

Womack deserves recognition for work

By Sylvia Grier
SPECIAL TO THE POST

After reading in the paper about a county commissioner that wants to designate who our African American civil rights leaders are, I am again appalled as many of us are. We in the African American community have allowed others to choose and select our leaders on other occasions, so again a white person thinks we will continue to allow that to happen.

I and the Carolinas Association of Black Women Entrepreneurs, Inc. say "no" to that. Dawn Womack should receive the recognition that county commissioner (Darrel) Williams wanted to give her at the County Commission's meeting and/or CABWE would be honored for Dawn Womack to receive her award at our Juneteenth Event. And to commissioner (Bill) James, he was voted on for his principals, morals and faith as those in District 6 that voted for him agree with his position, do they too fear African Americans in Charlotte knowing the truth or should we continue to live in the land of not knowing and not re-acting.

Dawn did a great job with the slave ship Henrietta Marie tour here in Charlotte. Many of us took time away

from our jobs and businesses to be a part of the success of the exhibit that represented our heritage. Dawn did everything she could to show her appreciation to the volunteers. The success of the tour made Charlotte look good. The slave ship Henrietta Marie offered a great deal of diversity, first being sponsored by General Motors and picking up the corporate sponsorship that Dawn was able to obtain locally.

In a 1993 article in The Charlotte Post, Hugh McColl said that diversity and economic opportunity are two timely interwoven issues that will determine whether our nation continues its global leadership. And if one would look at local issues should we not start right here at home. Charlotte promotes itself as a world class city, but it is to say that the only time it appears to be world class is when something totally white is going on. When there is anything African American to be praised in Charlotte there is always someone that brings an unnecessary issue, as commissioner James.

The white community should not select our leaders for us. Our grassroots leaders are the people we see keeping grass from growing under our feet and helping us fulfill the American Dream. Our leaders are not the gate keepers that keep us on crumb road. Our business leaders are

the ones that are out there "always trying to make money". Yes, when our real business leaders make money they contract and use the services and products of those of us that are in business to make money and provide jobs and opportunities for others in our communities and those coming behind us. Black businesses are not hobbies. And the success of the Henrietta Marie tour here in Charlotte adds to the successful career of Dawn Womack.

We appreciate the success of the exhibit and we appreciated an opportunity to hear all of the speakers. Many of us had not heard from in a long time. And it was great to have them in Charlotte. Yes, we applaud Dawn Womack and will give her and anyone else in the struggle any opportunity for recognition of awards and praises as they enhance the awareness of the struggle that we as African Americans still go through in Charlotte and these United States.

SYLVIA GRIER of Charlotte is a businesswoman and community activist.



Grier

Letters to The Post



A proposed proclamation for Dawn Womack was withdrawn because of speakers at the Henrietta Marie exhibit.

Commissioner out of line

Excuse me Bill James, but is it not about people having choices in today's world. How on earth can you...solely decide what people want to see and hear today and especially about plights, struggles of the black/Afro American community. The Henrietta Marie slave exhibit was for anyone who wanted to experience going to see it, learn from it, and whomever the Spirit Square chose to speak for this particular exhibit was your choice to make to go and hear them.

Its unfortunate that your narrow mind set is reflected by a lot of other Charlotte people and its not allowing Charlotte to grow. If there is anything going on within Charlotte, I as an individual have a choice in whether 'want to go or not. I certainly would not object to what someone else would like to choose or do. It's an open society to all and why should I try to stop Charlotte from being a city that can offer so much to all citizens.

Wake up Bill James, Don Reid, Hoyle Martin and all those other...and smell the coffee and join the real world.

I applaud you Dawn Womack.
Barbara Morris
Charlotte

What's on your mind?

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Undermining the family

Economist and columnist, Walter Williams:

Ideas of the liberal media and academic elite, supported by liberal politicians, have delivered one disaster after another. Their agenda has featured attacks on shame, traditional values and civilized standards of conduct.

Take the afternoon television sleaze shows, where hosts have guests ranging from those who have slept with their daughters' boyfriends and teenage male and female prostitutes to gang bangers and other lowlifes. Viewers are supposed to believe that these lifestyles are morally equivalent to any other lifestyle. The so-called spouse abuse "crisis" is a modern liberal cause and part of a devious agenda. According to the U.S. Department of Justice statistics, the 1992 rates of those who engaged in assaults, per 1,000 of the population, by marital status, were: never married (males, 23; females, 12); divorced or separated (males, 14; females, 9); married (males, 6; females, 3). Clearly both men and women are safer when married. The least likely assault victim is a wife. What the liberals call wife beating is more accurately labeled girlfriend or "partner" beating.

Male-female relationships within marriage are far more stable than in "partnerships" - in my day called shacking up. Reduced assault rates are just one benefit. Children raised in a traditional family have higher cognitive skills and lower delinquency rates. The poverty rate for traditional families is lower; in the case of blacks, it's around 7 percent, compared to 34 percent for blacks in general. Married men not only earn higher income; but they're healthier and live longer as well.

Some civilians dare not cross thin blue line

By Ron Daniels
SPECIAL TO THE POST

Nearly five years to the day of the verdict in the infamous Rodney King beating trial, more than 700 people gathered at Hunter College in New York City for a National Emergency Conference on Police Brutality and Misconduct. The conference participants came from 50 cities and 16 states. Convened by the Center for Constitutional Rights, the goals of the emergency conference were to discuss the scope of the crisis of police brutality among people of color and poor and working people, to analyze the social, economic and political forces driving the crisis and to adopt an action agenda to combat the crisis.

Parents and family members of

persons who have been killed by the police presented powerful testimonies about the disrespect for the people of color and the wanton disregard for human life by the police in the ghettos, barrios and reservations of this nation. These personal testimonies were reinforced by a stream of reports from local coalitions and movements against police brutality from cities like St. Petersburg, Fla., Buffalo, Pittsburgh, Atlanta, San Francisco and New York. The picture is very clear. More and more people are being harassed, brutalized and killed by the police across this country and the outrage against police abuse has reached the boiling point.

The Rev. Jesse L. Jackson, president of the Rainbow-Push Coalition, Richie Perez, coordina-

tor of the National Congress of Puerto Rican Rights and Bernice Powell Jackson, executive director of the Commission for Racial Justice of the United Church of Christ all spoke to the resurgence of racism as a factor in the rise of police brutality in recent years. However, each of these leaders also pointed to a combustible climate of economic injustice in communities of color and economic anxieties among poor and working class whites as a major factor fueling the epidemic of police violence. Ron Hampton, executive director of the National Black Police Association, suggested that police brutality is bred and protected by a "police culture" and mentality which predisposes police officers to see their work as "us against them." Other speak-

ers cited the demonization and criminalization of black and people of color youth in the media as another factor driving police brutality in communities of color.

What was distinctive about the National Emergency Conference, however, was that the participants not only identified the problem but adopted an Action Agenda with strategies to combat the problem. As an outgrowth of the conference there will be a concerted effort to identify parents and family members of persons killed by the police to form a national network of parents/families against police brutality.

Congressman John Conyers, who has been in the forefront of dealing with the issue of police brutality for years, has been asked to take the lead in requesting congressional hearings on

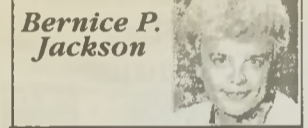
police brutality. If the Congress fails to act, we have asked Rep. Conyers to discuss the possibility of the Congressional Black Caucus, Hispanic Caucus and Progressive Caucus holding their own hearings in selected locations this summer.

The Center for Constitutional Rights will also establish a National Clearinghouse on Police Brutality to compile and disseminate information on police brutality and misconduct, network/connect groups and organizations working on this issue from across the country and publish and distribute educational materials to create greater public efforts to combat the crisis.

RON DANIELS is a syndicated columnist.

Police brutality a growing concern in U.S.

People of color are most likely targets



Bernice P. Jackson

In New York City two Hispanic men are killed when they are shot from behind 28 times and another Hispanic man was choked to death after his football hits a police car. In Pittsburgh an African American businessman is choked to death after being stopped for a traffic stop. A St. Petersburg, Fla. African American motorist is shot to death also after a traffic stop. New Haven Conn. African American man suffers the same fate. In each case the killing occurred while the men were in police custody or in the course of police action.

These are just a few of the stories which were heard at the National Emergency Conference on Police Brutality held in New York City recently. Sponsored by the Center for Constitutional Rights, this conference brought together people who had experienced police brutality from across the nation, including Kentucky, Georgia, Ohio, Florida, New York, and New Jersey.

Indeed, criminal justice is the issue which seems to show the greatest racial divide in this nation. Most people of color would characterize the system as the criminal injustice system and most European Americans would not. A New York Times columnist recently wrote how, in the course

of writing a book, he asked African American men across the nation whether they have ever been hassled by police. Most of them can tell a story of being stopped in a store or in their car while driving in a white neighborhood. Some may have been questioned simply because they were at a phone booth or in a mall. It doesn't matter whether they are well-dressed or what their occupation. Even off-duty or plain clothes police officers have been stopped, or occasionally even shot while on duty. Few European American men have had this experience.

Not only are hundreds, perhaps thousands of people of color victims of police brutality every year, but seldom find justice in

the courts. Take the case of Johnny Gammage, an African American businessman and the cousin of Carolina Panthers player Ray Seals. Mr. Gammage was choked to death after a routine traffic stop outside Pittsburgh in 1995. Last month the judge in the case dismissed charges against the police officers accused in the killing, saying that prosecutors unfairly singled them out.

Or take the case of Anthony Baez, the young New Yorker who was choked after his football hit a patrol car. The officer accused in his murder was acquitted of all charges in a non-jury trial.

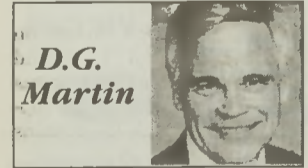
It is important to note that while police brutality disproportionately impacts communities of

color that the number of European American victims is growing. A recent Montel Williams show focused on white victims, for instance. And it is also important to note that while most of the police officers are European American, there are officers of color who occasionally have been found to be violent.

Finally it should be noted that brutality is not just found in police officers. It is also present in corrections officers, immigration officers and others in the criminal justice system. And its victims are also women, often those who are incarcerated. What are the reasons for the increase in police brutality cases and what can we do about it?

BERNICE P. JACKSON is executive director of the Commission for Racial Justice in Cleveland, Ohio.

The Legislative session - beginning to see end



D.G. Martin

as an incentive to wrap things up, I think they might just do it.

There are a lot of people who say I am naive, and that the legislature will still be arguing about the budget well into August.

We will see.

Now that should be the end of this column. But there is more. I can't deal with the question of the time of their going home without beginning to feel something more about this institution of Democratic government - our General Assembly.

It is more than an "it." It has a life and culture of its own - like other groups of people who come together, get to know each other on close terms, and then break up. Like grade school classes, college students, summer camps, bus tour groups, or travelers on ocean voyages.

There is a feel to these groups as they come together. It changes as they develop the way they all relate to each other and find out how they can get things done. It changes again as their time together moves towards an end.

As the end of an ocean liner voyage approaches, people move out on deck just looking over the

horizon trying to see the landfall - long before the coast is really near enough to see.

Passengers begin to treat each other differently. The anticipation of the winding up is shared by a growing number of people. A sense of urgency grows. Projects must be completed - or abandoned. Warm personal relationships have developed. Now they must be quickly sealed. Or, with resignation and sadness, there must be an acceptance that, with the end of the trip, some things must end before they are finished.

The Legislative session is not unlike a great ocean liner, after a long hard voyage, approaching its destination. Here I sense the same kind of "end-of-the-trip" feelings as the legislature moves towards completion of its work.

There is an overtaking realization among a growing number of legislators that most of their great dreams for new laws and new policies will not happen this session. Nor will they succeed in all of their efforts to help people back home by getting "a little money to help a very worthy project."

It is a time of some disappoint-

ments and misunderstandings. "But you promised me that my project would be in the budget bill," one legislator will say to another.

"No, you misunderstood me. I said I would give your project my support. I did support it. There just weren't enough other people who wanted it."

Those who got their bills passed in one house, but not the other, are starting to get nervous. Time is slipping away and there are so many things that could keep them from succeeding.

This sense of unease will continue until the budget is done - and then, for those who still have hope to complete their pet projects, it will turn to panic.

And why is that? Because when the budget is agreed upon, everything else will end quickly. When the budget is done, all the leaders want to go home right away.

Why? Some people will be disappointed with the budget provisions. And if the session doesn't end immediately, the budget leaders will be overwhelmed with requests and demands that the disappointments get fixed and that the broken promises get restored.

It is easier for the leaders if most of the legislators are sent home before they know for sure what didn't get funded - or didn't get done.

So, when the budget is done, there will be a headlong, confused rush to the end. Like the whirlpool following a big ship coming into port, the end of the legislative session will pull everything that gets close downward. Only those with the most power or the most craft can get big things done at the end. (And those with power and talent do very well by picking up the pieces that have been spilled or left out and lost by all others.)

Then the end will come. Suddenly and strangely, the legislative building will empty and stand deserted as an ocean liner in its destination port, cleared of its departing passengers, empty of everything but memories, waiting for a new group to come and begin it all again.

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