

POINTS OF VIEW

Voyeurs won't settle for school 'success stories'

W alled Lake Western High School assistant principal Bill Calhoun didn't come out and say it in so many words. But he was sending plenty of signals for someone to know what was on his mind.

Why weren't the media all over Western like a blanket to ask about some of the success stories that had begun there, he surely thought. Instead, they wondered whether people remembered Leslie Allen Williams, now probably the most famous student ever to attend Western.

Heck, Calhoun spotted a few of the good ones just by looking at the 1971 class picture. That's the one with Williams pictured in the top row, which we saw accompanied by a not-so-flattering, but accurate, description of the man who has confessed to killing four teen-age girls.

Calhoun would love to talk instead about this doctor or that minister. Or about Walled Lake City Council member Linda Ackley. Perhaps about that Snook kid, Ron, now working in the computer programming department at Oakland County's Pontiac complex.

But, he must have been thinking, please close the book on Williams.

"There have been a lot of very successful people who graduated from this high school and nobody has paid a damn bit of attention to them," Calhoun said.

Well, that's not entirely true. To name just one, 1985 graduate Dan Gabriele was the subject of media attention in his junior and senior years because of his pitching ability. Major league scouts came to Western's field, armed with notebooks and radar guns to see for themselves just how fast this



TIM SMITH

teen-age lefty could throw a baseball. Front page stuff in all the dailies. Gabriele was. He also wound up getting signed to a professional contract by the Boston Red Sox but had to quit a couple years later — still deep in the Boston minor-league chain — due to arm trouble.

Seems to me there wasn't much in

the papers about Dan Gabriele when his career ended. But that's another story. Or is it?

The general public that many media people try to reach just isn't all that interested in how the A student or A anything of yesterday is doing, no matter how impressive the achievements. But put a baseball or football in that student's hand and it's "up-on-a-pedestal" time.

That's society. High school athletes make any number of all-star teams, from various publications, then possibly draw more interest from a big college — where heaps of additional attention.

But when's the last time you can remember major coverage in newspapers or on TV for the local high school academic awards ceremony?

Such "good news" rarely makes the

headlines even though it's out there. Like it or not, most people these days want to be entertained, shocked, uplifted and even disgusted.

They want stories about the young local baseball star who might make it big — or about the one-time student whose terrible deeds have sickened everyone.

Bill Calhoun, by the way, is absolutely right. In a perfect world, all we'd be giving you would be happy updates about former students. Perhaps, for example, one would be a feature on how well a graduate who now teaches in one of the district's elementary schools is doing.

In a perfect world, however, there wouldn't be monsters such as Leslie Allen Williams.

Tim Smith, a Livonia resident, is a reporter with the West Bloomfield/Lakes Eccentric News.

Center's mission presents a 'mighty challenge'

Quick, now, for the "Final Jeopardy" question — what area is the most racially segregated in America? That's right, greater Detroiters, you've got it — ours is!

Metro Detroit gets the national blobby prize for that dubious distinction.

But now the intrepid young Oakland County Center for Open Housing has come to the rescue. OCCOH is trying almost single-handedly to whittle away at this inequitable social disgrace that shames our region. Segregation prevents millions of metro Detroit's citizens from getting a fair deal in education, municipal services such as police protection, prices for groceries and other goods and access to jobs.

Since I sit on OCCOH's Advisory Board, I can tell you first-hand that the center's mission presents a mighty

challenge. Many real estate brokers ignore or subvert the fair-housing laws by "steering" white buyers into mostly white areas and black buyers into black areas. Most predominantly white municipalities continue to stonewall allocations for low-income construction in their communities.

They also deliberately neglect to explore other incentives for minority move-ins while pretending to have the red carpet out for everyone.

The solution, of course, is to bring down the armored Goliath of municipal boundaries between city and suburbs, but that would take more courage than exists within Lansing's motley aggregate of puny politicians. In the midst of all this cowardice and collusion, OCCOH stands — sling in hand, the lone David of democratic hope.



JOHN TELFORD

■ Segregation prevents millions of metro Detroit's citizens from getting a fair deal in education, services and access to jobs.

But OCCOH must have some powerful allies, right? For instance, the distinguished banks, foundations and other dispensers of funds for worthy causes will surely underwrite most of the 51 painstakingly written grant requests the center has submitted to them for \$600,000 within the past year, won't they?

No, they won't. They've underwritten only five, most of them for relatively modest amounts (with the exception of the City of Southfield). We've also received funds from the Community Foundation of Southeastern Michigan, Oakland County's Community Development Division, All-State and the Birmingham Unitarian Church.

Would you like to guess how much cash Comerica, GMAC, First of America, Huntington, Standard Federal and

other financial giants in the metro area have contributed to OCCOH's efforts to establish outreach, education, marketing and incentive-loan programs? A whopping zero. Zilch. A great big goose egg.

Can't these institutions foresee that if missions like OCCOH's succeed, America's corporate enterprises will prosper, too? Separate but equal is not only inherently unequal, it is "Final Jeopardy" for the region, for the state and the nation in this increasingly interdependent world.

John Telford, a Rochester Hills resident, most recently was assistant superintendent in the Rochester School District. He previously was executive director for secondary education in the Plymouth Canton district.

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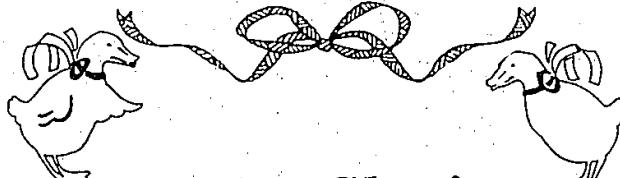
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