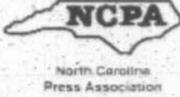


OPINION/ FORUM

THE CHRONICLE

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The Lash Tournament has become a venue for rising young players from area high schools.

It's About the Kids

Despite a tough economic environment and many financial setbacks, The Chronicle / Lash Junior Varsity Holiday Tournament was another great success. We had record crowds in attendance at each of the three-day event's games. The excitement level was high as was the caliber of play from each of our young, growing athletes.

Therein lies the real reason we have put this tournament on for the last 15 years or so. It's about the kids.

The tournament's name stems from the legacy of Coach David Lash, a tremendous leader and encourager of young athletes who passed away several years ago. It has been the beginning for many ninth- and tenth graders, giving them an opportunity to feel what it's like to compete in tournament play. They get to experience the thrill of playing before a large crowd, the drama of an important game, the important free throws and the last minute scrambles to either catch up or maintain one's lead.

The fervor of the tournament would rival that of a UNC Chapel Hill championship game. One attendee said that his son, who plays for RJ Reynolds High School, had been talking about the tournament ever since he made the team.

Another remarked, "This is as close as you can get to the true spirit of athletics."

In describing how great a venue the tourney is for kids, one family commented, "There is nothing else like this anywhere for our kids. I watched all the games and enjoyed every one of them."

People from all parts of our community attended, and that's what it's all about: bringing people of diverse backgrounds and cultures together to enjoy what we have in common rather than allowing ourselves to be separated by our differences.

Perhaps the most telling evidence of the positive impact of this tournament is the way that one Mt. Tabor player described it, crying, "We really wanted to win this tournament."

Why? he was asked. "Because it is The Chronicle tournament," he said.

Another member of the team said, "You just don't know what it means to win The Chronicle tournament."

We do now. It's about the kids.

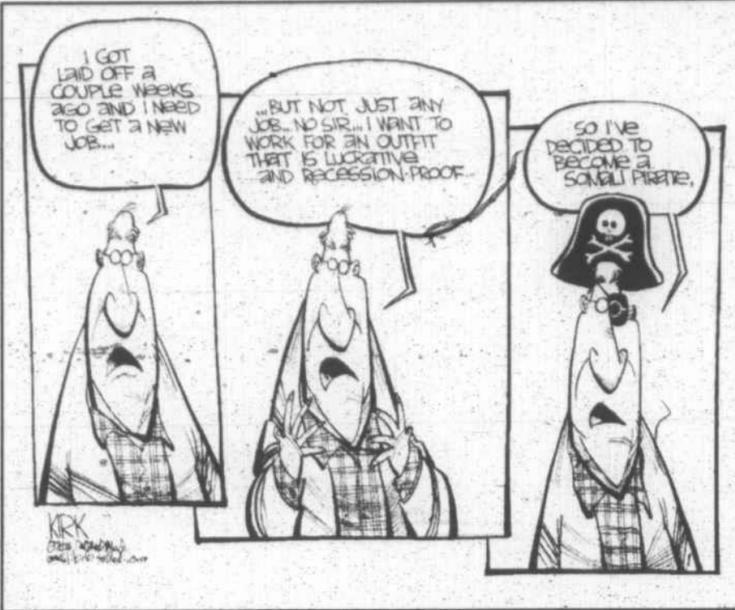
We would like to thank all the sponsors, schools, players, coaches and parents for making this year's event one to remember.

Submit letters and columns to:

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Obama, Justice Thomas and Lil Wayne

Rev. Barbara Reynolds
 Guest Columnist

The greatest gift of all this Christmas was the emancipation of the human spirit, a present everyone can receive, but virtually no one can buy.

With plant closings, homeowner evictions and unemployment on a frightening rise, this Christmas was not just another celebration of the acquisition of more stuff. As we lost stuff—wages, stocks, houses—we were forced to see what else there is about ourselves that gives us meaning and purpose.

And when the euphoria fades from the election of our first Black President Barack Obama, we must still face those issues of self-hate and cultural rot that no one person in the White House can fix.

But for now at the highest level, virtue is making a comeback. For eight long years under George Bush, we have seen how mega-lies, cronyism, unbridled greed and corruption have destroyed our economy, tarnished our image around the world and at the very worst cost the lives of thousands of our own soldiers and Iraqi civilians needlessly.

Today, with the election of President Obama we see the re-birth in the American character of the blessings of hard work, integrity and the pursuit of excellence as realities rather than storybook fantasies.

I see the torch passing, not just from Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. to Barack Obama, but from our African slave ancestors to every living soul with a vision, a dream, a legacy to be built and to pass on.

I first noticed that foreigners were looking at African-Americans differently, perhaps as an extension or a reflection of a rejuvenated spirit, when I was touring Egypt this summer along with a group from the Howard University School of Divinity. Other tourists, not only from Africa, but European countries were smiling and waving at us calling us "Obamas," which, based on past experiences abroad, I found surprising.

Now as the entire world looks at African-Americans differently because not only is one of our own the leader of the most powerful government on Earth, but he's also the new face or symbol of professional excellence and morality.

Nevertheless there is still a demand for a change in our culture to embrace this new global reality. The greatest gift we can give to our first Black President is to put forth our best efforts on all fronts: the best parents, the best students, the best politicians, and the best caretakers of our senior citizens.

For those who believe in miracles, there are a few more we need: Barack cannot fix all our problems; some solutions must come from above.

For example, my Christmas wish is that a lightning bolt hits the Supreme Court building and knocks Justice Clarence Thomas to the floor, and miraculously revives him as a principled Black man. He continues to be an embarrassment.

The latest scandal is how Uncle Thomas took up the cause to deny Barack Obama his history-making presidency based on the stupid challenge that he was not a "natural born" American, which would forbid him from becoming president under the Constitution.

None other than Republican Alan Keyes, who had parachuted into Illinois to run against Obama for president, teamed up with Thomas to press the case even after other Justices ignored it. The argument was that since Obama was born in Hawaii and his father was a Kenyan national, Obama had dual citizenship at birth, which disqualified him from the presidency. Happily on December 8, the Court rejected the case. Only a lightning bolt from heaven could release Thomas of his inbred self-hatred, which he bitterly projects on other Blacks.

Second on my wish list that we can't expect President Obama to fix is the obsession with thug culture. The spectacle of so many "credible" adults standing and applauding Lil Wayne at a recent BET event was typical of why so many of our young people are drugging, gang-banging and busting through the charts with HIV/AIDS.

Dwayne Michael Carter, Jr. (Lil Wayne) has a CD on the charts called, "The Lollipop." While the lewd lyrics are too pornographic to be quoted here, I assure you the lollipop Little Wayne is encouraging our boys and girls to lick is not candy. Yet, respectable adults who appear to be in their right minds stand and cheer this pornographic rapper with his pants down showing his underwear.

Lil Wayne, who is up for several Grammy awards, is a hero to many young people partly because of his thug credentials, which includes several arrests for possession of drugs and guns.

The rappers and the thug culture are creating a homicidal environment for our young people as more Blacks die in Black-on-Black violence than soldiers killed in a declared war in Iraq. Again, as HIV is pandemic in our community, those who sing about rampant sex are cheered instead of denounced.

If we can elect a Black president surely we can achieve the next miracle of creating a culture where a Supreme Court Justice and a pornographic rapper can stop projecting values that kill and destroy.

The Rev. Barbara Reynolds is an adjunct professor at the Howard University School of Divinity and the author of several books, including "Out of Hell & Living Well: Healing From the Inside Out."

Now a Digital TV Divide?

When most television broadcasts in the US go all-digital in February, it will mark a new triumph for communications technology. Across the country, the conversion from an older method of transmitting TV signals, known as analog, will give way to digital technology.

The transition to digital TV, which is taking place around the world, will bring vast improvements in both picture (high definition) and sound quality, and the ability of broadcasters to multicast—sending multiple signals over the same airwaves used for one analog signal. There are other benefits as well. There will be more space on the airwaves for public safety communications, allowing police, fire and rescue squads to keep us safer. In addition, it will make a new generation of wireless technologies available.

Multicasting may allow more free ethnic media broadcasts. Yet, there may also be a serious downside: We may be creating a new digital divide. While many Americans take their cable and satellite TV services for granted, millions of families still rely on rooftop antennas and rabbit ears to receive their television stations. On February 17th, when most television stations must broadcast digitally, those old over the air television sets will not pick up the stations many Americans rely on.

Not surprising, low income families and communities of color will be impacted the most. The Nielson Company, leaders in television viewer research, has completed a study with stunning results. Their report shows that 12.5 percent of African American households and 13 percent of Hispanic households are using analog televisions and are not ready for the digital transition. Moreover, households with annual incomes of less than \$25,000 are five times more likely to be unprepared for the digital conversion than households earning over \$75,000.

The impact on communities of color is underscored by Nielson's listing of locations with the highest percentage of households with analog televisions; most have large minority populations. For instance, 15.8 percent of Houston households aren't ready for the conversion; 14.3 percent in Dallas-Ft. Worth, 14.1 percent in Tulsa, 13.4 percent in Salt Lake City, 13.3 in Milwaukee, 12.7 percent in Albuquerque-Santa Fe, 12.0 percent in Minneapolis-St. Paul, 11.6 percent in Austin, 11.6 percent in Los Angeles and 11.6 percent in Memphis.

The data paints a disturbing picture. Many low-income and people of color who were part of the broad coalition that lifted Illinois Sen. Barack Obama to the presidency face the real possibility of not being able to follow his progress once he takes office. Moreover, as the nation confronts one of its most challenging economic crises ever, millions of people won't be getting the latest news and information about public policy changes from their television sets.

It's crucial that public officials, as well as corporate, community and civic leaders join in the effort to inform those with analog televisions how they can obtain converter boxes that will allow their televisions to continue receiving stations after the conversion. The government is sponsoring a conversion assistance program. A Digital-to-Analog Converter Box Coupon is available; households can receive two \$40 coupons for the purchase of converter boxes. Depending on the television, converter boxes cost between \$40 and \$70. For more information, visit www.dtv2009.gov, or call 1-888-388-2009 (voice). The process can take up to six weeks, so people must order their coupons now.

The Leadership Conference on Civil Rights is urging civic, community and political leaders to help their constituents keep their televisions on. Here are ways to assist those who need our help: Post flyers to community and office bulletin boards; Place announcements in newsletters, bulletins, and newspapers; Send postcards or emails to everyone in your address book; Give bookmarks out at your neighborhood school; Attend conversion education events in your community.

There are 21 million households currently relying on analog television. As our nation breaks many barriers, including the election of its first African American president, we can't allow millions of people to lose their source of news and information. That would be taking a giant step backwards.

Let's help those who can't afford new televisions keep their access to the airwaves. Wade Henderson is the president and CEO of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, which is the nation's premier civil and human rights coalition. Information regarding the digital conversion can be found on their website at www.civilrights.org/dtv/.



Wade Henderson
 Guest Columnist



Chart-topper Lil Wayne