

LETTERS/OPINIONS

Winston-Salem Chronicle

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Plan to Raise Cigarette Tax Encourages Criminals

To the Editor:

Earlier this month in Greensboro, a truck with cigarettes valued at more than \$1 million was stolen.

Unfortunately, the Clinton Administration's plans to raise the federal cigarette tax by \$7.50 a carton to pay for government-run health care will only encourage criminals — and consumers frustrated by unfairly high taxes — to take illegal actions to obtain cigarettes.

We've heard much about how the cigarette tax increase will lead to joblessness, and be a blow to the North Carolina economy. But now it is clear that there are other unforeseen consequences of unfair taxation.

Should North Carolina be forced to endure a new crime wave? We think not.

Mat Adams
Cary

Supporting Children

To the Editor:

I still have not figured out exactly which of the two emotions I experienced today affected me the most, although both did, and are really related anyway. They both speak to a problem that is getting out of hand, and that is the indifference that is shown toward our most valuable resource, our children. While return to school from the local YMCA with a bus load of five-six-and a couple of seven-year-olds, I overheard part of a conversation between two of the other adults

on the bus as they wished each other a thanksgiving and the reply from one of them that they were sure that everyone would have a nice Thanksgiving. Nothing could be further from the truth, although the comment says less about the people who said it than the state of mind of today's America.

For every family that sits down together on Thanksgiving or any other holiday there will be three or four that will not have anything to eat at all.

Even with all that is being done by the social service agencies, churches, various clubs and organizations, and many private individuals, there will be many that fall

grandmother use to say, she has a strong constitution, she may be able to overcome her troubles, but the deck is definitely stacked against her, as well as her baby.

We have to do more for our children. Our future as a society depends on it and demands it of us.

We have to look beyond our own four walls and reach out to those among us who are, because of circumstances sometime not of their own doing, less fortunate than us.

We can't continue to sit idly by and let another day go by and let our children suffer as some of them are doing today. Reach out to them in some way and let them know that they are loved. A little love goes a

aware of the fact that to become a parent at such a young age not only robs them of their precious childhood experience, but is a great sense deprives us all because it takes away from us our most important resource.

While it is too late to make a difference in someone's life for Thanksgiving, I would hope that we all resolve to treat everyday as a day when we can do something for someone who might not be able to do for themselves.

All of us know someone in need. The little girl who wears the same pair of shoes all year round, the boy whose jacket is worn, torn, and beginning to look a little short

CHRONICLE MAILBAG Our Readers Speak Out

long way.

America is, without question, the greatest country in the World. We enjoy liberties that people in other countries can only dream about yet we have millions of people, a lot of them children, who lay down at night without the benefit of a meal and in more and more instances even a roof over their heads.

This can't continue to go on, or can our children who are no more than children themselves keep having babies. We have to make them

in the sleeves. The single mother who can't stretch her food money from one pay period to the next because of unexpected medical bills when she or one of the children gets sick and she has no insurance because her minimum wage temporary job provides no benefits. Believe me, a lot of us are just one pink slip or three or four missed paychecks away from being in the same situation ourselves.

Steve A. Floyd
Winston Sports Travel Club

KWANZAA Celebration is Good For Our Children

Kwanzaa, the week-long African-American holiday created by Maulana Karenga in 1966, offers an opportunity to reflect upon the traditional cultural and moral values that have historically held the African-American community together. As we consider the seven principles of Nguzo Saba, which serve as models for personal development and community growth, let's keep our children's needs uppermost in our minds.

Many African-American families celebrated Kwanzaa (which means "first harvest") instead of, or in addition to, Christmas. The symbolic lighting of candles, sharing of food, and remembrance of ancestors and history are the kind of positive rituals we need to strengthen our communities. By giving Kwanzaa a children's focus, we remind ourselves that nothing is more important than the quality of life we provide for our children. With the seven principles as a guide, we can use African-based traditions to work on behalf of our children. These principles are based on positive, nurturing behaviors that we should practice year round.

Umoja (unity) urges us to care for each other and to strive for and maintain strong families, communities, and nations. One reason that black children and families in America are facing so many crises is that we have lost the sense of unity that brought us through slavery, war, emancipation, reconstruction and segregation. We must reweave the fabric of community if our children are to have any future at all. Let's put aside our differences and agree on a common goal: saving and improving the lives of our children. Let's be an example of what can be achieved when we work together for the common good.

Kujichagulia (self-determination) encourages us to think for ourselves, and to take responsibility for overcoming the challenges before us. If our children are to overcome the epidemic of hopelessness that fills them with despair, we must teach them — through our

examples — the power they have to make a difference.

Ujamaa (collective work and responsibility) brings to mind the traditional African cultures that emphasize the common good over individualism and cooperation rather than competition. This principle reminds us to replace "me-first-ism" and "me-too-ism" with concern for others. Let's put aside our differences and, together, take responsibility for our children's lives.

Ujamaa (strong economic base) calls for us to recognize the influence we wield, but seldom use to our own advantage. Black purchasing power, now over \$250 billion annually, exceeds the combined gross national products of Australia and New Zealand. But all our spending has not translated into commensurate black economic influence and concrete results for the masses of African Americans. We hold in our hands the potential to overcome the crises results for the masses of African Americans. We hold in our hands the potential to overcome the crises we're facing and build a solid foundation that will support our children in generations to come. Let's invest wisely and support black-owned business who give good service to the community. This is an important step in reversing the cycle of poverty that stunts the lives of nearly half of black children in American today.

Nia (purpose) focuses our attention the meaning behind our actions, and the need to act with a sense of purpose. I can think of no better purpose than improving the life circumstances of our children, whose present is clouded and future threatened by a growing sense of peril. Let's make saving our children the purpose of everything we do.

Kuumba (creativity) urges us to devote our

creative energies to improving our communities. We all have talents — artistic and otherwise — to contribute. Our creativity has often helped us survive, whether we were making feasts out of table scraps or creating the music of jazz. Creativity is the way our unsung heroes and heroines in our community devote themselves to bringing beauty and harmony into the lives of those around them. Let's make our children's well-

CHILD WATCH

By MARIAN WRIGHT EDELMAN



being the focus of our creativity today, and dedicate all of our resources and abilities to building them the future they deserve.

Imani (faith) is a testament to the power of spiritual belief and the hope the sustains us when we have nothing else. The poverty of the spirit that afflicts so many of our children and youths today is often caused by an absence of hope that burdens the heart and cripples the soul. It is up to us to give our children faith in us, in themselves, and in the possibilities of a life where faith is fulfilled. Before we can demonstrate this principle to them, we must rediscover and nurture it in ourselves. It is faith that gives the other principles of Nauzo Saba their meaning. And it is faith that the holiday of Kwanzaa is all about.

As we celebrate this holiday season, let's memorize these principles and apply them to our everyday lives. With a child's face as our beacon and a child's needs as our guideposts, let's live up to Kwanzaa potential as an affirmation of family, of community, and of life.

(Marian Wright Edelman is President of the Children Defense Fund)

BY BARBARA BRANDON

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