

FORUM

Find your purpose in life



Nigel Alston
Motivational Moments

"Don't ask yourself what the world needs; ask yourself what makes you come alive. And then go and do that. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive."
-Harold Whitman

"Who will you be in 2003?" asked my minister on the last Sunday morning before New Year's. It was the title of her sermon and a timely message as many of us will be writing down resolutions for the new year - goals to be achieved - that will not survive the first 90 days of the year.

It was also a couple of days after I had a chance meeting with a young man barely out of high school. He graduated last May. I entered the retail store where he works, to purchase a shirt, and left wondering how many people don't know what they want to do with their lives.

"What are you doing now?" I asked, as he rang up my purchase. He informed me that he was enrolled in college but quit after two months. He admitted he wasn't motivated enough to get up and go to class. His moth-

er died last year and he doesn't have much motivation to do anything at this point. You can see it in his eyes and his body language.

He plans to attend technical school and, at the same time, wants to play organized football, having played tight end in high school.

"Do you realize they don't have a football team at the technical school?" I asked.

Right now, he has no purpose or direction; he is just aimlessly wandering and going through the motions of living.

He is not unlike the people St. Augustine, an early Christian priest and author, once wrote about: "People travel to wonder at the height of the mountains, at the huge waves of the seas, at the long course of the rivers, at the vast compass of the ocean, at the circular motion of the stars, and yet they pass by themselves without wondering."

That's true isn't it?

Before you finally decide on your goals and resolutions for the new year, consider answering this question: "What should I do with my life?" It isn't an easy question to answer, as Po Bronson, the author of the book by the same title, found out as he traveled the country, interviewing more than 900 people, who, like the 18-year-old above, have struggled to find their callings, their true natures, before getting

things right.

"We all have passions if we choose to see them," Bronson wrote. "Most of us don't get epiphanies. We don't get clarity. Our purpose doesn't arrive neatly packaged as destiny. We only get a whisper - a blank, nonspecific urge. That's how it starts."

So, what are you doing with your life? According to a poll conducted by the magazine Fast Company, "answering the ultimate question means doing a gut check." Do you love your job? Of the 1,400 people who voted in the poll, 53 percent voted yes, and 46 percent no.

"You either love your job or you don't," the statement reads on the poll site. At the heart of the matter is this question, though: "If you don't, what exactly are you doing about it?" That's where the rubber meets the road.

Sometimes you just don't know, like the employee of a large bank who said, "I started out with great promise and expectations, but have never risen above mediocrity in my work life." Like most of us, things that he likes doing, he does well; however, he has never really found work that he loves.

He took advantage of a severance agreement to leave his company. "I decided to search for work that is more engaging," he said. "The epiphany, if there

was one, was in realizing that if I don't try something different, my circumstances won't change."

Here is an observation from a pastor, a self-described spiritual coach to hundreds of people. "When we discover who we are and what we are here to do, then we can be unleashed to do the impossible." That act of discovery requires reflection and self-examination.

So, who will you be in 2003? Have you discovered who you are and what you are here to do? Whether you have or not, consider this quote by an unknown author to guide you day by day in 2003: "This is the beginning of a new day. You have been given this day to use as you will. You can waste it or use it for good. What you do today is important because you are exchanging a day of your life for it. When tomorrow comes, this day will be gone forever; in its place is something that you have left behind....Let it be something good."

"What should I do with my life?" is an important question to consider. Make a resolution to answer it and then make it happen.

Nigel Alston is a radio talk-show host, columnist and motivational speaker. Visit his Web site at www.motivationalmoments.com.

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Time to leave the victim labels behind



Armstrong Williams
Guest Columnist

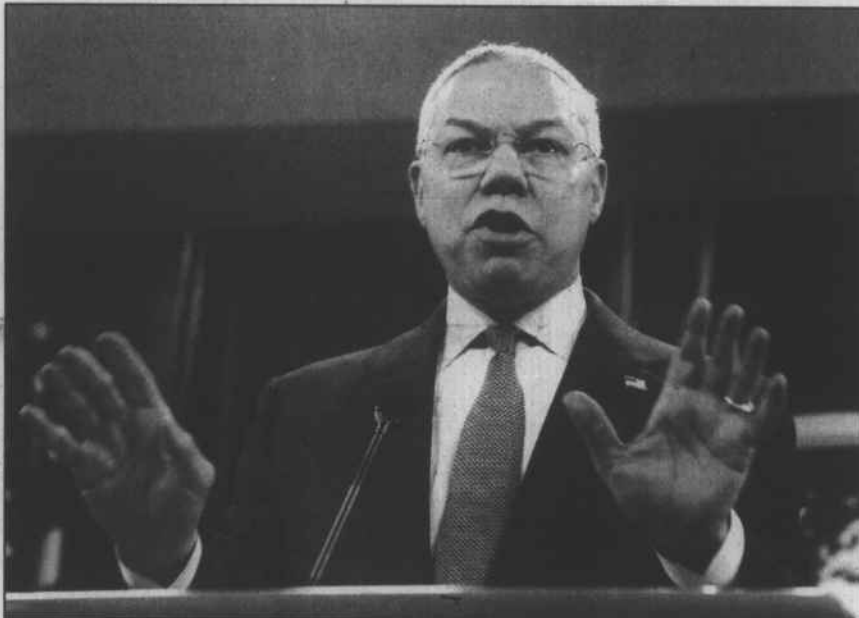
This new year, I would like to offer a rather profound insight: Tiger Woods has a bank account that rocks big time.

The CEO of American Express also makes millions, as do BET founder Bob Johnson and Radio One CEO Cathy Hughes. These CEOs know the value of money. But if they wanted to, they could use dollar bills to light their cigars or scoop up their clam dip. Michael Jordan has more money than most countries. The Williams sisters, Venus and Serena, have a higher GNP than Russia.

They have money. They have clout. They are the faces of the new wave of black millionaires.

Kobe Bryant has so much dough that he built a moat for bumper boats in his back yard. In a country with little history other than the shared desire to make money, these American blacks have managed to ascend.

Their examples spread through every field. Alfred Liggins shapes the music culture as a joint CEO of Radio One. U.S. Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas makes decisions that protect those essential rights we associate with happiness. Filmmaker Spike Lee and music executive Russell Simmons exert considerable influence in music, film and fashion. Condoleezza Rice and Gen. Colin Powell make policy decisions that help ensure the security of our republic. In fact, the Bush administration is studded with more American blacks than any previous administration, includ-



Secretary of State Colin Powell speaks out against Iraq at a Dec. 19 news conference.

ing Deputy Secretaries Leo Mackay (Veteran's Affairs), Alphonso Jackson (Housing and Urban Development) and Claude Allen (Health and Human Services).

Get it? Black Americans have pushed into the mainstream. They stud the upper echelon of America's economic hierarchy. And this is not just true of entertainment or sports, two areas to which black achievement was traditionally confined. From politics to corporate finance to litigation to fashion, blacks succeed.

Yet, despite these obvious successes, there remains much talk about how blacks remain victims of a cruelly unjust past. Our most visible civil rights leaders, Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton, make a living telling poor blacks that they are trapped in a repressive white

society that neuters their talents. Sharpton and Jackson are the dispensers of a warm drug, a surrender of the will to the feelings of victimization. Their rhetoric gives people the feeling that they are not to blame for the missed opportunities of their lives (with at least one sad byproduct being that those black Americans who actually have the audacity to succeed in industry are marginalized as "sellouts").

And while it is true that social hierarchies exist, it is self-limiting to regard race as inextricably bound to victim status. Yet that is precisely what many of our civil rights leaders accomplish when they demand that all blacks are victims of an unjust past.

Victims? I dare you to look deep into Gen. Colin Powell's steely gaze and call him a "vic-

tim." Call Condoleezza Rice a victim to her face and you might just taste the back of her hand.

Blacks are much more than a label. They are rich and poor. And they rise and fall on their own merits. Perhaps it is time our civil rights leaders took notice of this rousing fact. Instead of harping on the message of retribution, perhaps they ought to focus on what it takes to make it in this world. Perhaps it is time to revel in the greater good of our success stories, rather than discarding most of them as "sellouts." This new year, it is time to provide our youths with models of success and the reasonable expectation for future possibilities.

Indeed, that would be progress.

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