

FORUM

Clara Lucille Berry Gaines: The Virtuous Woman

Alex Haley, after listening to the decorous accolades used to introduce him, would always say, "...when you see a little frog up on a pedestal, somebody picked it up and put it there."

Kudos to Wake Forest University for the laurels and distinction it accorded Clarence E. "Bighouse" Gaines — and the institution itself —



LIFT EVERY VOICE

By WILLIAM H. TURNER

with the first honorary doctorate degree bestowed upon him. It is rare to be honored in one's own backyard. This quasi-sacred parchment will compete for wall space with the mass and throng of awards in the Bighouse Home, where a virtuous woman has held sway for 44 years.

Thus, at the risk of violating the dictums of political correctness, I shall go on record/proclaiming that Clara Berry Gaines is chiefly responsible for making "Bighouse" what he is today.

This brazen declaration is in keeping with the proverbial statements about the daily aspects of Clara Gaines' relationships with God, with herself, her family and her fellow human beings.

King Solomon must have had Clara Berry Gaines in mind when he asked, "Who can find a virtuous woman?" Clara's best friend, Virginia

Wiseman, commented without delay that Clara — a minister's daughter — is "a very religious woman!"

The Original African Heritage Study Bible speaks of the relationship between Clara and Clarence when it notes that "the first accomplishment of the virtuous woman, in partnership with her husband, was the creation of a functioning family."

First, according to "Bighouse", "Clara laid the foundation for the organization of our lives together." (Her husband...praiseth her.) Can one imagine what ungodly hours she had to rise to "giveth meat to her household." This just to feed you-know-who, not to mention the hordes of students he brought to the table from WSSU?

Only God knows the myriad of things she did to garner wool and flax...working willingly with her hands" for their children, Clarence Jr. and Lisa, who "riseth up...and call her blessed." "Mom awakened us banging out the Songs of Zion on the piano." ("The virtuous woman riseth also while it is yet night"). Clara still plays a mean hand in the Saint Paul UMC Hand Bell Choir. "It was Mother who really pushed us," says Lisa. "She was the disciplinarian." Clarence Jr., like Lisa, holds an MBA from UNC. The "Chip off the Big Block," a Morehead scholar, also studied at William & Mary before arriving in the front office of the Chicago Bulls. "She looketh well to the ways of her household and eateth not the bread of idleness."

Clara and her sister, Lennie Berry Williams, have taken turns caring for 95-year-old Mother Lucille Berry for most of the past two decades. "Many daughters have done virtuously..."

Neither did a mild apoplexy a few years back stop this praise-worthy three-time grandmother, who had already "girdeth her loins with strength and strengthened her arms" through her practiced study of yoga and tran-

scendental meditation.

Clara Berry Gaines, with degrees from Pitt and Columbia, "openeth her mouth with wisdom" for 26 years as the Latin and English literature teacher at Atkins High School. Make that virtuous and classical!

Yes, Clarence E. "Bighouse" Gaines, "is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land," but, make no mistake about it, Clara Berry Gaines did "him good and not evil all the days of her life."

God bless you richly. (Clara Berry Gaines, archetype of King Solomon's Virtuous Woman, one steeped in high honor: intellectual, spiritual, and domestic. We proudly acknowledge "the fruit of your hands; and let your works praise you in the gates.")

Virtuous and Classical and Honorable.

Enjoy the pedestal with Bighouse. God picked up both of you and put you there. Make that Dr. Clara Berry Gaines! Amen!

(William Turner is a regular freelance columnist for the Chronicle.)



Clara Berry Gaines

'We Rob Working-Poor Peter to Pay Welfare-Reform Paul'

In earlier articles, I stated that our national and state welfare-reform efforts should reflect our basic values and protect vulnerable children and families. Our welfare policies should attack poverty, not those who are trapped in poverty. Genuine welfare reform will cost money. But the long-term pay offs of preventive investments in areas such as educational training, job creation and high-quality child care make it worth the effort.

Where will we find this money? There's no easy answer at a time when federal budgets are tight and public sentiment against tax increase runs high. Current budget rules require the Congress to "pay for" new welfare-reform investments either by raising tax revenues or by cutting spending in other areas. The question now is whether welfare reform will be financed in an equitable manner, with the greatest share of budget cuts or tax hikes borne by those individuals and groups who can most afford to pay, or whether the money will come from cuts in programs that help poor families and provide for children's most basic needs?

As the welfare reform debate heats up, I fear that poor children and families are becoming increasingly frequent targets of budget-cut proposals. One flawed plan proposes to pay for welfare reforms by denying welfare benefits to poor children in instances where they have been taken in by grandparents or other relatives. Other misguided proposals suggest eliminating virtually all forms of aid to legal immigrants who have not yet become citizens (even though many have lived in the U.S. and paid taxes for years) and restricting emergency assistance to families who are about to become

homeless or lose their children to foster care.

The pattern of taking aid away from one needy family to help another already is visible in state child-care programs. The demand for child care among families receiving welfare has increased dramatically in response to education, training and other work-related requirements contained in the Family Support Act of 1988. In an effort to meet this demand, many states have reduced child-care assistance to working poor families struggling to

systems.

We must be honest with ourselves and the American people about what we can afford. Welfare reform cannot succeed if it asks struggling parents to choose between housing assistance food stamps and child care. We will accomplish nothing if we move some families off welfare while at the same time generating more poverty, neglect, homelessness and hopelessness for others.

I hope we will never forget that two-thirds of welfare recipients are children. Protecting their health and safety is a critical step if we seek to get parents working and keeping them on the job. It must be a key goal when parents, for whatever reason, are unable to work. Welfare provides an essential safety net for families in crisis and times of need, one that we cannot afford to lose.

Welfare-reform efforts can bring us closer to ending poverty in America. To realize this potential, however, we must begin to tackle the root causes of child and family poverty. As our economy changes, and particularly as the earnings of young parents plummet, it may become harder and harder for the next generation to escape poverty and support their children through work. That's a problem that certainly won't be solved if we rob working-poor Peter to fund welfare-reform Paul.

(Marian Wright Edelman is president of the Children's Defense Fund, a national voice of children, and a leader of the Black Community Crusade for Children.)



CHILD WATCH

By MARIAN WRIGHT EDELMAN

remain off the welfare rolls. A recent CDF study documented that low-income working families face long waiting lists for child-care help in many states and that states now tend to rely on low-cost child-care options that are often of poorer quality. Few efforts to more parents off welfare and into the work force no doubt will place added strains on overburdened child care

'Getting a Job only Makes Us Dependent on Whomever Gives us the Job'

"Get a job!" is a song that a long-forgotten black singing group of the sixties used to sing, as well as the song that almost every black father and mother demand that we be treated as equals in American's capitalistic society, we also continue to illustrate that we do not equally understand the nature of economic production in this country.

Although we are surrounded by the wealth of the world's richest country, we only understand one part of the economic equation that made the U.S. and its free-market system so great.

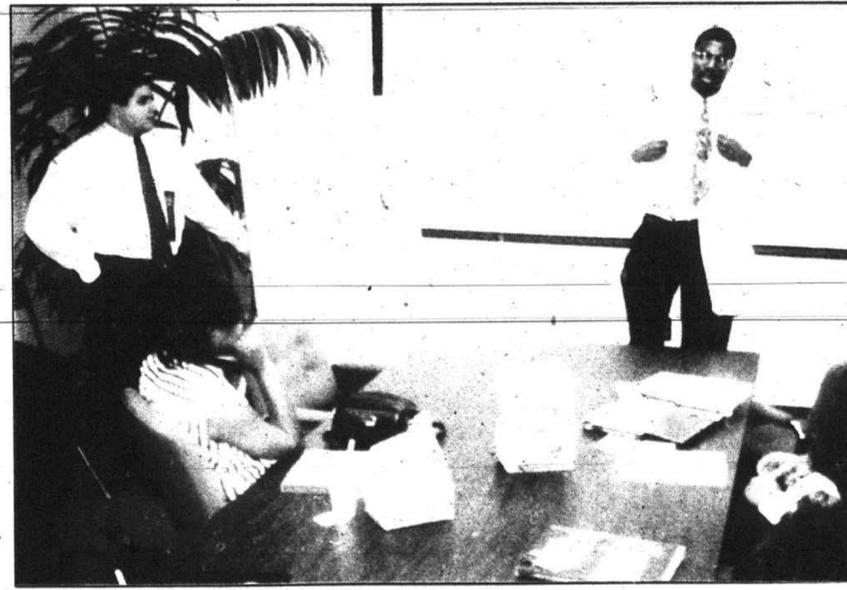


BUSINESS EXCHANGE

By WILLIAM REED

"Capitalism 101" tells us that "land, labor, capital and entrepreneurship" make up the four parts of the economic equation. But, starting with slavery, the bulk of blacks have only participated in the American businesses, business opportunities and how to "get ahead" around their dinner tables, black moms and pops talk about "getting a job" to their kids. It is no secret that if African Americans want equality in America we will have to "hand out" our monetary needs to us. Getting a job only makes us dependent on whomever gives us the job, but starting businesses is down-right American and offers grand opportunity for the best kind of equality.

Investing in a business is risky, but it offers a lucrative reward. When you are involved in a business, you benefit directly. Business ownership is the ultimate income producer. Blacks who live in urban areas should look at



Area students attend workshop on how to become owners of their own business.

dreds of thousands of us can gain wealth by supplying these daily needs of our people. Supermarkets for groceries; mini-markets for limited food stuffs needs; retail stores for clothes, shoes and cars; dry-cleaning establishments for clothes; gas stations; auto repair and body shops; and a host of other "needed" things represent opportunities for blacks to sell to and service other blacks for profits.

The last time that blacks had no trouble "getting a job" was before the Emancipation Proclamation. But the great Emancipation Proclamation of 1864 did not emancipate the minds of former slaves and their offsprings. In today's environment, we need to note that we are the only persons who can demand and make our own economic freedom happen. We are the only ones who can emancipate our own minds. We are the only ones who can divest ourselves of the notion that the only thing we can do in life is "get a job." We are the only ones to assure that we take our rightful place in American marketplace.

For a listing of 25 franchise opportunities, companies seeking minorities for dealership and business opportunities and inner-city investment possibilities, send \$2.50 to the International Exchange Network, 2054 National Press Building, Washington, D.C., 20045. Or call (202) 547-4125.

(William Reed is a national syndicated columnist.)

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