. Unlike the old days, people are not barred from participation because of race, creed, or religion.

• Expectations are clearly defined. Players and coaches know what is expected of them.

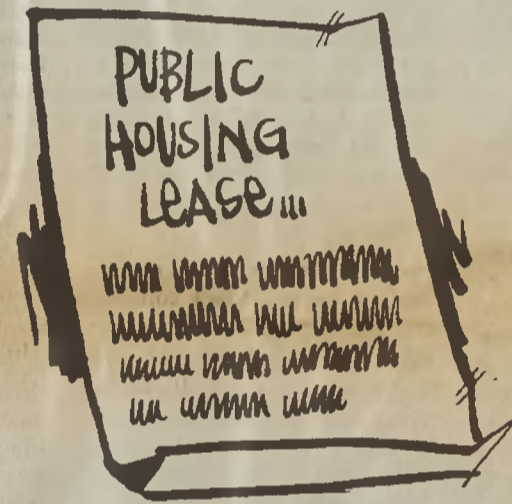
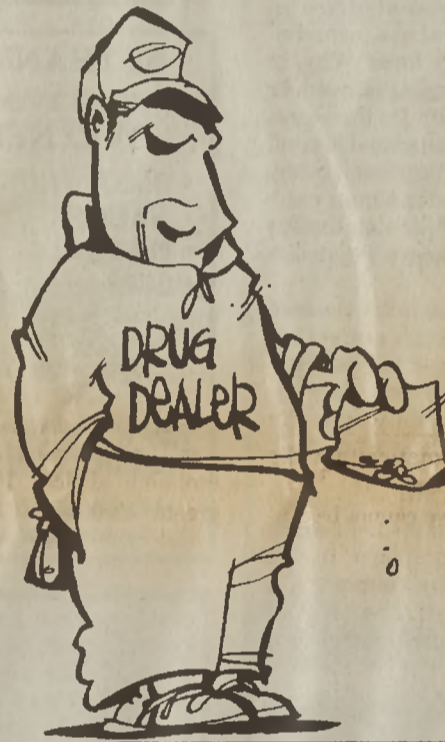
• Everyone has a stake in the final results. It is easy to evaluate everybody's contribution. Subjectivity is minimized in this environment.

• Consequences of results are immediate. Coaches and players alike know when they are not meeting expectations.

Most employers are not put under the microscope like sports teams. As a consequence, most employers use a lot of subjectivity as it relates to hiring, firing and promotions. As long as this subjectivity is a part of the corporate structure, so should be affirmative action. Subjectivity carries the biases of the person doing the selecting or the judging. It closes the door of participation. It clouds expectations, thereby confusing what the expected results should have been. Affirmative action is the only current vehicle that balances this corporate subjectivity with a dose reality when the scale tips too far to the right.

GERALD O. JOHNSON is publisher of The Charlotte Post.

WHICH IS INTIMIDATING?



THE CHARLOTTE POST
COPYRIGHT 1996

How the NAACP handles elections

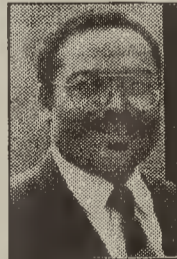
By Kelly Alexander Jr.
SPECIAL TO THE POST

After reading your article "Candidate barred from NAACP vote," (Nov. 14 Post), I wanted to clarify the election procedures used by the NAACP.

Elections in the NAACP are governed by rules found in the "Election Procedures Manual" and in the constitution for branches. These official rules, adopted by our national board of directors, may not be changed by a simple vote of a branch. The only body that can change these rules or grant exceptions is the national board by majori-

ty vote.

In order to be nominated for office a candidate must be a member of the branch at least 30 days before the October meeting. The national rules provide that a receipt signed by a membership solicitor



Alexander

makes you a member of the national organization as of the date of the receipt. However, your membership in the local branch starts at the time your

membership is received by the branch Secretary. Memberships given by solicitors to any officer other than the Secretary are only recorded when the Secretary receives them.

The NAACP has a history of not opening its membership roster for general inspection. This stems from an attempt decades ago by a state bent on publishing the names of all members of the NAACP, so that the Klan and racist employers could harass and attack them. The organization defeated this attempt in court and has held its membership roster close ever since.

However, our election rules do

provide appropriate access for presidential candidates.

The Secretary of the branch, not the Elections Supervisory Committee, certifies nominees for office.

The Elections Committee simply sees to it that those properly certified have their names placed on the ballot and that only those persons whose names appear on the roster thirty days before the elections, in this case those who were members as of Oct. 21 are allowed to vote.

I hope that this clarifies our process for you.

KELLY ALEXANDER JR. of Charlotte is the former N.C. NAACP president.

Recognizing blacks' real struggle

By Malik Russell
NATIONAL NEWSPAPER PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION

Throughout the history of the United States of America slavery has been often deemed "the Peculiar Institution." Its peculiarity arises from several distinctions, not least of which was an inhumane treatment of Africans. But, also peculiar about this institution was the way Southern antebellum society maintained its control of Africans.

Despite the attempts of Hollywood and jaded historians, Africans did not succumb to docility, nor willingly accept oppression. In fact, according to historian I. Herbert Aptheker in "American Negro Slave Revolts," "Several first hand

observers of the slaves were struck by their restlessness, discontent, and rebelliousness." The fear of rebellion - particularly during times of war, was so pervasive among slave owners that it prompted Jonathan Mason, a former Massachusetts senator who was traveling through the South in 1805 to write, "The citizens live in fear and (to) avert the evil, to lessen the danger, and to thin their population employs the time and expense of the Government annually."

In 1825, a Virginian slave holder and politician admitted the deep fear of rebellion, when he warned, "I wish I could maintain with truth...that it was a small danger, but it is a great danger, it is a danger which has increased, is increasing and

must be diminished, or it must come to regular catastrophe."

Although very few, if any detailed studies have been done concerning African slave revolts in America, except the well-known ones of Denmark Vessey, Gabriel Prosser, Nat Turner, and Cato, it appears that our ancestors revolted every time, and in anyway available.

In turn, as a means of controlling these enslaved Africans, Southern states developed a militaristic infrastructure which should be viewed as the precursor to the present American police state. According to Aptheker, "behind the owner, and his personal agents, stood an elaborate and complex system of military control. In the cities were guards and police, for the countryside there were

the ubiquitous patrols, armed men on horseback...Practically all adult white men were liable for patrol service."

As we are beginning to see, those quaint pictures of huckabucking, grinning slaves full of timidity and docility are about as real and accurate as having a Caucasian actor portray a pharaoh of ancient Kemet (Egypt).

The lesson those of African descent must learn is simple: Power concedes nothing by choice, only through respect or fear of a loss of power. The gains made by African Americans were mere concessions conceded at a certain time in order to prevent greater losses.

MALIK RUSSELL is a National Newspaper Publishers Association columnist.