

# There's more to Generation X than meets the eye

By Jeri Young  
THE CHARLOTTE POST

I really didn't realize that I was a member of Generation X. As a matter of fact, the whole stigma of my generation was lost on me.

Some of us are black, well-educated and think about much more than our hairstyles, as do all of my friends. We volunteer our time to numerous organizations and want to help others.



Young

We are a constant shock to many people, inundated by news of the shallowness of the lost generation. We know many of the traditional jazz artists. I am a huge fan of Miles Davis, Billie Holiday and Cab Calloway. A good friend expressed shock. I explained to him that I got into jazz in college. I found it relaxing as well as entertaining. I even own a few oldies

myself. We also read and think, in spite of what you hear.

Part of the stigma of being 20-something is our portrayal in the media. They call us Generation X, which I take to mean that we lack a true identity. What we really are is a diverse bunch of firsts.

The first to go to desegregated schools, grow up on welfare, and use computers in elementary school. The first to grow up in integrated neighborhoods. We are the first to experience the promise of America, whatever that is. A lot of us are the college integration group, the first to take major universities to that magical "10 percent people of color mark."

Doesn't it stand to reason that we might be just a little confused? Unlike our parents, many of us did not grow up "backed" by the black community. There were no all-black elementary schools to show us positive role models and people did not openly discuss racism. We are just now beginning to realize that children need the security of a positive neighborhood and old-fashioned discipline. It does

take a village to raise a child. Black people seem to have lost their village.

Ours was a black community in transition.

We didn't have any strong leaders that could unite



people as there have been in the past. We do not know directly of a n y

Martins, Malcolms or Marys. We had Jesses, Louises and various and sundry others

who have never been able to unite us.

They are not aided in their tasks by the media. For the most part, young black women

have n o m e d i a i m a g e, while young black men have just one -

thug.

While I do not like to see gold teeth and baggy jeans, nor do I like being called a

bitch by rap artists, I am open minded enough to judge on content, not appearance. The media has taken style and confused it with substance. Young black America's anger has been reduced by the media to a lack of spirituality, intelligence and morals.

I know this is not true, but for many older black folk, the stereotype has become reality. They have lost their old caution when dealing with the media and police statistics. They believe wholeheartedly that our youth are "lost," particularly the black male. I would be the first to admit that there are too many brothers in jail, on drugs and in peril, but there are also many who have succeeded despite the odds. Have you asked yourself where they are?

Young blacks have long expressed themselves differently than the generation before. Lots of what's going on is just kids feeling their oats. The music reflects their confusion and frustration. For every Dr. Dre, there is a Speech or a Tracy Chapman. For every gangbanger there is

a Kevin Johnson, a Kirk Franklin or a Jaqueline Woodson.

There are of course too many lost young men and women, searching for identity, using drugs and killing. But haven't there always been? Instead of focusing on the lost, hold up the successful as role models. Use your experiences to educate youth instead of denigrating them. Figure out where we went wrong. Do not spend so much time looking at the symptoms. Figure out the problem. What makes one person want to succeed in a neighborhood where most don't? Crime does not happen randomly. There is always a reason.

Volunteer a little of your time to help youth keep on the straight and narrow. Go out and see for yourself instead of believing everything you see on television.

Several days ago, my "20 something" girlfriends and I were having lunch. Guess what we talked about? Retirement plans. We are Generation X.

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## Stand for our children on June 1



Marian Wright Edelman

On June 1, parents and grandparents, aunts and uncles, teachers and preachers, and Americans of every race, religion, income, age, faith, and region who care about children will come together on the National Day of Commitment to Children at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., to mount a massive moral witness and to stand for children. We will affirm our responsibility for all children as families, as communities, and as a national community. Together, we will commit ourselves to taking positive personal and collective action to see that no child is left behind. I urge you to join us in Washington June 1, to:

- Stand together and speak truth to power for children with our presence, voices, votes, and hearts.

- Stand for something more than ourselves, more important than money, and more lasting than things.

- Stand with those who can't stand alone or for themselves: the young, the weak, the disabled.

- Stand and be counted for children in good times and bad. We will draw a line in the political sand that no officeholder of any party or ideology will dare cross.

- Stand with parents who struggle every day and who need our help.

- Stand unwaveringly for America's values of fairness and equality, for compassion and common sense and stand against uncaring people and policies.

- Stand tall against those who seek to hurt and divide and stand with those who seek to unite and heal our communities.

- Stand firmly against those who practice genderhood and racehood and classhood and culturehood and stand with those who practice brotherhood and sisterhood and mutual respect.

- Stand up to those who mouth family values, but who do not support what families need and who work against crucial child protections.

The June 1 Stand for Children will not be a partisan or political day. It will be

a day of spiritual, family, and community renewal and personal commitment to children. It will be a day for all Americans to transcend our differences and affirm what unites us as people: A sense of fairness; a loving desire to raise moral, healthy, and educated children and a belief that in the richest and most powerful nation on earth no child should be left behind. We will return home after June 1 with a renewed sense of unity in our mission for children, a revitalized commitment to caring for children, and a range of personal and local action steps for 1996 and beyond.

We are living at an incredible moral moment in history. Few human beings are blessed to anticipate or experience the beginning of a new century and millennium. What you and I stand for and do now as parents and advocates - and encourage our political leaders to stand for and do in this last national election year of the century - will shape our national fate and our children's futures in the next century and millennium. It is time to call the moral question about whether America truly values and will stand up for children, not just with words

but with work; not just with promises but with leadership and investment; not just with a speech or photo opportunity, but with a sustained positive commitment to meet children's needs.

We will stand together for children June 1 at the Lincoln Memorial because we know there is nothing more important than re-dedicating ourselves personally and as a national community to our children. We will stand together because we know there is nothing government can do that is more important than provide resources to help families help children.

Join us. Make history by answering this call to stand for children and for the promise of America's Dream for every child. For information on the June 1 National Day of Commitment to Children, please write to: Stand for Children National Day Headquarters, 1834 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Washington, D.C. 20009, or call (800) 233-1200 or (202) 234 0095.

S.C. native MARIAN WRIGHT EDELMAN is president of the Children's Defense Fund.

## Double standards cloud race relations in America

By James Alsbrook  
SPECIAL TO THE POST

Why do so many educated and intelligent white people discriminate against black people by using double standards on racial issues? Perhaps several anecdotes will help to answer this question:

1. When I was teaching at Ohio's Central State University, a white drama professor suggested that a black female student demonstrate her ability by giving a skit showing "a slice of black life." He wanted something "powerful." The young woman later went onstage at Robeson Hall, introduced her skit and spewed forth a shocking cesspool of vulgarity and depravity, leaving her racially mixed audience shocked and insulted.

2. In 1982, a black senior at Ohio University presented a one-man show titled "An Evening of Black Drama" featuring "a collage of monologues" written by misguided black writers. These monologues dwelled on dope, sex, drunkenness and other moral and ethical deviations supposedly characterizing the black community.

3. Several years later while I entertained an Ohio University journalism class in my home, a white female honor student saw a copy of "The Color Purple," the widely discussed novel by Alice Walker. She read the first one or two pages and asked permission to borrow the book, explaining that it would broaden her "knowledge of black people." Those pages present a poor, Southern black girl who mentions sexual organs and intercourse in vulgar terms and in slave dialect. This 20-year-old white honor student certainly internalized negative images of black people and considered me to be "a rare exception."

4. One or two years later, several black students performed a collection of senior and graduate school "Chicago scenes" at the Memorial Auditorium on the OU campus. This "recital" depicted whore houses, dope dealers, thieves, drunkards and a motley array of other disreputable characters, all using "jive" talk and the vilest of profanity. When later I asked one of the performers about the content of his shocking material, his face became rigid as he said, "This (expletive) smells but this (expletive) sells to the white folks who have the say-so and the money. He and similar others are "theatrical prostitutes."

5. In 1987 the Athens (Ohio) Messenger carried a two-column eight-inch notice of auditions for "Livin' de Life," an "Uncle Remus" take-off story supposedly written by one Ed Graczy. I went to get a copy of the script as if I were considering a role in this degrading bit of slave-talking trash. After reading the script, I talked with several persons on the faculty and in administration. Soon, this monstrosity, scheduled for several presentations before impressionable elementary school children, was properly canceled.

6. Several years ago I learned from separate sources, including white former students, that black men appear most frequently on television as criminals because police in some cities notify television stations when and where drug raids will occur in a black neighborhood. If the raid is to be in a white neighborhood, the television cameramen usually are not notified and consequently very few drug raids in white neighborhoods appeared on television evening news.

7. Law-enforcement officers of the low Mark Fuhrman type have been exposed in many police departments and have duped the media by telling lies and mishandling so-called "evidence" against black people. The new NAACP with Kwame Nfume could do much to monitor the police and the media, curtail damaging racism and improve the social, political and cultural climate for black people.

Most of the incidents listed above involve self-niggeration by black people who send the wrong message to the world - the message that blacks in fact are inferior.

The war against double standards and stereotypes can be helped if black performers develop more self-pride and self-respect. Also, old performances involving stereotypes should be required to do what "Showboat," now on Broadway, is doing. It honors black heroes nationwide in each advertisement it sponsors.

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## What is wrong with America?



Bernice P. Jackson

It's been some African American History Month of 1996. I'm not sure what has horrified me more. The report of the burning of 23 African American churches in Tennessee, Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama or the statement by the Justice Department official that we can't assume that these are crimes of racial hatred. The disclosure that Pat Buchanan's aide has ties to the militia movement and white supremacist groups or the fact that Buchanan hasn't been forced to fire him and his support of his "friend" has gone almost unquestioned. Indeed, after his win in New Hampshire, one must wonder whether Buchanan hasn't been rewarded for his extremism.

What is wrong with a nation which burns black churches? Oh, one fire has been attributed to a disturbed 10 year-

old, but that still leaves 22 fires which have burned black churches to the ground. Twenty-two fires where the building has been destroyed, but the spirit of the people survives, along with their determination to re-build.

The stories of the burning of these houses of God recalls for many of us the bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Ala. in 1963. That wretched deed resulted in the deaths of the four little girls whose deaths rocked the nation and made us face the evil that was among us. And while no one has died in these fires, these fires are clearly meant to terrorize African-American people. For if their churches are not safe, what is?

Four of the fires have occurred in one town, Boligee, Ala., two on Dec. 22 and two on Jan. 11. In Knoxville, Tenn., Inner City Community Church, where Green Bay Packer Reggie White is associate pastor, was burned on Jan. 8. Indeed, it may only be because of White's sports fame that USA Today began its investigation and there began to be a recognition that some-

thing bigger than isolated church fires was going on.

What is wrong with a country which burns houses of God? And why hasn't there been an outcry by churches across this nation? An outcry by government and political leaders? An outcry by people of good will and all faiths?

Then there is the case of Larry Pratt, the co-chair of Buchanan's campaign who is now on a leave of absence. Which means Larry Pratt can come back any time he wants.

It amazes me sometimes how short our collective memory really is. It was less than a year ago that the Oklahoma City bombing occurred. It was less than a year ago that little children and federal workers were killed, injured and shaken. We decried the militia movement then and reports of the connections between the militia movement and white supremacist groups came to light.

Yet, we as a nation seem willing to accept Buchanan's acceptance of a leave of absence for Larry Pratt and his continued "support" for his friend. Even if Pratt was only tangentially involved (and the

evidence seems to be otherwise) in rallies by these hate groups, do we really believe that he didn't know what they were advocating as he stood on the platform with them? Do we really want a supporter of militias and the Aryan Brotherhood as a kitchen cabinet advisor to a presidential hopeful or a presidential nominee or a president?

Many of us who are African Americans in this land of the free and home of the brave are forced once again to wonder when will it all end? When will the hatred end? When will we truly be at home in this our native land? How long, O Lord, how long?

Contributions to aid the churches destroyed by fire can be sent to Greene County Emergency Church Fund, Rt. 2, Box 94, Utah, AL 35462 or Nelson B. Rivers, Southeast Regional Office NAACP, 970 Martin Luther King Jr. Drive SW, Suite 203, Atlanta, Ga., 30314.

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