

The Charlotte Post

The Voice of the Black Community

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OPINIONS

Success against long odds

What is black history? It could mean many different things to each one of us.

To me it represents the accomplishments and struggles of our race. We owe the celebration of Black History Month to

Carter G. Woodson. In 1926, he launched Negro History Week to bring national attention to the contributions of black people.

The second week of February was chosen because it signified the birthdays of Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln, two men who greatly impacted black American society. In 1976, the observance of Negro History Week became known as Black History Month. As a people, we can contribute our successes to those individuals who mapped out our future.

As we look back at our history there are so many strategic efforts that were made to improve their livelihood.

Blacks in America knew they were given the shorthand, treated unjustly and robbed of their heritage. Fighting back for what they've lost, was the mindset for most. Obtaining equal rights and better education was achievable but unreachable. Segregation in education varied widely throughout several states. Brown vs. Board of Education took place in 1954, and is a landmark decision of the U.S. Supreme court, which outlawed racial segregation of public education. Following this event brought new momentum to the Civil Rights Movement including the Montgomery Bus Boycott, Freedom Rides, and perhaps the high point of the movement was the March on Washington, which was led by another great historical leader, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. And from his political, peacemaking activities led to another national holiday, Martin Luther King Day.

African Americans have a rich history and have established significant declarations in the month of February such as the NAACP founded by W.E.B. Dubois. The 15th Amendment was passed granting blacks the right to vote. The first black U.S. senator took oath of office on February 25 and on February 5 I was born, into this monumental month of history, still in the making.

LaSONYA ROBINSON lives in Charlotte.

The Willie Lynch syndrome and us

By Glasher Shealey

SPECIAL TO THE POST

"Gentlemen, in my bag here, I have a foolproof method for controlling your black slaves... I have outlined a number of differences among the slave and I take these differences and make them bigger. I use fear, distrust, and envy for control purposes... The Black slave after receiving this indoctrination shall carry on and will become self-refueling and self-generating for hundreds of years, maybe thousands."

The year is 2007, almost 300 years after the Willie Lynch letter was written and the letter has now become a spirit that the African American race carries with them daily. Today African Americans struggle with issues of skin color, age generation gaps and hair, which are all differences that originate from the Willie Lynch letter.

Skin color, generation gaps and hair bias techniques were used as racial oppression of the African American race and started in the United States during slavery. To justify racial slavery, slaveholders supported a white supremacist ideology, which states that persons of African descent were inferior to whites. Whiteness became identified with all that is civilized, honorable, and beautiful. Blackness in opposition was and still is identified with all that is poor, evil, and ugly.

When slavery was abolished 165 years ago, so should these discriminating racial practices. However, they were not, therefore they still affecting the African American race, but the practices have actually worsened. Not only do these practices continue today, but more specifically they have become a negative mentality for the African American race.

As a reflection of how the African American race, the community and society as a whole feel about the Willie Lynch letter please send a response to grs_sep07@yahoo.com stating whether you agree or disagree with the information presented above and why.

GLASHER SHEALEY is a senior at West Charlotte High School. As his senior exit project, he wrote this editorial to gauge readers' position on the topic.

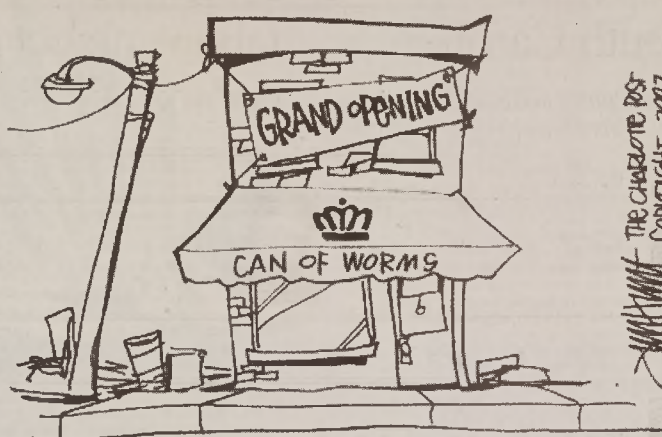
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MEANWHILE BACK IN THE BELMONT COMMUNITY...



Demolishing buildings, not memories

TUSCALOOSA, Ala. - In the past, when people uttered Thomas Wolfe's famous line, "You can't go home again," I always disagreed, arguing that you can - just don't stay too long. Now, I am not sure about even short visits. On this trip home, I did something I'd never done since leaving in the mid-1960s. I didn't drive past the old Druid High School, my alma mater, or McKenzie Court, my public housing project.



GEORGE E. CURRY

I have a good reason for not visiting my old stomping grounds - they no longer exist. In the name of progress, they've been demolished. Years ago, they tore down 2715-15th Street, the shotgun house that housed my earliest memories. They destroyed Big Mama's house, three doors to the west, where I was born on February 23, 1947.

Given the age of those old shacks, demolition may have been an improvement; a few of them are still standing. Instead of replacing houses in "The Bottom," as it was called for good reason, they razed the houses to make way for a new,

arched highway on 15th Street. Sound familiar? But it was McKenzie Court that held my fondest memories. We lived in 5-D, 75-A and 52-B. Unlike in the North, there was no stigma attached to living in the housing project. After all, they were built with brick, unlike most of the housing on the Black side of town, and they resembled town houses more than the towering, crammed structures on Chicago's State Street, for example. For a poor family, it didn't get any better than living in McKenzie Court.

My Big Mama, Sylvia Harris, and Percy, one of her sons, lived in 23-A. I would eat twice on Sundays, once at home and once with Big Mama. I was the first grandson, so I'll let others draw their own conclusions about our relationship. Let me put it this way: There was Mama and there was Big Mama. Of course, Big Mama was the equivalent of the Supreme Court. She was the only person who could reverse lower court rulings.

When we first moved into 5-D when I was in elementary school, Mama could usually find me at Miss Dot's house because she was one of the few people who had a telephone and a TV set; we had neither. As I grew older, I spent more

time on the basketball court, talking to Mr. Robert L. Glynn, the manager of the projects; and visiting my friends. Back then, everyone knew every family in the projects and adults made sure we didn't get too far out of line.

Late last year, they leveled McKenzie Courts, again in the name of progress. They define progress as building new low-income units to replace the projects. It was done under a federal housing program called Hope VI. That's a good name, for we can only hope that most of the displaced people get one of the new units.

The final straw was the decision to demolish Druid High School. Unlike the "separate but equal" schools in the South, Druid really was equal in one respect. The same architectural plans used to build Tuscaloosa High, the White school across town, were used to construct the block-long Druid High School. It was a great building, with two libraries, and even greater teachers and administrators. In the name of integration - and to destroy all symbols of the previous era - it was renamed Central High, but to former students, it was and always will be Druid.

Now, whatever you call it - Druid or Central - has been

leveled and is to be replaced with a middle school. They've also demolished the old Tuscaloosa High, but have already replaced it with a gorgeous new structure and allowed it to remain a high school.

On this trip home, I just can't stomach driving by McKenzie Court or Druid High and not see those structures that meant so much to me growing up. When I went to visit a couple of family friends - Miss Dot and Miss Julia (even though both are married, in the South we still call everyone "Miss") - I took circuitous routes so that I could avoid seeing what they had done to my high school and housing project.

I look around and notice that all of the old plantations from the Civil War have been neatly preserved. Why couldn't they rehab Druid High School and McKenzie Court? Are they any less important than monuments to a lost cause? I know that one day, I'll have to go back to my old neighborhood and see what they call progress. But for now, I prefer not to see the destruction and cherish the memories.

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Cold shoulder to Black History Month

Carter G. Woodson began Negro History Week in 1926, designating it to take place during the second week of February to coincide with the birthdays of Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln.

That second week in February eventually became the entire month of February, and is now called Black History Month. We cannot discredit in any way the efforts of Woodson's initiative, black consciousness, and resolve to strengthen our people through history and education. His effort to establish what is now an entire month of celebrations and remembrances of our people is laudable. But I have a bone to pick with Black History Month.

In 1926, things were very different. Personal transportation was scarce among black people; very few blacks even wanted to fly, and many could not afford the price of an airline ticket anyway. Blacks pretty much stayed in the areas of the country where they lived, especially during Negro History Week in February. They celebrated in their homes, churches, and schools for the most part. Besides, as it is now in 2007, it was flat-out cold in February 1926, and you

know how much black folks dislike cold weather. Today, we celebrate Black History Month across the country, and we often travel to different cities to participate in celebrations as well. In addition, Black people organize events during Black History Month and invite out-of-towners to speak and to participate in other ways. This is a real problem in eastern and northern cities, and even in some of the near western cities like Denver, Kansas City, and Oklahoma City. Why? Because it's cold, and most of the time it snows in February.

I recently read where Chicago had to cancel one of its events again this year because of the cold weather, and I am sure that happens in many other cities. Yes, this is personal with me because I love to drive to most places when I speak, and February driving is not my idea of a fun time.

"So what?" you ask. Well, here is the plan. Let's change Black History Month from February to June. The obvious reason is the weather but we could also fold in our Juneteenth celebrations with Black History Month activities and not have to worry about the cold, snow, and ice of February canceling our events or making it difficult for us to participate. Hey, we can pick up two more days in the process, too.

It may appear that I am joking around, but I am dead serious brothers and sisters. I understand the deference to Carter G. Woodson, and

his reason for assigning Black History Week in February, and I am grateful to him for doing so. But we do not have to continue to conduct our celebration of what he started in what probably is the coldest month of the year. We need to be traveling and mingling with one another during the celebration of black history. We need to be visiting relatives and celebrating the fact that we are still on this earth; they need to see one another, be able to eat outside, play outside, and remember our ancestors when the leaves are on the trees, when the sun is shining, as we watch our children playing. February is just not the month for that. As my man, Gil Scott-Heron said in his "vibration" on the Ghetto Code, "There is something wrong with February."

I would venture to guess that our ancestors didn't like February too much either. There were no leaves on the trees for cover at night and very little visible black and brown soil for camouflage; instead, in some cases, they had only a backdrop of white snow and a trail of footprints, which were not conducive for escaping. They endured bitter cold, day and night, with few clothes to warm their bodies and thin blankets to warm their children. No, I don't imagine our ancestors liked February very much at all.

This year during Black History Month, I was honored to be invited to speak at Pittsburgh's Carnegie Mellon

University, Youngstown (Ohio) State University, and the Northeast Church of Christ in Oklahoma City, all known for unpredictable winter weather in February. I am sure many of you had places to go during Black History Month as well. I pray you were not stranded or delayed because of the miserable weather we had during the first three weeks of February. I don't know about you, but I certainly enjoy traveling more in June than in February.

Yes, this may be a little selfish, but I think it's a reasonable task for us to undertake. We don't have to ask anyone; the corporations and mass media will go along with whatever we say in this case; so don't worry about your annual donations. They will adjust their sales and their commercials to whatever month we decide we want to celebrate OUR black history. So before you get cold feet, just remember the real reason for our celebrating black history, and remember who owns it. Black history is definitely a "Black Thing," y'all.

So, what do you think? Can we start a campaign right now, and change our month from February to June (or maybe you have a better month to suggest)?

JAMES E. CLINGMAN, an adjunct professor at the University of Cincinnati, is former editor of the Cincinnati Herald newspaper and founder of the Greater Cincinnati African American Chamber of Commerce.

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