

# FORUM

## Remember to take care of your soul



**Nigel Alston**

**Motivational Moments**

"You can find your way by paying attention to what is happening inside you."

— Gary Zukav

The snow has melted, most if not all in the community have their power back on, and with a few days remaining, the mad rush is on to spend, spend, spend. The mall is packed with shoppers. Students are home from college, and school systems are days away from letting anxious students out for the holidays. They — the students and teachers — can't wait.

While you are looking for that special gift, spending a dollar or two more than you should or expecting a surprise under the tree consider this: Remember to take care of your soul. Don't get so caught up in the commercial aspects of the holiday that you forget what is really important, like the merchant with four wives.

Realizing he is about to die, he wants one of his wives to follow him so it will not be lonely in the afterlife. Which wife will it

be? According to the story, one wife remained loyal to him even though he didn't love her.

He really loved wife number four, was afraid of losing wife number three, could count on the second one and didn't care at all for the first. She was skinny and bordered on being malnourished. Of all the wives, she was the one who would be there when he needed someone. It took a date with death for him to realize that she was loyal to him.

The merchant often demonstrated favoritism toward his fourth wife. For example, he really took care of her, as she wanted for nothing and was showered with the best of the best. I imagine she turned heads like an Ebony Fashion Fair model clothed in the popular fashions of the day.

He was not very confident his third wife would always be around, and that caused him to really worry. He was proud of her and always wanted to show her off, but he was afraid he would lose her to another man.

His second wife was there when he needed her to hold his hand, listen to him and encourage him on. She was considerate and patient, a true confidante, a "go to" person, and one he turned to in difficult times. She always

delivered.

His first wife contributed greatly to his health, wealth and household, yet he hardly took notice of her. He would regret that decision later. It came sooner than expected, as one day he fell ill, realized he was going to die and leave his luxurious life and be all alone.

"Now I have four wives with me. But when I die, I'll be alone. How lonely I'll be!" he was heard saying.

He was sure his fourth wife was going to follow him and keep him company. "No way!" she told him as she walked away without another word.

And if you think that was terrible, consider what his third wife told him. She wouldn't follow him either. His fears were coming true. "Life is so good over here! I am going to remarry when you die!" she told him.

He turned to his second wife, and she declined him partially. "I'm sorry, I can't help you out this time!" she replied. She would see him to his grave, but that was it. He was devastated.

That is when he heard his first wife call out. "I'll leave with you. I'll follow you no matter where you go," she told him, being loyal to the end.

"Actually, we all have four

wives in our lives," according to the story. They represent your body, possessions, family and friends, and your soul. No matter how much time and effort you lavish in making your body look good, it'll leave you when you die. Your possessions, status and wealth will all go to others. No matter how many times family and friends have been there for you when you're alive, the furthest they can stay by you is up to the grave. And as much as some folks don't want to let loved ones go, they will not get in that grave with them.

And then there is the soul. Often neglected in our pursuit of material wealth and sensual pleasure, it is the only thing that follows us wherever we go. The essence of the story: Perhaps it's a good idea to cultivate and strengthen your soul now rather than wait until you are on your deathbed to lament.

That's a good suggestion to consider during this holiday season. Take care of your soul and it will take care of you when all else is gone. Don't wait until it is too late.

Nigel Alston is a radio talk-show host, columnist and motivational speaker. Visit his Web site at [www.motivationalmoments.com](http://www.motivationalmoments.com).

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Holiday Season*

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## Children aren't safe anywhere



**Marian Wright Edelman**

**Guest  
Columnist**

"Your children are not safe anywhere at any time." These terrifying words by the serial snipers terrorizing the suburbs and communities around our nation's capital horrified much of our nation. For all of us who live here, the threat of the anonymous and unseen sniper shooting innocent victims as they went about their everyday business in familiar places was very real. Fear had suddenly very literally hit home.

For me and many others, the most terrifying threats of all were the ones against children. Who was not outraged when a child on his way to school was shot?

Montgomery County, Md., Chief of Police Charles Moose's tears reflected our own frustration and fears. When the snipers left their chilling words in a note to police, a community already paralyzed by anxiety took its fears to another level.

Many parents chose to keep their children home behind closed doors. Television cameras captured our empty parks and playgrounds. Children who attended school were surrounded by police cars in place of crossing guards and monitored by surveillance helicopters hovering overhead. Once inside, students were locked into classrooms during the day and not allowed to leave the buildings even for recess. Our children themselves became the first prisoners in "lockdown" to be punished during this domestic reign of terror.

But there is a huge number of Americans for whom gun violence is an everyday threat in their neighborhoods, schools and homes. In September, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Center for Health Statistics released the latest statistics on child gun deaths. There was some good news. Gun deaths among children and teens



**First Lady Laura Bush visits with Iran Brown, left, the 13-year-old victim of the Washington-area sniper, and his mother, Lisa Brown, on Dec. 12.**

declined by more than 10 percent between 1999 and 2000 and reached their lowest point since 1984. The very bad news is that we lose eight children to gun violence every day in America — one young life every three hours. These deaths do not come with a note and a warning that "Your children are not safe anywhere at any time." Perhaps if they did, it would galvanize our national community to respond with a similar sense of urgency.

More children and teens die from gunfire in our country than from cancer, pneumonia, influenza and HIV/AIDS combined. In 2000, 3,012 children and teens died from firearm homicide, suicide or accidental death — the quiet equivalent of Sept. 11. More than half of them — 1,776 children and teens — were murdered with guns. More than a thousand children and teens committed suicide with guns in 2000, and 193 died from accidental shootings. Guns kill children of

all races and ages in this country: 1,762 child gun victims were white, 1,149 were black, and 568 were Hispanic; 433 were under 15, while 129 were under 10, and 59 were under 5. It is safer to be an on-duty law enforcement officer than to be a child under 10.

The fact is, no child today is safe anywhere because gun violence occurs every day in every type of community: poor, middle income, affluent, white, black, Latino, rural, urban and suburban. Between 1979 and 2000, nearly 90,000 children and youths lost their lives to gun violence. The majority (61 percent) were white although gun violence disproportionately victimizes black and brown children.

And like shooting sprees and other gun violence, child gun deaths are a uniquely tragic American problem. The rate of firearms deaths among children under age 15 is almost 12 times higher in the United States than in 25 other industrialized coun-

tries combined. American children are 16 times more likely to be murdered with a gun, 11 times more likely to commit suicide with a gun, and nine times more likely to die in a firearm accident than children in these other countries. Why is this so? Why do we continue to tolerate it? What is it going to take for us to say no to the killing of children by gunfire?

In the suburbs of Washington, D.C., we spent three long weeks dealing with fear that we and our children could be targets at any time. For many children, this threat never goes away and is a daily reality in the war zones of their homes, schools and communities. Three thousand gun deaths and thousands more gun injuries are a human catastrophe. When is our homeland security department going to "protect them?"

Marian Wright Edelman is president and founder of the Children's Defense Fund.



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**Week of Dec. 26, 2002**  
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**Week of Jan. 2, 2002**  
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**Dec. 27, 2002.**

*The business office will close  
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