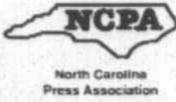


OPINION/ FORUM

THE CHRONICLE

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Meals are served at the Resource Center last week. Photo by Layla Farmer

Fighting the Good Fight (and Winning)

When Andrea Kurtz and other community leaders announced just a few years ago that they were unveiling a Ten Year Plan to End Chronic Homelessness, there was more than a little skepticism.

Homelessness, and the abject poverty it stems from, has existed seemingly since the dawn of time. Poor and disheveled men and women are regular characters in the Holy Bible, their plight a reoccurring theme in its writings, and judging from the streets of Winston-Salem and virtually any city on the globe.

How then, could anyone be so naive as to believe that they could have a tangible impact on such an deplorable, yet resilient societal ill?

Yet Kurtz, the United Way, Mayor Allen Joines, the City Council and many others didn't let history determine the future of our city, and we are certain that many among us today are eternally grateful for their optimism.

No, Winston-Salem wasn't the first city to adopt a Ten Year Plan. Other progressive municipalities have also taken on similar initiatives, but the Twin City is still on the cutting edge, as it has been quite often with respect to many important issues over the last decade.

We applaud our elected leaders for, again, believing in us as a city despite the hardships we face in transitioning from an industrial to a technological workforce. We applaud the countless volunteers and paid staff members across Winston-Salem who leave their warm and comfortable beds each morning in the pursuit of a little comfort for those who are without.

Even as naysayers were poopooing the project, it began to grow. Like a gathering storm, it has swept more and more agencies into its partnership, broadening both its reach and its effectiveness.

And the proof is in the pudding, as some will say. From a one-time, annual effort that sought to help people find the services they needed to turn their lives around, to The Resource Connection Center, a large-scale, monthly project that has likely served hundreds since its inception just over a year ago, and still the momentum continues.

Folks like Benjamin, the recovering addict mentioned in the story on the Center's anniversary, will tell you that a little caring and a lot of hard work can go a long way in empowering those who might have once believed they could no longer empower themselves.

He knows that no matter what his problem is, the people who work at the Center will do everything they can to help him, not because it's their job, but because they care about him as a human being and they want him to do better. For many people living on the streets, that kind of attitude is a rarity. Often the choices that have rendered them homeless have also caused them to burn bridges with families or loved ones, the people who would normally offer such support and encouragement. Who doesn't need love? The Resource Center fills that gap.

Other organizations, like the Samaritan Inn, the Salvation Army Shelter and the Winston-Salem Rescue Mission have long played a valuable and important role in combating homelessness, and with the added backing from the collaborative partners of the Ten Year Plan, their work has become even more relevant. Isn't it amazing what can happen when people work together for a common cause?

We think so.



Economic Transformation

Julianne Malveaux
 Guest Columnist

I have a friend who has not had to struggle around money issues for the past 20 years. This year, though, she is counting pennies, cutting back, and warning friends that if there are gifts at all, they are likely to be small ones.

Like many Americans, she is being whipped between the stock market (lower pension fund payments), and the layoffs of those in her close circle. Whenever she feels that she has a leg up, she is confronted with a hand out. She's not the only one.

At Bennett College for Women, the Parent's Association wanted to help send five students home. They ran an essay contest and planned to award prizes to the five best essays. In the end, the stories of economic trauma were so painful that more than 15 young women got help with their travel. Others, equally needy, were too busy with finals to participate in the essay contest. They also struggle to make ends meet.

This economy is banging

people around all kinds of ways, forcing them to make compromises that they don't like to make and, in some cases, to stop celebrating the holidays the way they once did. It's not all about the holidays. When January 1 comes, there will be those who cannot find jobs, or pay tuitions, or even pay for the cost of searching for a job or an opportunity.

All eyes are on Washington, between the possibility of Congressional bail-out action, and the excitement around the inauguration of our nation's first black President. There are some solutions that will emanate from Washington. State and local governments, too, have the opportunity to craft solutions. So do individuals who must now use every ounce of creativity they have to survive this economy.

It will likely be another year before there is a hint of economic recovery. The folk whose holiday dinners are not as bountiful as they were a year ago are likely to have to continue to tighten their belts to make ends meet.

This whack economy actually offers the possibility of developing a more just economy, to look at issues of wages, benefits and distribution in the context of economic recovery. If we emerge from this econo-

my with an economic distribution that looks much like the one we started this recession with, we have emerged as failures, attempting to use old conditions to find new solutions.

So what must we do? We must focus on the creation of jobs that pay living wages and ensure that these jobs are distributed across a continuum that includes women, young people, people of color, and those who are too often left out of economic recovery.

We must emphasize the role that education plays in the economy and provide dollars to HBCUs who are part of the solution, not part of the problem. Think about it! If we can seamlessly send tens of billions of dollars to the auto industry, why not send just a fraction of that to our 105 historically black colleges and universities?

We must get a handle on the housing crisis, not just for owners, but also for renters. Banks can make profits without exploiting people if they really try.

Advocates for economic justice have to sing the same tune, over and over again. This is not the time to choose to switch focus because it is interesting and exciting.

If we begin to fix the jobs problem, we will have a fair crack at fixing most of our

nation's problems, or at least getting more of us in productive, remunerative work that is rewarding. If we lose sight of the jobs matter, sidetracked by other concerns, we'll look up and a year from now, American will still be out of work.

Nobody is doing much public policy these next two weeks. People will be full of reviewing the exciting year that was, and ruminating about the times we now find ourselves in. This is both personal and political for many of us - if we have not lost our jobs; we are affected by those who have, affected by the economic pinch that is becoming a squeeze.

We are not defined by our economic times. I told my friend who is paring down her feast that at least there is a meal to have. The student who needed a way home found, in most cases, that help was on the way.

If we can share the concept of economic justice, we can build an economy that fills us with pride. We just have to stay focused on the economic transformation that is necessary and the work we must do to attain it.

Dr. Julianne Malveaux is president of Bennett College for Women.

I am Not Dreaming of a White Christmas

George Curry
 Guest Columnist

There is a picture of me at the age of 7 or 8 decked out in my cowboy suit - replete with hat, gun, scarf and cowboy boots. My gun is drawn and pointed in the direction of my sister Charlotte, four years younger. Charlotte is appropriately attired in a cowgirl suit as we stand smiling in front of a well-decorated Christmas tree. Clutched in Charlotte's left arm is a doll, a White doll.

It was not usual for Black girls to have White dolls in the 1950s, and at our age, it seemed no big deal. But it was a big deal to my stepfather, William Polk, who was concerned about the self-esteem of Charlotte and, later, Chris and Sue, my other sisters. Although Black dolls were rare back then, William thought my sisters should only play with dolls that looked like them.

With only a fifth grade education, my stepfather relied on his intuition to reach that conclusion. But what he felt in his gut was later quantified by husband-and-wife psychologists Kenneth B. and Mamie Clark. They conducted groundbreaking doll studies in the 1950s in which they sought to learn how America's concept of beauty impacted the self-esteem of African-American children.

The couple conducted a series of tests in which they showed Blacks kids White dolls and Black dolls. In each instance, most of the Black children preferred to play with White dolls over Black ones. Moreover, they considered the



"Then all of the reindeer loved him, as they shouted out with glee, Rudolph the red-nosed reindeer, you'll go down in history!"

Jesse Jackson's response? "George, you have lost your mind."

Apparently, I hadn't. It wasn't long before I heard Jesse Jackson telling my Rudolph story on radio. He was telling it to Tom Joyner as if it were his story. But any journalist who has traveled with Jesse Jackson for any length of time knows that's an occupational hazard.

Sylvester Monroe, a correspondent for Newsweek magazine, showed Jackson a greeting card on the campaign that had caught his attention. Again, Jackson did not appear to be impressed - not until he heard Jackson reciting the words during a speech. That's classic Jesse Jackson.

Back to the White dolls, you would think that after nearly 50 years - and millions of Black dolls - that Black kids would have better self-esteem. If you think that, think again.

In 2005, Kiri Davis, an 18-year-old filmmaker, decided to replicate the doll experiments with 21 Black children at a daycare center in New York. In her experiment, 15 of the 21 children preferred the White doll, whom they considered nice and pretty.

My stepfather knew what he was talking about.

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White dolls good and pretty and the Black dolls bad and ugly.

Their research was cited in Brown v. Board of Education, the landmark 1954 Supreme Court case outlawing segregated public schools.

Even during the season we celebrate the birth of Christ, racism does not take a holiday. And one of our defenses, in and out of season, has been to resort to laughter.

I can't say that was my frame of mind in 1984 when I was covering Jesse Jackson's first presidential bid. When you are on the road seven days a week, often working 12- to 15-hour days, the mind comes up with all kinds of whacky things. Such was the case when I made the mistake of telling the candidate that I believed Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer was a brother.

At first, Jesse Jackson was dismissive. But that didn't prevent me from arguing my point.

"Think about the lyrics," I suggested.

"Rudolph, the red-nosed reindeer had a very shiny nose. And if you ever saw him, you would even say it glows."

Don't act like you don't know what I am talking about. When it gets cold, our noses definitely shine.

But next came the definitive proof - at least in my mind - that Rudolph was Black.

"All of the other reindeer used to laugh and call him names. They never let poor Rudolph join in any reindeer games."

It can't be clearer than that. Can't you just see them calling poor Rudolph the R-word? And of course, they didn't allow him to join their games.

But when the big, fat, bearded one chose Rudolph to guide his sleigh, everyone suddenly had a change of heart.