

# The Charlotte Post

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OPINION

## Honoring the teachers who share their gifts with students

November convention to honor Charlotte pioneer and train at-risk students to maximize potential

By Brent Adams Muntz  
SPECIAL TO THE POST

The landmark Brown vs. Board of Education decision was handed down in 1954, the same year that the National Association for Gifted Children was founded as a nonprofit dedicated to high potential learners.

Fifty-two years later, upwards of 3,000 researchers and practitioners in the specialized field of gifted children are headed to Charlotte for the 53rd annual convention of the NAGC November 1-5 with a very special new program in place.

Among these experts are the nation's leading advocates of under served gifted children who reside in poverty. These experts know that there are promising learners in every classroom. They also have thirty plus years of longitudinal data to support it. Their cause is to extend the legacy of the late Mary Frasier — a beloved past president who was a giant in this field. Through generous support of her colleagues and the Wachovia Foundation, the tools developed and inspired by Mary Frasier will be taught to local teachers from Title I schools.

No single person had more influence in the field of minority gifted children than the late Mary Frasier. Among her many accomplishments, Frasier changed the state's rule in Georgia to use multiple criteria rather than straight IQ scores — and thus tripled the number of African Americans in gifted/talented programs during the period 1996 to 2004. After her success in Georgia, Frasier worked with the U.S. Office of Civil Rights to increase minority student access to gifted programs nationwide.

Dr. Frasier consulted frequently in North Carolina and is as loved for her kindness and strength as she is for her research and results. Addressing the "opportunity gap" that exists in gifted and talented programs has been a clarion call of the NAGC for decades — especially so during her tenure as president from 1987-1989.

It is especially important that the launch of the program takes place here in Charlotte according to Dr. James Gallagher of the University of North Carolina, and a fellow past president of the NAGC. "There simply is no better extension of Mary's legacy than this training of teachers from Title I schools. Our community will be left so much better on November 5. I couldn't be more thrilled to welcome all of Mary's colleagues from around the country and together train our local teachers" said the renowned author, educator and contributing architect of Head Start under the Johnson Administration.

Through generous support from the Wachovia Foundation, NAGC will invest heavily in training local teachers to identify and serve students in Title I schools. The tools have been developed over the course of NAGC's 53-year history, but became especially prevalent in 1988 after the Jacob K. Javits Education Act was passed, funding specific research in this area. Dr. Frasier's tool — the Frasier Talent Assessment Profile will be provided as orientation to a rigorous 38-session program.

After three days of intense training, the NAGC has arranged for follow-up visits with experts at UNC Charlotte. Data will be collected on how the training manifests in the classroom. "The ultimate goal is to reach the kids. We can never take our eye off of that goal," said Nancy Green, Executive Director of the NAGC.

The coincidence of the Brown v. Board of Education decision and the founding of the National Association for Gifted Children is too stark not to notice. Thanks to the generosity of gifted experts and the Wachovia Foundation, these two separate but interrelated 1954 events come together beautifully 52 years later in Charlotte, N.C. to honor an incredible African American pioneer named Mary Frasier.

BRENT ADAMS MUNTZ is deputy executive director of National Association for Gifted Children in Washington, DC.

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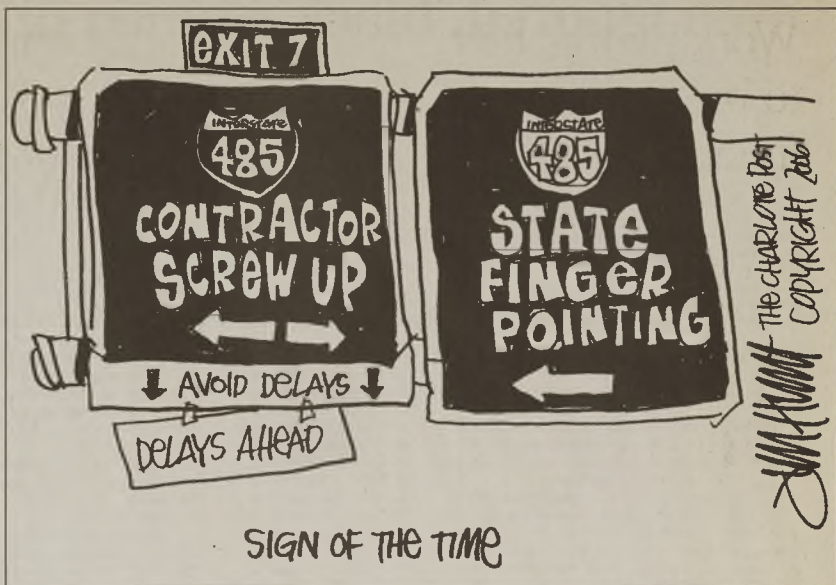
LETTERS

## Must voting rights have a statute of limitations?

I just read the article on President Bush signing the voting rights extension on the White House lawn (Aug. 8, "A toast to voting rights victory"). I say he should have vetoed it until it is rewritten without an expiration time.

In 25 years, the legislators will have to go through this ridiculous extension again. Who ever heard of giving civil rights that expire? Do the Bill of Rights and the Constitution expire?

Mary Cuthbertson  
Compton, California



SIGN OF THE TIME

## Eliminate daily obstacles in AIDS war

TORONTO — For the moment, set aside the talk about microbicides, pre-exposure prophylaxis, post-exposure prophylaxis, combination therapy and HAART — Highly Active Antiretroviral Treatment. Throw out all of the acronyms associated with the deadly alphabets of HIV and AIDS. Once one moves past all medical jargon, the realization sets in that regardless of the scientific



GEORGE E. CURRY

progress that has been made and is yet to be made, many of the obstacles associated with preventing HIV and halting the spread of AIDS are everyday issues that must be addressed as urgently as the scientific quest to develop an effective vaccine.

First, there is the simple issue of not having enough health care workers.

The World Health Organization, often referred to by the alphabets WHO, estimates that more than 4 million global health workers — including doctors, nurses and midwives — are needed to deal with public health threats. There is a chronic shortage in sub-Saharan Africa.

"With 11 percent of the world's population and 24 percent of the global burden of disease, the region has only 3% of the world's health workers commanding less

than 1% of world health expenditure," according to a recent WHO publication titled, "Taking Stock Health Worker Shortages and the Response to AIDS."

It continues, "By contrast, the WHO Region of the Americas, with 10% of the global burden of the disease, has 37% of the world's health workers and spends more than 50% of the world's health financing."

Health workers, particularly those working in Third World countries, also say that while HIV/AIDS is an important issue, it must be placed in a larger health care context.

"Unless we start looking at the factors, the root causes that drive health disparities — in other words, why some of us get sick and some of us don't — broadly within our communities, we will be always treating one illness, while the patient dies of another," Gregg Gonsalves, an AIDS activist from Cape Town, South Africa, told the delegates to this year's international convention here.

"It's no coincidence that these multiple epidemics exist among marginalized communities across the globe, among the poor, women, drug users, sex workers, gay men, prisoners, migrants — the social, economic and political policies that create this marginalization in the first place also push us into the path of oncoming epidemics," Gonsalves said. "Yet, we con-

tinued to place our hopes in prevention programs that narrowly construct risk around individual behavior or in some new technology that will save us."

The UN General Assembly's Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS declared there is a direct link between AIDS and agriculture and nutrition. He called for "sufficient, safe and nutritious food" as part of an overall HIV/AIDS strategy.

In many impoverished counties, the cost of life-saving drugs is prohibitive. Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.) has introduced a bill that would allow U.S. generic drug firms to manufacture low-cost generic versions of patented medicines for export to needy nations if a voluntary agreement cannot be reached between the patent-owning and the generic manufacturer.

Pharmaceutical companies are not the only culprits. In many countries, the government is responsible for thousands of deaths. Human Rights Watch, for example, noted that in Zimbabwe, "Three thousand people die each week due to governmental policies that create formidable obstacles to accessing life-saving treatment."

It's also tough, if not impossible, to get around many of the customs in male-oriented societies.

President Bush has insisted that at least one-third of U.S. funds to fight AIDS must go to the ABC program

"Abstain, Be faithful, use Condoms."

In a speech to the convention, Bill Gates noted, "Abstinence is often not an option for poor women and girls who have no choice but to marry at an early age. Being faithful will not protect a woman whose partner is not faithful. And using condoms is not a decision that a woman can make by herself; it depends on a man."

There are also the issues of stigma and discrimination. And the church, as the foremost defender of moral and social norms, has been complicit in condemning those afflicted with AIDS.

"We raise our voices to call for an end to silence about this disease — the silence of stigma, the silence of denial, the silence of fear," declares a 2002 statement from Anglican Primates on AIDS. "We confess that the Church herself has been complicit in this silence. When we have raised our voices in the past, it has been too often a voice of condemnation. We now wish to make it clear that HIV/AIDS is not a punishment from God. Our Christian faith compels us to accept that all persons, including those who are living with HIV/AIDS, are made in the image of God and are children of God."

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## 'Unimaginable loss of life' is relative

As the actual events and details surrounding the alleged terrorist plot to blow up commercial airliners unfold, the fear and foreboding that has lived within many of us since 9/11 resur-



BILL FLETCHER

facied. Yet, in the initial announcement of the alleged plot, there was a reference by a British official that caught my attention.

Describing the alleged plot, this official went on to say that the outcome of such bombings would be an unimaginable loss of life.

Before going any further, let me be clear that as far as I am concerned, any attack on non-combatants is criminal and should be condemned. Yet, in thinking about the comment by the British official, my first and continuing response was Unimaginable to whom?

The probable numbers of people who would have been killed might have gone as high as 15,000 (a very rough guess). As someone who just flew back from the West

Coast, I would not look forward to flying on a plane that was the target of a terrorist attack. Nevertheless, in today's world, 15,000 dead civilians is not an unimaginable figure, unless, of course, one means 15,000 dead civilians from Western Europe, the United States or Canada.

I do not wish to be harsh or unsympathetic, but let's count a few numbers and you tell me what conclusions you come to. Since 1997, approximately 4 million people have been killed as a result of the civil war (and foreign interventions) in the Congo. That comes down to approximately 444,000 per year or 37,000 per month or about 1,200 per day.

I would call that figure unimaginable (even though it happened), or perhaps inconceivable in the sense that this planet has permitted 4 million people to die with very little international attention.

Or, a few miles to the north, in the Sudan, over 20 years, more than 2 million people were killed in the north/south civil war that recently ended. In the Darfur region of the Sudan, more than 400,000 people (not part of the 2 million) had died as a result of

the government-backed genocide, and this number starts around 2003. Or, if we wish to be more modest, we can see the more than 1,000 Lebanese civilians killed as a result of Israel's collective punishment of that country, a collective punishment that has specifically targeted civilians and civilian targets, this from an allegedly civilized nation.

Should I mention Iraq? More than 2,600 U.S. personnel dead and by most reports more than 100,000 Iraqis dead as a result of an illegal war (by the way, that is more than 30,000 dead per year or about 80 dead per day). This does not count the hundreds of thousands of Iraqis who died as a result of the US/British sanctions against pre-war Iraq.

So, I found myself wondering about this term "unimaginable loss of life." The potential tragedy of a terrorist attack on civilian aircraft would deserve condemnation should even one person die as a result. But telling us about an unimaginable loss of life when the government of Britain, let alone the United States, has been prepared to sit back and watch or partici-

pate in the massive loss of life in countries of the global South is nothing short of disingenuous.

This returns us to an issue that I have raised in previous columns, i.e., the relative importance or unimportance of the lives of different peoples. Four million dead in the Congo is absolutely unimaginable. It is difficult to even count to 4 million sitting in the same place. It is unimaginable that so many people could lose their lives and yet the Congo has to fight to get the attention of major news media in Western Europe, the United States and Canada.

Short of a titillating incident or an obvious and gross atrocity, the loss of 1200 people per day does not seem to merit our consideration.

Perhaps I have a different imagination?

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