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want to read an article that was in the Public Pulse February 1, from a parent at Westside. It wouldn't be fair for me to leave the record as it may appear to be from the column I read and the comments that I made off the cuff in reading it. But I've read some very ill-considered comments in the Public Pulse, where white people were talking about freedom of speech. That's what they always say, and when they bring it up, it's to disparage, degrade, demean, abase black or other nonwhite groups. Then they want to say, freedom of speech. But this is what a mother at Westside wrote. The headline that the World-Herald thought should be on this letter was "Award for blacks is fine." As a Westside parent, I am concerned about the tone of Pulse writers and columnists--for example, Jeff Jacoby--who criticized school officials for their handling of the Martin Luther King Day incident. Although the students involved used misguided and ultimately disrespectful means, it is good for them to ask legitimate questions about racism in our society. Why should African-American students receive a special award? Because we do not live in a color-blind society, and these kids are succeeding despite that. Why should African-American students, who make up only 3.8 percent of the student body, be eligible to receive a special honor? Because--in italics--they make up only 3.8 percent of the student body. It takes a strong person of color to face a sea of white faces every day. The diversity that African-Americans, and all minority students, bring to Westside is valued by us. I don't know who all she includes in that word "us." Back to her letter. Why shouldn't we celebrate them? If Westside students do not understand the historical and ongoing struggle against racism, we need to teach them. Making minority students feel welcome in our school should be the first lesson. One of these white scamps had the nerve to say, as white racists always say, some of my best friends are black. They obviously don't understand the meaning of friend either. Friends have shared experiences. Friends learn about friends' sensitivity. Friends respect those they call their friends. But to hold this whole issue up to ridicule in the way these young racists have done is anything but an act of friendship or respect. And if there were more black students at Westside, this would not have been done. But they felt safe, because they outnumber the 70 black students 1,843 against 70.