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# A call to stand for children

## Bernice P. Jackson



This has been a tough year for our nation's poor children. Their welfare has been teetering like a seesaw on the edge of congressional rhetoric and political expediency.

Millions have almost lost their health care, their school lunches and food stamps and the much-needed dollars which their unemployed or under-employed parents have received.

After several months of political games and stalled budget negotiations, no one is quite sure yet what the Governors' proposed solutions to the welfare and Medicaid stalemates will actually mean for the poorest of the poor or whether those proposals will actually be accepted by the Congress and the President. While President Clinton had seemed to hold the line against the harshest welfare and Medicaid "reforms," both the President and Congress are under increasing pressure to solve the budget problems and get on with life as usual in Washington.

Meanwhile, those who are concerned about children - about poor children and not-so-poor children are taking our children's future into their own hands and calling for a National Day of Commitment to Children. This day, to be held on June 1, will be a day of family and community renewal, celebration and commitment to our nation's children all of them. Called Stand for Children, it will be held in Washington, D.C. at the Lincoln Memorial, the site of the historic 1963 March on Washington.

"This will not be a partisan or political day," said Marian Wright Edelman, President of the Children's Defense Fund, in announcing the day. Rather, it will be "a day for all Americans to transcend our differences and affirm what unites us as a people: a sense of fairness, a loving desire to raise moral, healthy, and educated children; a belief that in the richest and most powerful nation on earth no child should be left behind."

This massive day of commitment for children and with children is also designed to send a message to Congress and the President that the fundamental moral principle of doing no harm to children is a line which must not be crossed. It is designed as a day to hold ourselves and our elected leaders responsible for putting children first.

This national day of commitment will be a day for parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles, advocates and providers, educators and students to come to Washington and participate in this historic day. It is being sponsored by a number of national, state and local groups who are hoping that thousands of their members will participate. If you care about our children, then be prepared to take a stand for them. Be prepared to come to Washington on June 1.

For more information, contact Stand for Children, 1832 Connecticut Ave. NW, Washington, D.C. 20009, (800) 233-1200.

BERNICE P. JACKSON is executive director of the Commission for Racial Justice in Cleveland, Ohio.

# Ruby's cooking - we will sure miss it

## D.G. Martin



"Ruby's cooking."

It is an invitation. And for more than 20 years those words have been the most welcome invitation anyone can get in Raleigh. It usually comes late on some afternoon while the General Assembly is in town.

It is always given by Representative Jack Hunt of Cleveland County.

With a grin, he says those words - "Ruby's cooking." He tries to look humble - sort of. He pretends to anxiously await some word from you about whether or not you would like to eat with him and Ruby.

But he knows he is offering something that nobody can turn down.

And that grin always turns into a broad smile - like Santa Claus letting you know that you are going to get exactly what you most want for Christmas.

It is a style of inviting that isn't used very much anymore. I don't know how to describe it, but Jack Hunt tries to make you feel that it would be

his and Ruby's highest honor if you would join them for supper.

Then, when you get there, their Raleigh home is full. His colleagues in the legislature. The governor. The chief justice. The president of the university. Their friends from Cleveland County. And always some of their family. Daughters, sons-in-law, and grandchildren who happen to be in Raleigh help Jack and Ruby make everybody feel at home.

How do I say this? How do I explain how special Ruby's cooking really is? In Raleigh, meals at the fanciest restaurants are a dime a dozen for legislators and top political leaders. There is always somebody who wants something and will take them wherever they want to go. For most of them that fancy living gets old a week or two after they get to Raleigh. But home-cooked, home-served meals are a rare treasure.

What is Jack Hunt trying to sell with this invitation to Ruby's cooking? What is his

agenda? Mostly, it is this. He and Ruby like people. They enjoy the fellowship that goes along with legislative service. They like to make friends. And then they want to enjoy their friends. But there is more to it than that. More than just the joy of getting together and making other people happy.

Jack Hunt has always been one the "peacemakers" in the legislature. When there is a tough, mean problem that divides people, it is often Jack Hunt who gets the call to try to bring them together. Getting around factions, petty jealousies, and partisanship, he tries to find out what it would take to resolve the disagreement.

"What's keeping us from working this out?" is the question people count on Jack Hunt to ask, then listen, and move everyone towards the answer.

He thinks the people's representatives make better decisions when they are not angry with each other. When everything else fails to bring people together, Ruby's cooking can work magic.

It is hard to be angry with anyone when Ruby Hunt is serving corn from her garden, frozen minutes after it was picked last summer, and now offered with six or seven other

vegetables, ham, chicken, biscuits with sourwood honey and molasses, and more than you could remember.

There are so few of these informal institutions left. But they are so important in keeping our leaders functioning on a healthy, human scale.

After this year, things will have to get worked out without the magic of Ruby's cooking. Jack Hunt didn't sign up for re-election. He won't be back in the legislature next year. When the legislature gets together in 1997, Ruby's cooking will be a memory of the way things used to be - in a better time.

It will be a big loss. Not just for those who miss those wonderful meals together - but for all North Carolinians. In the future their problems will have to get solved without Ruby and Jack Hunt's help.

I'll be sad too. But in the meantime, for the rest of this year, I'll be waiting by the telephone, hoping somebody will be on the other line saying, "Ruby's cooking."

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# NCAA continues with narrowing view of scholarship athletes

By Leland Stein III

NATIONAL NEWSPAPER PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION

"In our particular society, it is the narrowed and narrowing view of life that often wins."

-Alice Walker

SAN BERNARDINO, Calif. - The annual NCAA convention in Dallas concluded recently and again the hopes of the Black Coaches Association and numerous other concerned groups and advocates for fairness in inter-collegiate athletics were left, with a "we know what's best for you" conclusion. What will it take for the people at the top of our educational system - College Presidents Commission - to get in the business of educating and out of the business of eliminating?

It must be noted that no one is saying education isn't important and shouldn't be a focus for continual enhancement. It's just the elimination methods used to improve the process with which I and many others differ.

The holier-than-thou Presidents Commission is living Alice Walker's words.

They are continuing with their narrow vision of how the real world works and their non-recognition of the very real trials and tribulations that many youth encounter as a result of their socio-economic and living environment. That's the point of contention for the BCA and others. The BCA, Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference and many others supported a proposal that would qualify freshmen if they graduate high school with a 2.25 GPA in 13 core classes and receive a score of either 800 (SAT) or 19 (ACT). NCAA standards requires a 2.5 in the 13 core classes and either 890 (SAT) or 18 (ACT). Leading the charge that defeated the BCA proposal was University of Southern California President Steven Sample, who hung his hat on "we are letting partial qualifiers in." But, partial qualifiers - students who can practice but not play - must have a 2.0 in 13 core classes, sounds like opportunity, but, each school can accept only four a year. And they must be

two women and two men and only one can be accepted per sport.

"The MEAC plan provides more freshman with the ability to earn the privilege of playing collegiate sports," said Rudy Washington, BCA executive director and head men's basketball coach at Drake University. "Expanding, not restricting the opportunity for a student to receive a college degree and participate in sports should be the goal as educators."

Sample, whose school is located in an impoverished area, should know better than what he claim. Still he defended his narrow position saying: "I live and work in the county of Los Angeles that has 10 million people. We no longer have an ethnic group that is a minority. There is nothing in the current standards that prevents a student from becoming a partial qualifier." Sounds good, but with 10 million people and only one partial qualifier per sport and two men and women total, that's not much of an opportunity.

Khalid Channel, 22, a Stanford medical student and

member of the student-advisory committee, retorts: "Does he live in L.A. or does he live in Brentwood? When you live in certain circumstances, it's ludicrous to say it doesn't have an effect on a kid's (academics)."

A 1995 Profile of SAT Program Test Takers figures agree with Channel. Students with annual family incomes less than \$20,000 have average scores of 769 to 813 on the SAT. And students with family incomes of \$70,000 or more average 1,004. "We are concerned about the use of the standardized test...not to say that it shouldn't be used, but its misuse is a concern," said Georgetown University Coach John Thompson. "Even educational testing services have acknowledged the NCM uses the test incorrectly."

"With all the crime, drugs and social unrest going on... it's the worst time in the world to do what we are doing (eliminating scholarship opportunities), and one of the purposes of our educational institutions should be to have a direct affect on what's going on in our society."

Said Temple University coach John Chaney: "We are saying education is important, but so is athletics. They (the Presidents Commission) are depriving youth of an aspiration level they need to have. All the studies show very



PHOTO WADE NASH

Current NCAA rules could restrict the access black athletes would have to college scholarships.

clearly that through higher education the youth gain entry into society and become viable contributors into that society. And sports may be the vehicle to get them there."

The college presidents are at the top of our educational system, but the only method they can come up with that improves the process is elimination, and by a culturally biased test method - SAT and ACT - that even many of their peers, including a special com-

mission the Presidents Commission appointed last year, acknowledged should not be used as the ultimate judge as to who can perform adequately in a college environment.

Although many colleges are implementing multi-culturalism in curriculum and are tailoring their environments to accept the diversity that is America, the lordly Presidents Commission is holding fast to its narrowing view of potential scholarship student athletes. No matter that within their schools, each body of study [English, math, engineering, etc.] is embracing the ethnic and environmental differences of their students.

I work in areas college presidents never visit or see, teaching and cajoling high school students to look past their environment, family problems and peer pressures. Many get the message, but it's not enough to right 15 years of wrong. Still if given an opportunity, the facts clearly show, most rise to the opportunity and improve their lives with the opportunity a college athletic scholarship can bring.

To this aim, I say the SAT should be used as a gauge toward determining the deficiencies and strengths of a prospective student athlete. LELAND STEIN's column originally appeared in the Black Voice News in California.