

OPINION

THE CHRONICLE

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Our Mission

The Chronicle is dedicated to serving the residents of Winston-Salem and Forsyth County by giving voice to the voiceless, speaking truth to power, standing for integrity and encouraging open communication and lively debate throughout the community.

Government should aid programs that help the poor

Thanksgiving 2015 has come and gone. Many nonprofit organizations are reporting that they served food to this number and that number of people during this time. This is a special holiday, so at this time and at Christmas, people take it upon themselves to do special things.

Now, as Christmas creeps up on us, people are saying needy children need gifts because Christmas is a special time. All children deserve gifts at Christmas, right?

The problem is, how can a child feel like playing when he or she is hungry? How can parents handle the things they need to do when they have headaches because of hunger and frustration because they can't take care of their families? What happens after Dec. 25?

While Winston-Salem Mayor Allen Joines forms a 21-member panel to combat poverty, many nonprofit organizations are forging ahead to help people get out of poverty. They are not just using elements of President Lyndon B. Johnson's "War on Poverty," which Joines says has not worked in 50 years. They are using elements of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's "New Deal," which was implemented during the Great Depression in the 1930s.

Under the New Deal, the federal government put people to work on projects that benefited America, such as constructing buildings and bridges.

In this century we had the Great Recession. Many people who could provide for their families just fine lost their jobs and careers, just as during the Great Depression. They were plunged into poverty. Programs today are putting people to work as part of a comprehensive agenda that helps the people involved get out of poverty and helps the organization. One such program is the Circles Program, administered by The Shalom Project, which is helping participants through leadership training, community support and community transformation.

As part of a Women's Fund of Winston-Salem event announcing grant recipients, participants in the program recently told about how Circles is helping them. They had various reasons for moving into the poverty ranks, but they are moving toward the same outcome: They want to be self-sufficient enough to take care of themselves and their families.

They did not mention that a 21-member panel helped them. People called "allies" helped them. These are individuals who encourage and help people as they go through Circles. One participant told about how she was drifting toward depression until her allies stepped into her life.

What if the 21-member panel would decide that it would disband and just give more money to the programs that work now to bring people out of poverty? What if city government hired poor people to help build projects that are being built with money from the bond issue approved in 2014? Joines claims the War on Poverty has not worked. Tell that to Experiment in Self Reliance. It states on its website: "Like its sister Community Action Agencies (CAA's) across the nation, ESR was born out of Lyndon B. Johnson's War on Poverty and the Equal Opportunity Act of 1964, the economic twin to the Civil Rights Act."

The organization, chartered in 1964, "has served the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County community for more than 50 years, working to eliminate poverty and homelessness, and help people help themselves."

All members of Winston-Salem City Council are up for re-election in 2016. The filing period to run has opened and will end Dec. 21. There are an estimated 60,000 people in poverty in Winston-Salem. What if those in poverty who are registered to vote did so next year?

Those in poverty now are hard-pressed to wait five years to get out of poverty. Organizations are working now to move people from the poverty statistics to the tax-paying ones. Government officials should look at what is working and provide more money to the organizations in charge of the programs or form their own programs now. If not, there might be new faces looking at how to help the thousands of poor people who helped put them in office.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Black Rep giving back through 'Black Nativity'

To the Editor:

From the beginning, the North Carolina Black Repertory Company (NCBRC) has used theatre to give back to the community. Every two years, the NCBRC hosts the National Black Theatre Festival, its international outreach program, which boosts the city and state's economies. The company also prepares the next generation of professional theatre artists through the Teen Theatre Ensemble (TTE), a six-week intensive that introduces local youth to the fundamental elements of theatre.

True to its mission of developing the community through the theatre arts, the NCBRC will be producing its annual revival of the classic gospel play "Black Nativity" Dec. 4-6 and 11-13.

Created by the poet and dramatist Langston Hughes, "Black Nativity" tells the story of Jesus Christ's birth from a black perspective. The play blends gospel music, dance and poetry to captivate audiences. When it debuted on Broadway in December 1961, the play was an instant success. Soon, it quickly achieved international success, touring many major cities in Europe. As a result, "Black Nativity" helped to legitimize gospel music and became a staple of Black theatre.

Just as it did in the 1960s, the play still has the power to engage and amaze the community. The story as well as the accompanying gospel music connects the viewer with their spirituality. For the company's production, the creative team chose to use a West African theme in the costume and choreography to evoke the ancestral roots of black people. However, the NCBRC does not want to engage the community only as audience members. The production team and cast are all residents from the Triad.

Additionally, the NCBRC works hard to involve the community because the play holds personal significance to the company. Mabel Robinson, the company's artistic director, originated the role of Mary in the Broadway production, replacing Cleo Quitman. She continued to perform the role for many years on the national and international tours.



2014 file photo: N.C. Black Rep Photo by Larente Hamlin

Some of the cast members of "Black Nativity" are shown.

She believes the experience to be the highlight of her career as it sparked her interest in Black theatre. Due to the play's influence on her, she suggested it to Larry Leon Hamlin, the company's founder and former artistic director, who wanted to produce a Christmas show to connect to the community. It has become a tradition now, as this year is the 15th production by the NCBRC.

The company is proud to be presenting its annual production of "Black Nativity." We are also extremely enthused to continue to foster our relationship with the citizens of the region, whose support we greatly appreciate. Please come out and join us as we tell the story of Jesus Christ's birth. As we always say at the NCBRC, we're saving a seat just for you.

Ivan Mosley
Office Assistant with the
NCBRC
and a 2013 WFU graduate
with a BA in Theatre

Black preachers, don't let Trump manipulate you

To the Editor:

I am at a loss for words that black preachers allowed [GOP presidential

candidate Donald] Trump to expose our vulnerability over a meeting and a press conference.

Preachers, let's look out for the people we serve and not ourselves. Trump has publicly disrespected every minority group from Latinos to



Bishop Mack

those with special needs, to the Black Lives Matter movement.

My thing is this: has Trump ever been to a black church? If not, then why now does he want the black preacher to come to him?

Is it really about a conversation? We have been talking for years about jobs, better schools, economic empowerment. Where has he been with his billions? But now he needs a vote and a picture so he calls the black preacher.

#DontGetTrumped.

Bishop Sir Walter Mack
Pastor
Union Baptist Church

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