



## Getting Along



Dr. James P. Comer

Dr. Alvin F. Poussaint

## ERA is for Everybody

The Equal Rights Amendment very simply states: "Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex." It seems strange that such an idea would have to be legislated this late in the twentieth century, but that is the case. "All men are created equal" meant literally that to our founding fathers, and even the fourteenth amendment did not extend rights to women.

People who oppose the ERA warn of catastrophic consequences to its passing, but in states such as Maryland and Pennsylvania who have passed state ERA amendments, life seems to be going on pretty much as usual, and the rest rooms still say "men" on one door and "women" on the other.

One thing that the ERA would do is eliminate a number of discriminatory laws in one sweep, instead of requiring legislatures to ferret them out one by one. An example

of such a law is North Carolina's ruling on "Domicile", which contends that a wife's legal residence is the state in which her husband resides. Using this concept the state is trying to collect income tax from a woman who lives and works in Illinois, simply because her husband is a North Carolinian. If the situation were reversed, they would not tax the man.

The laws concerning women vary from state to state in such variety that it is reminiscent of the pre-Civil War "slave states" and "free states". It behooves a woman to investigate state laws before she moves-- or marries a resident of another state-- because in doing so she might lose some of her rights.

It is unfair for states to have "special laws" for women, which differ from state to state. The concept of human rights is too important to be left to the whims of a state legislature. Equal rights for everybody ought to be the law of the land.

[James P. Comer and Alvin F. Poussaint are psychiatrists and the authors of the book "Black Child Care." Dr. Comer is professor of child psychiatry and associate dean for student affairs at Yale University School of Medicine. Dr. Poussaint is associate professor of psychiatry and associate dean for student affairs at Harvard Medical School.]

**Dear Dr. Comer:** I am black and a grandmother of four lovely children, ages 4 through 12 years. I feel that my two sons and daughters-in-law give their children too much. They say that they can afford it and the children should have some of the things they couldn't. I have noticed that even poor black families try to give their children too much, especially toys at Christmas time. Why? Is it good for the children?

F.B.

**Dear F.B.:** The most important thing parents can give children is the kind of time and relationship which will help them grow into socially skillful, competent and responsible adults. A moderate amount of such material things as toys, clothes and vacations isn't harmful if the parents are interacting with their children in a way which develops healthy attitudes.

But there is a limit. In some homes every "nook and cranny" is filled with children's things. In some of these cases, parents have substituted material things for real interest and involvement with their children. Giving children whatever they want can be a way of trying to buy affection, which never really works. It can also be a way of avoiding a painful showdown with a child, of having to say no to excessive wants.

Children are not born knowing how to share, be reasonable and responsible people. They must learn and develop these characteristics from the adults around them. Heaping gifts upon children works against development of good character traits. A child who gets whatever he wants can become selfish and may feel that the world owes him something.

Children need to hear that you don't buy something every time you walk into a store. They will say, "Mary's

mother bought her one!" They need to be told in a kind way that you don't do something just because somebody else does. Parents should explain that they buy useful and fun things when they can afford them, and after they have bought all the things they need.

There is a first generation middle-income trap here. Most middle income blacks are of the first generation.

People who have been very poor often like to prove to themselves and others that they've made it. People who are still poor often try to make up for it with a big day for children on the holidays. Without being fully aware of it, some blacks try to compensate for the race-related problems their children face with material things. While these reactions are very human and understandable, they are not very helpful.

Millions of middle income Americans are over their heads in debt because they received too many material things as children and think they need them now. Since it is no longer true that a good education will guarantee a well-paying job, such needs are even more troublesome.

Children of middle income families who become accustomed to the excessive good life today may discover that they can't afford it tomorrow. Childhood preparation for reasonable spending is more important today than ever before.

Parents and grandparents who grew up with very few material things sometimes have unrealistic ideas about how much is reasonable and what is excessive. And being excessively tight can create as many problems as buying too many material things.

The proof of the pudding is in the behavior of children. If they are able to share, handle frustration and disappointment reasonably well, relate to and have good attitudes towards others, there is little cause for concern.

You might discuss these goals with your sons and daughters-in-law. That way they can be more aware of promoting them as their children enjoy the material things they can afford.

Dr. Comer

[If you have any questions for the doctors, send your letter to, "Getting Along," care of this newspaper.]

## Time for Partnership

The night of Thanksgiving Eve, the normally deserted parking spaces along Fifth Street and Liberty Street accommodated almost as many cars as they would have during the daytime.

Because of a gala ball at the Hyatt House and a new discotheque on Liberty Street, many of these cars belonged to blacks.

Their presence on the downtown scene vividly demonstrated the potential role Winston-Salem's black community can play in the "revitalization" of downtown. Unlike other segments of the population, it is not necessary to reacquire blacks with downtown. In large measure, black consumers and workers support downtown.

As the mayor and other city officials undertake to rally public support here and outside the city towards strengthening downtown, we suggest that the red carpet be extended to black citizens, not just as consumers forced downtown because of the lack of shopping facilities in the eastern part of the city, but as entrepreneurs and full partners in economic growth.

We trust that travels to other cities, such as the current trip to the National League of Cities by the Mayor and several aldermen, will awaken our government to innovative approaches being used in other cities to stimulate minority development of stores and other

businesses abandoned in center cities.

As we note the need for black involvement for the betterment of the overall community, our thought turn to another event held during the holiday weekend in which the efforts of blacks to enhance the image of our city were sorely lacking in support from the overall community.

We refer to the successfully begun effort of the Winston-Salem State University Ram football team to achieve a national championship in Division II of the National Collegiate Athletics Association.

The Rams beat Cal Poly-San Luis Obispo 17-0 before a paltry crowd of less than 7,000. Athletic director Clarence E. "Big House" Gaines noted that he could probably count the number of whites present on his two hands and two feet.

Championship caliber performance at any level of competition is no easy feat. Yet there appears to be the attitude that a 1-10 Wake Forest team is much more deserving of support than an 11-0 Ram team.

The callous indifference to the magnificent Ram success strikes us as racism of the worst sort.

We look forward to the day when blacks and black-controlled institutions are considered full partners in the mainstream of our community life.

## Speaking Out

Ruth McCracken

It was during the fall of 1972 when I first met Estelle Williamson Pritchett. She was a dainty little black lady, neatly dressed, obviously not a highly educated person but one wise from life's experiences of about 65 years. She was poised, very determined, with an air of quiet and simple dignity.

Mrs. Pritchett told me she was born to parents who could not care for her and had "given me away". During her childhood years, she moved from foster family to foster family. The limbo of not belonging had been both painful and difficult for her. She longed for a permanent home like other children.

When she reached teenage years, though she lacked education and felt the effects of a deprived childhood, she found work as a domestic, devoting her life to taking care of the children of families for whom she worked. She remained in North Carolina for a while and then went "up north". She married Wilbert Pritchett, was widowed, with no children born to her. Then, 25 years ago, she began a pattern of working for families "up north" during the fall, winter and spring, returning "home" to North Carolina during the summer months. She carefully saved her money for summer "vacations". She managed to buy a small home, her haven.

Mrs. Pritchett came to the Children's Home Society demanding to know what efforts were being made on behalf of children. She listened intently as I explained our statewide adoption program and our special efforts to find permanent homes for older children now in the limbo of long-term foster care. The expression on her face mirrored her pain as she identified with the needs of these children. She had already visited several other agencies and child care institutions to learn about their programs. On this first visit, she did not say why she had come.

Several days later, she invited me to her little home. It was a small home, immaculately clean. With much pride she showed me her nicknacks and told me how each one had come to her. Many were given by friends and the families for whom she had worked. She revealed a little book in which monthly payments on her home had been meticulously recorded. She showed me her yard, lovingly kept. She shared her experiences with children, her involvement with her church and friends.

It was not until I was leaving that I learned why she asked me to visit. Since she had no blood relatives to inherit her possessions, she was considering a bequest to the agency. She asked many questions about the procedures necessary to naming the Children's Home Society in her will. She wanted her legacy

to spare children the limbo she knew. I suggested she talk with an attorney to carry out her intent. As I left, she remarked to me, "please don't let another child suffer."

We talked on the telephone several times before she left to go back "up north". Several letters came from her asking what our agency was currently doing for children. I replied each time until my last letter was returned, marked "no forwarding address". Then, nothing further was heard from her. In late August 1978, The Children's Home Society was notified by the Clerk of The Superior Court that the agency had been named in the will of Estelle Pritchett. Through her will, she bequeathed everything she had to the agency and rearing of underprivileged children.

I later learned that Mrs. Pritchett suffered a fatal

heart attack after boarding a bus to return home after visiting friends. It did not surprise me that she had asked that her body be transferred to a medical school to teach medical students, and her eyes were willed to the eye bank. I visited her little apartment to which she had moved after selling her home.

It was immaculate and all her treasures were in place. As I stood there, I remembered the little lady who had described each of her possessions with dignity and pride.

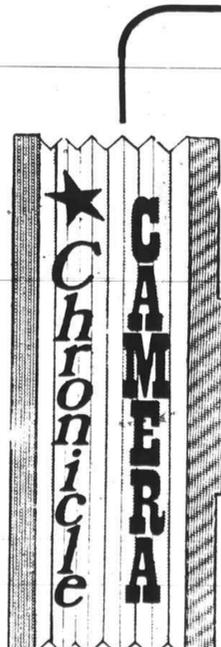
One cannot help but be moved and awed by this little lady and the magnitude of her life's plan. She was a caring person, meaningful to so many whose lives she touched. Even though her early life was tragic, she had, somehow, gained strength and purpose. Her legacy to children now fulfills her plea to me... "please don't let another child suffer."

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Stanley

Is inflation putting a damper on the Christmas spirit? Chronicle Camera asked persons at the downtown bus stop at 4th and Liberty Street whether rising prices would affect their holiday plans. Here's what they said.

**Mike Stanley**--"I can't get as much as I would have. I looked at some pants the other day that were \$25, now they're \$37.

**John w. Davis**--"Well, inflation is going to make it kind of tough. You can't get nothing. Things are just sky high--food and everything else."

**Rosalyn Albright**--"Prices are going up; toys are higher. I'm a working parent with one child. It's not too bad for me per-



Davis

sonally, but it's got to have some impact. For instance, the "Big wheels" that were \$14 last year are now \$19 and some models that were \$30 are now as high as \$40.

**Frieda Carpenter**--"It's got to have some impact because it's taking money out of my pocket. All the toys are going up.

They're getting outrageous with the prices. I won't be able to get too many Christmas presents."

**Theresa Bennett**--"I can't get what I want because prices are too high. clothes, especially. Pants that were \$9.99 are now \$15.99 and shoes that used to cost \$10.00 are now up to \$40 and \$50.



Carpenter



Bennett



Albright