

LETTERS TO THE POST

Increase Funding To Help Office Of Minority Affairs Do Its Job

The writer is president of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg League of Women Voters.

The Office of Minority Affairs is the most visible token of Mecklenburg County's concern about racism. Nevertheless, this year again that office is a temporary item in the county's budget. The League of Women Voters of Charlotte-Mecklenburg is urging the County Commission to stop its yearly debate about the need for that office and put it into the budget permanently with full funding.

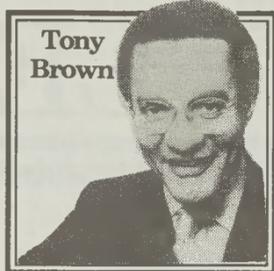
Early this year, the League of Women Voters of North Carolina asked each of its local Leagues to identify its single most serious social problem. The board of our local League named racism for Charlotte-Mecklenburg.

Last week Charlotte-Mecklenburg League members were among leaders of 15 big city Leagues meeting in Washington. That coalition identified racism as being at the core of many of the nation's most serious problems.

I wonder if, in all of those other cities, the only office dealing with racism is considered temporary.

BETTY SEIZINGER
Charlotte

Self-Help Beats The Media



Tony Brown

A recent report by television's 60 Minutes called into question - again - the mainstream media's ability to objectively report on black self-help success stories.

On the other hand, there is little debate concerning the media's ability to report the failures, ineptness, chicanery, incompetence and criminality of some black people. But self-help success seems to present problems of objectivity.

I distinguish self-help (especially economic) success from athletic or performing arts success which have outcomes which are objectively

observable. That is, they have agreed upon rules which eliminate cheating. Therefore, the player who scores 50 points is a better scorer than the one who scores 10 points.

But solving complex economic problems (where the rules don't necessarily determine the outcome - because cheating cannot be ruled out) and the subsequent social and psychological manifestations of economic poverty cannot be judged objectively. It allows one to judge the winner subjectively.

For example, how in the world could a group of 300 rural, poorly educated Mississippi blacks possibly go from welfare checks to ownership of a financial empire worth \$20 million without any government help - solving the problems of racism and poverty?

But as a result of doing just that, "The Company's" properties today include: three restaurants; a steel fabricating plant; three funeral homes; meat-processing

plants; 15 farms with 4,000 acres; and "one of the South's most successful hog-raising farms - all of which provide meat for the Reach processing plant and, ultimately, the enterprise's restaurants," the Post story explained.

Of course, the Post (as did 60 Minutes later on) ran down the local "black leader" (in this case, a NAACP "leader" who detested black self-help philosophically and was hostile to Bishop Luke Edwards personally. Names like Jim Jones, Rev. Sun Myung Moon along with "mind control" and reminders of "indentured servitude" were laced throughout the story.

I don't accuse the Post or 60 Minutes of racism.

But it is obvious from their reporting that they don't recognize that the real genius of black people is not found in leaders who work at being leaders and believe in white people rather than themselves.

TONY BROWN is a nationally-syndicated columnist.

WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND?

Your opinions are important to The Post and Charlotte. What are your feelings about issues like health care, education or crime? Write

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Changing Attitudes About Violence In U.S.



Marian Edelman

Every four hours in America, a black child is murdered, a young black adult is murdered and a white child dies from firearms.

Every six hours in America, a black child dies from firearms, a white child is murdered and a young white adult is murdered.

In 1990, two out of five black male high school students reported carrying a weapon - more than half of them firearms - in the previous month.

Guns and violence obviously aren't just "a black thang," but our community is suffering so greatly that we need to stop whatever we're doing and pay attention. We're in danger of becoming our own worst enemy; more young black men die from homicide each year than we lost in all the horrible decades of lynching.

When it comes to the harm that guns are causing our children, our youths, our families and our communities, the alarms are sounding loud and clear. Something has got to change.

A new survey by Louis Harris of LH Research shows that more Americans are supporting measures to limit gun violence. Interviews with a cross-section of Americans revealed that 77% of adults believe young people's safety is endangered by all the guns that are around and only 29% feel that most children are safe from violence in the schools.

When asked how much the availability of guns have contributed to the epidemic of violence that is engulfing all of America, 61% nationwide say "a great deal" and 20% say "somewhat." The strongest feelings about the relationship of guns and violence came from women, blacks, Latinos, and parents of children under 18 years of age. However, even 41% of all National Rifle Association (NRA) members say they believe guns have contributed to the violence in our world today.

How bad is it? The Harris survey tells us that:

- 18% of all adults, 20% of all parents and 30% of blacks report having had or knowing someone who had "a child who was wounded or killed by another child who had a gun."

- 15% of all adults, 19% of all parents, 22% of Latinos and 33% of blacks report "knowing a child who was so worried that he or she got a gun for self-protection."

- Fully 91% of all adults and 92% of all parents feel that there is "more violence in the schools than when they were growing up."

These numbers are just the tip of the iceberg; the situation is growing worse by the day. The good news is that attitudes about guns and violence are changing.

MARIAN EDELMAN is president of the Children's Defense Fund.

Ordinary People Do Great Things

They're Not Household Names, Just Individuals Who Make A Difference

By James Stroud
SPECIAL TO THE POST

We are bombarded daily with the trumpeting of public figures and the good works they are doing for the poor and underprivileged. We see the mayor, council people, commissioners, and all the rest, smiling into the camera as they go through their "Photo Op" sessions throughout the city.

Rarely do we hear of "regular" ordinary people who carry the real burden of letting the less fortunate know that there is someone who cares.

Three of these "little" people who make a positive difference in the lives of others:

• Claire Hurst:

A social worker with a private foundation that services pregnant teenagers.

Claire, in private life, also serves as the minister of Reeves Temple AME Zion Church in Davidson.

One of the other many ways in which Claire makes a big difference is through her Neighborhood Ministry. It is nothing formal, but totally effective in that the children of Biddleville love her.

What she does is bring them, both boys and girls, into her home for lessons of life. She teaches them the work ethic by having them organize car washes, yard sales, and the like. She teaches them discipline and courtesy, table manners and deportment. When she scolds them, it is firm, but with love.

Her home is open to them for any reason, any time. The atmosphere is one of safety, confidence and trust. These are the things often missing in their homes, and for the lucky few, it is found at Claire's home.

• Betty Marlin, R.N.:

Betty is a community health care provider. Her clinic, located in the Biddleville community, provides preliminary examinations, doctor/hospital referrals, weight control programs, and at prices the people of that community can afford.

Here you can get a physical for \$25, self care counseling for \$2, nursing care, (limited), \$2 and a host of other health services for an average of \$8 per procedure.

With nursing salaries being in the starting range of the upper \$20s (thousands), I asked her why she would come to such a poor neighborhood to practice her craft. Her answer was to the effect of "This is where I'm needed."

To see and talk with Betty is to witness a person who has found their work. She extends the services of her clinic to anyone needing health care or counseling, without the slightest regard for whether or not she will be paid.

In leaving her, I could not help but ask her to express her wish for all mankind. As was typical of her, she stated "My one wish for mankind is for us all to be well, whole, and holy."

• Richard McCullough:

Richard ("Richie" to me) is a contract worker for the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School system. He works as a general assistant at Carmel Junior High. His work brings him into contact with the children in the In School Suspension Program, that is, children who have been determined as problems in the classroom.

Richard uses his ability to identify with those "problem" kids to get across a very important message. That message is: "You are here to get an education as a means of survival in today's world."

His manner of communicating with them is through his "rap." He speaks in rhythmic sentences that the kids listen to without losing the intent of the message. Teachers often approach him with questions on how he does it, and he has no answers except to say, "I love 'em."

He calls them his kids, and to see the positive results of his work and influence is to see love at work through discipline.

I take the privilege here to thank Claire, Richie, and Betty for all of Charlotte who do not know of your works, and share with you the certainty that God has appointed the three of you to serve him in your own individual kind, loving ways. Thank you for the privilege of knowing you.

JAMES STROUD is a Charlotte writer.

Global Networking For Profit

By William Reed
NATIONAL NEWSPAPER PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION

With the second African-American Summit in Gabon just over, the major question confronting blacks here, and there, is "where do we go from here?" While the majority of participants in the Gabon Summit were civil right leaders, or civil rights leaders who've crossed that thin line and are now politicians, the actual feat of bringing blacks into the New World Order will be on the backs of those of us engaged in trade and commerce. While Rev. Leon Sullivan's Gabon summit provided headlines about "blacks bonding," the bottom-line results for blacks' economic development will be drawn by those people among us who are really about the business of doing business.

For those blacks who derive more pleasure from cashing checks than taking pictures with so-called "leaders," there are two active economic groups that they may wish to use toward international networking for profit. The Washington D.C.-based International Exchange Network (IEN) and the International Black Network Exchange (IBNE), based in Addison, Texas, are African American-headed groups whose focus is to promote the professional and financial networking of blacks toward aiding in the expansion of Africans and Caribbeans into the global marketplace. Rather than petitioning the White House and Congress to "please do something for us and our kin," these groups have directed their attention toward: matching business interests of blacks; coordinating joint ventures and promoting the products and services of African American-owned businesses and those of black manufacturers, world wide.

According to Malcolm Beech, president of the International Exchange Network, "It's not often that a large group of African American businesspeople have an opportunity to participate in the birth of a new wave of economic development activity." Beech's group is hosting a Southern African Trade and Investment Conference in Washington, July 16 and 17, to allow blacks in this country to see the broad range of economic opportunities emerging in Sub-Saharan Africa. Former U.N. Ambassador Edward Perkins' comments shows the potential of the conference, "I think that cooperation with African nations or with African individuals engaged in various kinds of projects in Africa will help improve the economic development of Africa and the economy of this country."

Beech, who is a former president of the D.C. Chamber of Commerce, says that, "If you missed the chance to get in the gravy train that drove America's economy in the '50s and '60s, the next train is now pulling out, and we don't need to wait for the government this time. Sub-Saharan Africa is a huge marketplace with a combined GNP (gross national product) of \$248 billion. The potential value of exports into African countries is over \$55 billion." The 47 Sub-Saharan countries, which includes industrialized South Africa, have a potential consumer population of over 535 million people.

The "Made in USA" Trade Mission is supported by both the IEN and the IBNE, and is scheduled for Sept. 7-16. The preparatory trade and investment conference sponsored by IEN, in partnership with Howard University's Small Business Center, will be held in July at the Howard University Inn. People interested in international trade opportunities should call the IEN at (202) 722-2465.

WILLIAM REED writes about urban issues for the National Newspaper Publishers Association.

Freedom Equals Responsibility

By Dr. Paula Newsome
SPECIAL TO THE POST

Where are the responsible leaders? Where are the responsible people in Charlotte? A 5-year-old is out in a van at 12:30 at night and the van is fired on. Where are the responsible leaders in Charlotte? A 34-year-old larger-than-life professional football player dies of a heart attack related to cocaine abuse. Where are the responsible people in Charlotte?

Our leaders host a symposium to talk about cruising in Freedom Park, which really was a non-issue. Where is the symposium to talk about taking our neighborhoods back from the drug dealers?

Where is the planning session for self esteem for our youth and adults? Where are the rites of passage classes for our males and females? Where are the real truth classes about our heritage? Is Walls AME Zion Church the

only place in Charlotte that is interested in teaching Africans their history from a spiritual base? Is Rev. Casey Kimbrough the only minister willing to challenge the Michelangelo version of Jesus the Christ as a blue-eyed, blond savior?

Where are the responsible church communities who are willing to go out into the neighborhoods, pick up children, take them to their sanctuaries, design programs for them and feed them for the summer?

Where are the retired teachers who used to make us learn in their classrooms? We need you to tutor our children who are lagging behind in every type of skill, especially reading. Where are the summer reading and math

programs? Our kids can not afford to take breaks!

Where are the responsible citizens who are saying we are sick and tired of our neighborhoods being destroyed by hoodlums, thugs, and cocaine?

Where are the retired nurses and doctors and even the practicing ones? Why aren't we out one Saturday a month sponsoring "a come as you are" clinic?

If we all took some responsibility, we could clean up our community both literally and figuratively. This action would truly lead to improvement.

Freedom is not free but certainly carries with it a big price tag - responsibility. In order for us to be free, we as a community have got to accept the responsibility for our children, our education, our religious institutions, our families, our extended families and most importantly, ourselves.

DR. PAULA NEWSOME is a Charlotte optometrist.

Save Allen University

Graduates from Allen University in Columbia, S.C. will reunite in Charlotte for the "Save Our School" reunion this weekend, June 25-27, at the Adam's Mark Hotel.

Allen, a struggling black college, has survived many hurdles over a period of 123 years. Through it all, graduates have constantly pooled resources to maintain this institution. Allen has graduated thousands of teachers, doctors, lawyers, musicians and other professionals who continue to work in

support of their beloved alma mater, and to keep it open for other students, especially those who have had difficulty being accepted in other colleges.

This weekend, Allen alumni come together again to present some of these alumni to help raise funds for the school.

On behalf of the students, administrators and alumni of Allen University, we invite all of Charlotte to come and help us "Save Our School." Please call 392-9475 for information.

LuCille Ivey-Norton