

Gas too high? Boost supply

How do we do that, you ask? Stop buying as much. How do we do that? Cut down on trips, especially those unnecessary ones.

Think before you hop into your automobile and drive off to some place you really do not have to be. Many times we take our situation for granted and fail to recognize the habits we have formed.

Driving is one of them, and the gas companies are making huge profits from our habitual and conspicuous consumption of their product. Wasn't \$36 billion enough for Exxon last year?

Conspicuous consumption? Yes. A few years ago people were raving about owning one of those gas-guzzling SUVs that passed everything on the road except a gas station. Well, now we are paying the price for our lemming-like attitude and for falling for the hype perpetrated by slick advertisement and marketing campaigns.

Our consumption excess has now manifested itself into a no-matter-the-cost dependency on gasoline never before seen in this country — and four or five companies are laughing all the way to the bank. Talk about elastic demand, this is ridiculous.

Have you seen the profits posted by those four or five oil companies lately? All the while consumers are paying outlandish, and I must say, capriciously set prices at their local pumps.

Gas prices change almost everyday. The price for the same gas in the ground changes four or five times before it is completely sold. What's up with that? When you are always on the demand side of the economy, however, those are the breaks, as Kurtis Blow would say. Bottom-line: These crooks are ripping us off, big time.

Let's see if we can straighten this thing out. They tell us supply is low, which causes the price of gasoline to go up. Well, it stands to reason that if their supply goes up, or even stays the same, the price will come down. So let's create greater supply, at least for some oil companies and help them with their problem. Here's how.

I am sure you have heard the latest call for economic sanctions against the largest oil company, Exxon/Mobil. I started my personal campaign against that company some time ago. And now I have added another company. Shell. I know I have to buy gasoline, but I don't have to buy it from them.

If we would stop buying from two or three of these gas gangstas, depending upon which ones dominate your local area, they will have plenty of supply and obviously less demand. With that as an issue, prices will decrease.

We cannot simply complain about these thieves and continue to support them. So what are we to do? Some would say we are at their mercy, we can't do anything. But, I beg to differ. We can choose those with whom we want to do business, and as the gas companies on the outside begin to feel the pinch, when they find themselves being open all day but getting little or no business, they will have to make some changes. It's as simple as that. If we are not willing to make small sacrifices to get what we need, the thieves will always win.

Find out which gas company represents the largest market share in your particular area. It may not be Exxon/Mobil where you live. If you are going after the largest company, find out which one it is in your town, and then call for sanctions against that particular company.

A large vocal group of consumers, calling for withdrawal of their dollars from a certain gasoline company will go far in bringing the prices down.

Less demand for certain gasoline will increase the supply of that gasoline. When it comes to lower profits, the big boys will make a change and they will see to it that the little guys do likewise.

These "manufactured" gas prices will soon be a thing of the past if we, the consumers, would simply practice a little restraint, endure a little inconvenience, make simple sacrifices, and act in concert to decrease our demand for their precious fuel and, thereby, their supply. Get organized and get going!

Oh yes, we cannot spend all of our efforts withdrawing our dollars from the rip-off gas companies and refuse to do something for ourselves at the same time. So take some of that money you save and buy few gas stations; that way we can at least gain some of the profits from this burgeoning industry. As Reginald Lewis said, "Why should white guys (and Arabs) have all the fun?"

One more thing. Let's cut back on all of the Navigatin', Escaladin', Expeditin', and Hummin' we love to do. The auto makers are probably laughing their heads off at the fact that consumers are still willing to purchase these monstrosities that get 12 miles to a gallon of premium gasoline.

If we really want gas prices to at least stay where they are, we had better be ready to do battle with the only weapons that count: Our dollars. Start your personal boycott today, and spread the word.

JAMES CLINGMAN is a syndicated columnist.



JAMES CLINGMAN

In education, Nebraska leads the way for nation

Recently, the State of Nebraska, following the leadership of state Sen. Ernest Chambers, organized the Omaha school system into separate districts, ethnically dominated by whites, blacks and Hispanics respectively, while excluding no one. And clearly, this may be a good or great model, perhaps in part, that should be emulated-adopted by Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools.

Indeed, Ernest Chambers was a former personal associate, as we worked together in the black liberation struggle in Omaha during the late 1960s, where I served as adjunct lecturer-instructor in black studies at Creighton University.

The late French author, Victor Hugo once stated, "Nothing is more powerful than an idea whose time has come." And the idea of a degree of ethnic separation (not segregation) of school districts clearly has come. Moreover, the essence of this idea is not new. For the late Dr. Carter G. Woodson, the "Father of Black History Month," in his classic book, *The Mis-education of the Negro* (1933), proclaimed that the Euro-centric system of mis-education was an "antiquated process" and

that blacks, to the extent that we were able should establish a system of our own. And the key word, in this context, is "able," for we blacks, with our resources having been stolen for nearly 400 years, may not be able to create or operate a completely autonomous school system that we need, at least, temporarily, to address MAJOR, unprecedented damages-economic, psychological, cultural, etc-perennially inflicted upon us in America, i.e., The Real-Holocaust (Foluke, 1995).

Additionally, in the basic premise of "The Crisis and Challenge of Black Mis-education in America: Confronting the Destruction of African People Through Euro-centric Public Schools" (2001), I postulated that we-blacks must gain greater CONTROL over the education of our students. For the present system of desegregation-"re-segregation" in education, like the old order of racial segregation, has FAILED us, with the present chaos and "academic genocide" within CMS revealing a specific case in point. Therefore, I proposed a series of recommendations that would promote a synthesis between these failed systems of mis-education-all to no avail to our "distinguished" (sic) school board and overpaid "professional" administrators. Indeed, many CMS officials have attempted to convince us that "we have a great school system, to quote Interim Superintendent Frances Hathcock. And such pronouncements reflect classic "WhiteSpeak" or "normal" white perceptions of truth-reality, in sharp contrast to black perceptions, while confirming a profound political aphorism, "Where you stand depends upon where you sit."

Indeed, our long experience with "education" under control of whites should have taught us that, generally, except for "training" or the "basic 3Rs"-reading, writing "rhythmic"— they will NEVER provide a genuine, wholistic, truthful-authentic education for our students, especially black students. Moreover and generally, I question the capacity of most white teachers, psycho-spiritually and/or culturally, to perform such a task. Additionally, in "The Crisis and Challenge of Black Mis-education," I offered specific recommendations locally to promote greater black control over the education of our students, as well as to provide critically needed assistance to "disadvantaged" parents. However and tragically, far too many local blacks are still focused on making desegregation work for us. Nonetheless, in the perceptive words of that renowned black poet, Nikki Giovanni, "It is not who you attend school with but who controls the school you attend." Amen!

In conjunction with this VERY SAD reality or "thinking" (sic) of local blacks, a brilliant black author-scholar, the late Dr. Bobby Wright, in "The Psychopathic Racial Personality" (1985) has written, "One of the most tragic beliefs widely shared by blacks throughout the world is that white-controlled educational institutions—regardless of whether they are elementary schools or universities—will educate our children. That faith continues to prevail in spite of the overwhelming evidence which disputes the belief...Blacks continue to ignore an irrefutable truth, namely, that in a racist social system, all institutions will reflect, protect and sustain values that are consistent with racism." Bingo!

And for those who still may be confused or unenlightened by such scholarly insights, let the record reflect that the U.S. Supreme Court, in its Brown decision of 1954, proclaimed that racial segregation, inherently was unequal, a perspective, in part, that some of us could continue to challenge, even when we do not support a "return" to racial segregation. For it was the failure to provide equal resources, within all schools, and racial restitution-reparations in the larger society that were major sins under this old order that contributed to its failure.

Moreover, there is a distinct difference between legally mandated segregation and voluntary, temporary, partial separation, the latter to include a degree of desegregation. Therefore, the new system in Nebraska, while perceived as a significant improvement over CMS, is not a panacea for black liberation-parity in America, in the absence of racial reparations. For the latter is an absolutely essential moral mandate, with more than adequate legal and political precedents, to justify its implementation-locally and nationally.

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GYASI FOLUKE

A call to action for Katrina's children

In our new Children's Defense Fund report "Katrina's Children: A Call to Conscience and Action," CDF documents the crisis facing thousands of young people who survived the storm only to still find themselves facing an uncertain future over seven months later.

We are letting them down. This is not a time for business as usual, compassion fatigue, or moving on to the next "story of the day."

This is also not a time for corrupt or self-serving leadership—political, corporate, educational, professional, or nonprofit—that hurts children and betrays public trust. What kind of leaders ask poor children to sacrifice already inadequate child health and mental health care, education, child care, Head Start, and after school programs to subsidize \$1.9 trillion in tax cuts which mostly benefit the wealthiest and most powerful people and special interests? What kind of citizens and people of faith permit this travesty?

If ever there was a time of irresponsible disregard for children and the poor and for justice for all, it is now. And if ever there was a clear case study for why our rich nation should not dilly dally another moment to adopt a coherent national health and mental health system for its people—beginning this year with children—it is Katrina's catastrophe, with children and survivors of all ages scattered across our land, facing 50 state bureaucracies without medical records. Some states—like Texas—actually have cut back child health coverage and benefits for hundreds of thousands of children. Others, like Mississippi, have callously made it harder rather than easier for children and families eligible for Medicaid and CHIP health benefits to get them by reimposing face to face eligibility requirements and shorter eligibility time periods. These costly and stressful bureaucratic obstacles will cause many poor people who lack transportation and awareness of changed policies and are already living on the edge in strange places to lose health and mental health care.

Current national political rhetoric and tax and budget choices tell us that the rich should be pampered and the poor plundered. The \$1.9 trillion in tax cuts, when fully in effect, will give the richest one percent of all taxpayers \$57 billion each year. This is enough to provide health coverage to all 9 million uninsured children or enough to end child poverty in America now. Current national rhetoric and priorities also tell us "our own might is our God."

Katrina's children are America's opportunity—once again—to hear and heed God's call to protect the poor, the orphan, the widow, and the vulnerable. Children are the transforming agents in our fractured nation and world. Dare we longer mistreat, neglect, abuse, kill, and deny health care to a single one of them? Dare we value one over another or hold babies and children responsible for unwise adult choices over which children had no control?

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

OUR VOICES

Celebrity is no free pass to suspected molester

I just wanted to thank you for writing a story about R. Kelly (April 6) and how he and other entertainers get a pass when it comes to child molestation/statutory rape.

There is NO difference between R. and the guy in Gastonia. I've been arguing with people for the past few years about R. Kelly not deserving a free pass. All anyone wants to talk about is "he's a musical genius." So what? Michael Jackson is/was too, but he's got problems. Will people ever stop putting celebrities on such a high pedestal and realize that they too put their pants on just like us: one leg at a time. Again thank you for not jumping on the bandwagon of "but he makes good music."

William Bout
Via e-mail

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