

FORUM

The Village, the Children & The School Bond Referendum

"It takes an entire village to raise a child."

This is the *en vogue* postulate and popular proverb mouthed most frequently by those who discharge the work that keeps all children on the minds of all adults. This expression of collective responsibility is heard most often when we are asked to dig deeper into our pockets and hearts to make up for all kinds of social shortages, especially when we try to shore up families who lack the means to support their faultless children.

As election day looms large, there has been a *switch* in the persons in our village using this idiom. Dr. Don Martin has been spending a lot of time among the townspeople in the African American zone (East Winston) talking about the village, the children and the schools. Clearly, Dr. Martin knows that when our children emerge from Forsyth County schools and go to compete in the global village, their margin of competitive excellence or mediocrity will be determined by what resources we have made available to them. Fact of the matter is, he is not talking about *superior* facilities and resources for our offspring, Martin is arguing for their need and right to have those *at least* effects.

Superintendent Martin would probably like for us to support what it takes to get our progeny on-line to cyberspace, but, the pathetic fact is that he is chanting about having *adequate space* for learning. Not insignificant is the difficulty he has in trying to attract quality people to teach in the schools in our village, when recruits are taken on tours through wheeled classrooms with aluminum siding.



Walter Marshall



Donald Martin

Martin became the offending partner, he has been most encouraging. He has put himself on the firing line, leading us in investments in the future and moving beyond idle bickering and political posturing. And, to make a point of dissent based on how much of the bond monies will be used in *our part of the village* is to miss the fact that our children attend schools all over the village. A rising tide elevates all boats, doesn't it. It benefits the whole village, remember!

Mr. Walter Marshall, school board warhorse, and ever-watchful keeper of the dream, supports the bond referendum; and if Walt ain't mad, nobody should be mad!

Taxpayers should ask themselves: Is this the only way? Is there no better way? After all, where is the synergy? Isn't it a strange paradox here in the village that those who claim to care more and know best about those one in three young black males who are in prison, on parole or on probation, are the very ones *not* supporting the school bond referendum?

If we choose *now* not to share in the responsibility for quality education, we will *later* have the choice to care for and watch for our youthful villagers who grow up without the appropriate skills to be productive citizens and taxpayers. If we don't do it now, later we will find ourselves supporting bonds for a broadened social welfare net, not the least of which will be to support what has become one of the nation's fastest growing industries: prisons. And it will come to pass that in this village that those not supporting better schools for progeny will be heard to say, in the words of a popular African American proverb: *"There are more blacks in American prisons than there are people in some African countries."*

Even the village idiot, yours truly, would not make this mistake!
(Dr. William H. Turner is a regular freelance columnist for the Chronicle.)

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LIFT EVERY VOICE

By Dr. WILLIAM H. TURNER

Not to support the referendum to build new schools, repair old ones and provide the new modes of learning that are available — only through computerized technology — is tantamount to consigning our children to a funeral of future failure.

Superintendent Martin's message is hard to dispute by those who are backing away from their own belief in the Ashante proverb about what it takes to raise our children. And, ducking behind the dead wood of what happened "last time," at Atkins Middle School or whatever, reminds us that two wrongs do not make a right. Such brother's keepers should be the first to know that the wisest elders, those who really care about the young, are predisposed to forgive past offenses, no matter how agonizing, when it comes to the welfare of the children. If, by default of taking the job Dr.

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Simpson Trial Benchmark for Race Relations

Maybe you won't believe this: I failed to catch the live broadcast of the verdict. Yes, I knew it was coming on, but I just lost track of time. I was absorbed in one of the seems like, but really isn't, a stack of books as tall as I am so the ringing phone returned me to the world I wasn't in. "The verdict is in... not guilty... are you going to write about it?" Sue's voice abruptly jarred me into the here and now.

"No, I'm not!" I said confidently. Famous last words! It was a given: Every columnist in America was tempted. Most would yield. I would resist and avoid unnecessary competition. Yet I try to write when my heart is full — when I cannot repress its overflow. I have more to say then, and I am more honest in what I do say as the contents of my soul and spirit come forth as a result of an attitude I wish to ever possess.

I'm glad the jury found O.J. not guilty. Head and heart agree. The evidence presented seemed so tainted by confusion and irresponsibility that I find it hard to believe that any intelligent juror would have found it otherwise. Yet the prosecutions charge of emotionalism was predictable. (In a way, he was only doing what was expected of him.) White America is so infiltrated with dualistic thought — and yes, Western thought patterns influence Black people's thinking, too — that we often fail to note that it is quite possible to feel deeply about a situation and to think clearly about it simultaneously. We do not have to be forever at war within ourselves.

Then again, maybe we do. It was impossible to escape the charge of racism that black people held ever before us in this case (as they have done repeatedly in other situations throughout the years). To this charge white Americans are numb.

There were issues other than race involved. Domestic violence was showcased to say nothing of murder itself. Someone killed two people. They are dead. Dead is dead, with no regard for who is and who isn't racist. Racism does not nullify murder. So, of course, White people will insist that murder was what this case was all about. We must put racism behind us (read: ignore race).

Wrong! Murder is what this case should have been about! The O.J. Simpson trial should have been about murder alone, but it could not be because white Americans repeatedly deny that race continues to be a systemic problem of colossal magnitude. Even those of us who see race as an issue often do not see it for what it is: a life-defining and activity-limiting reality that black Americans can seldom escape.

No wonder African Americans see this trial as a benchmark for

race relations in our nation; it is. This case crystallizes for us just how far we have not come.

This realization saddens me and, at least temporarily, it immobilized me — so much so that I chose not to write about it. But this trial, like any other historical event, can become the catalyst for change in the current racial climate if only enough people determine to make it so.

We are not beyond hope. Unfortunately too few people will admit that this hope is spiritual in nature. Its implementation requires that white Americans not only admit that we have been wrong, or that we still are wrong, but that we also begin to comprehend that repentance means turning from our current thoughts and actions and embracing a



GUEST COLUMNIST

By HELEN LOSSE

lifestyle that affords equality for everyone. Nothing less will allow us to envision race as it should be seen — as a culturally enriching heritage, not as an opportunity-limiting deterrent.

Yet all too often I hear that the spiritual exceeds the physical — dualism at its finest. Shouldn't the physical embody the spiritual: Our actions punctuate our attitudes? Unfortunately, what we really mean is that we will do nothing different. So we do nothing, and nothing changes.

But I had to change my mind. I must not allow the disappointment of the moment to deter me from speaking that which I know is right. I dare not shy away from O.J. because the competition is too tough — because someone just might, and probably will, submit a column that is better written than mine.

Life is not about competition. I must stand up and be found among those who envision racial strife as a battle that can be won. And I will speak until I see racial equality in our nation. Only then will my heart's longing be satiated.

(Helen Loose is a student at Wake Forest University)

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