

FORUM



Attorney H. Glenn Davis, holding plaque, is honored with a Lifetime Achievement Award during The Chronicle's Community Service Awards gala on March 21. File Photo by Erin Mizelle for The Chronicle

Farewell to trailblazer attorney H. Glenn Davis

Denise Hartsfield
Guest Columnist

Attorney H. Glenn Davis blazed many trails as an attorney in Winston-Salem. Dickey Woods, former Register of Deeds and longtime face in the Forsyth County Clerk of Courts office, knew whenever H. Glenn was in the Hall of Justice. He would follow the trail of cigar

butts that Harry would leave all over the courthouse so that he could retrieve them after court. Today we remember the trail that H. Glenn Davis blazed for so many lawyers in this community and beyond, with his wisdom and passion for the practice of law. In closing argument Harry would often say, "Your Honor, we all know what is really going on in this case. We all know what this case is really about." The rules of evidence and civil procedure often keep a lot of things from being said and presented in

court. Harry knew that if the judge was listening clearly, that he or she could separate the three sides of the story: My side, your side, and THE TRUTH. We all know what H. Glenn Davis was really about. He was about surviving in a time when racism and separate but unequal was the cry of the day. From the Pepper Building to Winston Towers, Harry had a successful practice for almost 60 years. We know that he was a mentor to young attorneys, teaching them the tricks of the trade and sharing the tools they needed to sur-

vive. He would pull them to the side, or take them to lunch to mentor and share. We know that Harry was not in the business of robbing or getting rich off of his clients. He did pro bono work before pro bono was cool. "Give me \$125.00. I will take care of it." We know that he was the street lawyer's envy. Bills paid, office open, payroll met, malpractice insurance paid, lights shining inside and out beaming hope for justice for those who did not have a voice. Harry Glenn Davis was that voice. We know that Harry

did not kiss and tell. Your case was safe with him. He respected the confidentiality of those he represented. We know that in his last days of practice he worked as a parent attorney in the juvenile court. He fought for mothers and their children, fathers and their sons, and daughters to do better for the sake of their children. It did not matter if the IQ was below 65, or if there was addiction or mental health concerns. Harry believed that families were meant to be together, working through the problems, one day at a time. Harry got the hard cases and DSS knew that

they had a fight on their hands, and that Harry was most concerned with the best interest of the kids. The Hall of Justice will miss H. Glenn Davis. He was loved by all: the DA, the PD, the clerks, the lawyers, the deputies, and the police officers. The judges respected his wisdom and fortitude. We can only hope that Harry will return to the Hall of Justice sometime, leaving a trail of smoke and a whisper, because we still need to hear his voice of wisdom to remind us "what really is going on in the courthouse."

The case for keeping the holiday spirit all year long

Chris Fitzsimon
Guest Columnist

earth but it's true. Overall North Carolina ranks ninth among the 50 states in food insecurity—that's the inability to afford enough to eat sometime during the year. That means tens of thousands of people in North Carolina are going hungry every day and that is happening despite the heroic efforts of the selfless staffs and volunteers at shelters, food banks, and other nonprofits in every county in the state. The informal and patchwork community safety net is important but it is not enough. That doesn't mean those groups don't need our help. They do and let's hope North Carolinians continue to be generous with their contributions and their time. But that is not going to solve the problem. Neither is the massive outpouring of support that comes every holiday season though it's also vital and important. It is the one time of year where some folks on the Right manage to put aside their stereotypes and demonization of people who are struggling to survive and actually encourage others to give money to help them or serve a Thanksgiving turkey or Christmas ham at the soup kitchen down the street. The rest of the year we're told that people without a job are lazy and that families forced to rely on food stamps to feed their children are mooching off the rest of us, and that if we help the poor with handouts they won't

take the initiative to improve their own lives. A staffer at a conservative think tank in Raleigh once famously scoffed at the long line of people in line waiting for a meal at a shelter by pointing out that some of them were wearing expensive basketball shoes. Apparently if someone gives you a nice pair of sneakers you don't deserve to eat when you are down on your luck. That's the kind of rhetoric you hear in the halls of General Assembly these days from the folks currently in charge. It's not clear why they change their tune as Thanksgiving approaches, why a poor single mother or a laid off worker who are seen as burdens to taxpayers most of the year are worthy of support when mid November rolls around. And it's not just about the role of government for the ideologues. If "giving" someone something for free allegedly creates a culture of dependency—to use a favorite right-wing phrase—that why does it matter where the "gifts" come from? Maybe it is guilt around the holidays that prompts folks to rethink their dismissive attitude toward low-income families. Maybe it's part of their religious culture that they conveniently forget the other ten months of the year. Maybe for help it is even cynical politics that makes them reach out to help. Whatever it is, it always seems to evaporate when Thanksgiving is over and the Christmas trees are taken out to the curb and the poverty-is-a-choice polemics start again. Wouldn't it be something if we could make that holiday spirit last all year, if we could help folks who are

struggling with contributions and volunteer hours AND get our leaders to stop punishing low-income families when they write budgets and pass laws? Reinstating the state Earned Income Tax Credit for low wage workers would be a good start. North Carolina is the only state to have enacted a state level EITC and then ended it. That's a mark of shame we should correct. Expanding unemployment benefits would help too. The state's unemployment debt to the federal government has been repaid and a surcharge for employers has ended. But the benefit cuts for workers remain and North Carolina now ranks 49th in the country in the percentage of laid off workers who receive unemployment benefits, another mark of shame. There's more, like reversing cuts to NC PreK and child care subsidies that help low income kids and their parents and rethinking a bill signed last month by Gov. Pat McCrory that will cut off food stamp benefits for 100,000 people next year. And maybe most importantly, let's follow the lead of 31 other states and expand Medicaid so 500,000 low-income adults can afford to see a doctor to stay healthy to find a job or go back to school to learn a skill to take care of their families. The fact that one in four children in our state doesn't have enough to eat is a moral failure of our society. And just being nice during the holiday season won't fix it.



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