

# Opinions

## Blacks, not only ones who have to struggle

*Editor's note: This article appeared in the Fuquay Independent and is mentioned in the column by Raz Autry which also appears on this page.*

by William M. Freeman  
The January 19th issue of the *Dunn Daily Record* carried a story, reprinted from the Saturday extra section of the *Fayetteville News and Observer*, that made me feel that I need to make an apology to white folks.

The article's heading was, "My Brother Raz" by Jerry Autry. The story caught my eye because I happen to know Raz Autry who is the superintendent of the Hoke County Schools.

Through the years, I have observed him as an active individual in the superintendent's division of the North Carolina Association of Educators and later, the North Carolina Association of Administrators when the former association superintendents left to form the latter group.

Why the urge to make an

apology to white folks? I guess most Blacks, because they have had it so difficult, feel that most whites don't have it as difficult. We see so many whites who are successful that we get the feeling that whites, "have it made." Although I grew up with whites who were poor, I forget sometimes and think that only Blacks are poor and have a difficult time making it.

Reading "My Brother Raz," reminded me again that some whites are poor, too, and they have to (in the words of my father) "scuffle" to make it. I was surprised to read in the article that the two boys, Jerry and Raz, had grown up in Harnett County near Dunn, where I spent the first six years of my life as an educator.

Jerry writes, "Our dad was a tenant farmer and worked the third shift at Erwin Mills, and Raz spent every spare moment in Dunn working on the farm and herding his brothers around."

This surprised me. Having seen

Raz in our state meetings, I just surmised that he had come from some well-to-do family whose father had been a big executive, principal or superintendent, that he "had" had good jobs passed to him on a "silver platter." In all these years, I never dreamed that he came from a background similar to mine.

Jerry, who has done well in his own right, is a lieutenant colonel and at one time was head chaplain of the 82nd Airborne Division at Fort Bragg.

Jerry said that Raz's ability to overcome, seemed almost the usual with him. He gave some examples such as winning a berth on the East Carolina football team, beating out a 225-pound first stringer and finally being named captain of the team, winning the presidency of the student body, and taking Jerry in to raise when he was only twelve after their mother because seriously ill.

The article stated that their father had reared them with a simple credo: In everything you do,

always be honest and try to do whatever is right. Jerry said that Raz has never wavered from their dad's admonition.

He went on to say that he ran into an Army captain overseas some years ago and the captain said that as a principal, Raz ran the school like the Marines. In fact, they had to keep their hair short and the students thought that he was crazy. The captain said, "Now, I understand. If it wasn't for your brother I'd be standing on the streets of Raeford instead of a captain in the Army."

Well, I guess the bottom line is, we Blacks need to read more stories like this one to let us know that all whites aren't rich and that Blacks aren't the only ones who must work, sacrifice and apply themselves if they are to get ahead.

I still must take one "poke" though. "Raz? I am also retiring in June of this year, but I bet if I had been white, I would have been a superintendent rather than an assistant superintendent!"



## Race is no factor among educators

by Raz Autry

Also on this page is an article which was written by Dr. William M. Freeman, Assistant Superintendent of Nash County Schools.

While I am most appreciative of Bill writing this article, I must tell him that even though I scraped and clawed to make a success of my life like he did, I still had an advantage he didn't have.

I was white. I wasn't barred from any place like he was. Even as poor as I grew up, if he and I were competing for a job I would have the advantage once again because I was white.

Bill, I agree with you, if you were white, you would be a superintendent because you are one of the most capable people I have ever known.

I have learned some very startling things about black people in the many years I have worked closely with them.

One thing I learned is that the most noticeable difference in black and white is the pigment of their skin.

Another thing I learned is that, contrary to what a lot of white folks believe, having illegitimate children is not a way of life for black folks.

Those who are caring parents get just as upset as caring parents of white daughters.

The concerned black people are just as uptight about dead-beats being on welfare rolls as the concerned white people.

Knowledgeable black people are as frustrated about inter-racial courtship and marriages as knowledgeable white people because they are fully aware that the biases that we face in this world, the children of inter-racial parents will have a tough time.

I am greatly interested, as all of you are aware, in the political process and am approached many times by politicians outside of Hoke County asking me if they can get the black vote.

I tell them quite frankly that if there is a black citizen running for the same office, the black citizens will vote for the black citizen. While some folks preach the philosophy that you should vote for the best person regardless of race, if all white folks will be honest, I don't believe a great number of them vote for black folks running for a particular office.

This is a prime example of the old saying that the kettle is calling the pot black.

In working with school folks for 35 years I have worked with some very outstanding black educators.

The only reason I use that term is to simply show that there is no difference in outstanding black educators and outstanding white educators.

However, since my topic is black

### Superintendent's Desk

citizens, I will deal with some names of our black educators.

Emma Mims and Milton Williams are two of the finest principals I have ever known. If anyone wants to challenge this statement, ask their faculty.

Gloria Williams is one of the most outstanding people in her profession. She is as knowledgeable as any individual in the teaching profession that I have known in 35 years.

No superintendent ever had an associate who was more loyal to an individual than John David McAllister has been to me. I have worked with him for 16 years and watched him in every situation. His expertise and knowledge would do justice to the most proficient I have ever known.

Margaret Bratcher was not only one of the finest Christians I have ever known, she was a most efficient secretary and bookkeeper. When Margaret died she left a void in all of our hearts that we will never fill.

Deborah Purcell was a high school student of mine. She is more like a daughter to me than a secretary. If the people of the world had her disposition and willingness to work, and her desire to help everyone, I wouldn't need to write this article.

Space will not permit me to go on. I will let the record of the others speak for itself.

When Kathy McMillan was bringing us fame, her mother, Mrs. McMillan, was approached about Kathy making a speech that in essence would say, 'look what a black girl has accomplished'.

Mrs. McMillan said that there is no way my daughter would say that in a speech.

When my daughter speaks she is going to say that 'I am thankful to be an American. What I accomplished came about because of the help of a lot of people and I thank them for it'.

The McMillan family should speak for all of us - what we have accomplished in our county came about because of the help of all of our people. If we are to continue to make accomplishments it will be due to the efforts of all of our people.

Bill, thank you my friend, for giving me a chance to have my say.

As we both go into retirement, we can hope and pray that the way things ought to be is the way they will be.

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