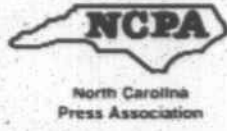


# OPINION/ FORUM

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## THE POWER OF YOU

When it comes to evoking change in our community and our worlds, one truly is the magic number.

While large consortiums of people can definitely yield a great deal of power and weight in both national and local debates, there is something to be said for he who has the courage to step out on his own. One man, woman or child can absolutely make a difference in this world, as some of those featured in this week's edition plainly illustrate.

David Lane is a perfect example. Lane, a longtime volunteer and retiree, has almost single-handedly fed countless hungry mouths through his dedication and commitment. Lane, who started his own non-perishable food collection program about two years ago, has garnered an impressive amount of donations that might otherwise never have been given.

Granted, Lane couldn't have had the impact he has had without the help and support of the local residents who graciously give to his campaign again and again. Yet, we would be willing to bet that some, perhaps many, of those who gave to his campaign did so simply because Lane made donating easy and accessible to them. Had there not been 100-plus boxes placed in businesses throughout the county, some of that food would have remained on the shelves of grocery stores, instead of going to those folks in the community who are hungry and in need of a little help and support.

Volunteers like Lane help to grease the wheels of organizations such as Crisis Control Ministry, allowing the agencies to broaden their reach. Because of this fact, Lane has been able to make a difference in the lives of many area residents, just based on his own fruition. We think that's pretty great.

Kweku Atta is another textbook case of what can happen when a person sets his or her mind to reaching out. Atta is far from rich, yet he sacrifices his own luxuries for the sake of others. Atta could have left Ghana behind. He could have gone on with his life in America and never looked back. After all, he had no obligation to uphold the people of a township he no longer lived in, and certainly, he had already done more for the folks in Tema than most. But Atta doesn't think like that. He is willing, joyful even, in giving of what little he has.

The amount of money Atta has spent on sending the clothes alone would put many of our annual, and perhaps lifetime, donations to shame, and he does so quietly, without seeking praise or recognition for his tireless work. What a joy it must be for the children of Tema to know that they are so loved by a man whom many of them have never met!

If we can take anything away from the stories of Lane, Atta and the countless others who work so hard to make our community and world the best they can be, it would have to be the fact that big change sometimes comes in small packages.

Imagine if we each chose just one cause to put our time, money and effort into. What would our world look like? How would our lives and the lives of those around us be enhanced? We think the results would be staggering.



## Why You Should Attend Atkins Meetings



**Virginia Newell**  
 Guest Columnist



**To parents of children in Title I schools:**

A lot of extra money is being spent on children in Title I schools, but money alone will not educate children. It takes outstanding, knowledgeable teachers who care and can discipline children. It takes an outstanding principal who is knowledgeable about children learning and knowledgeable about the subject matter students are learning in his or her school. Then it takes a parent

or guardian, grandmother or aunt, somebody who cares and will motivate the child to learn -- to read, write, think, analyze and solve problems. In other words, someone who will help the child to finish school because academics will undergird a person and stay there. My mother had a way of

saying it. She said "learn it, put in your head and no one can take it out." Now it's OK to learn sports and attend the games but please, please go the PTA meetings. That's what education is about. Know what your child is learning. Sports will come and go, but education is needed in whatever you

do daily. Our children are failing; read the news. The children will talk to parents from Atkins High School on this evening (Dec. 10) at 6:30 p.m. at Phillips Chapel Church and on Monday, Dec. 14 at 6:30 p.m. at Greater Cleveland Avenue Christian Church.

Pastors will be there, along with teachers and principals. We are especially asking the parents of children who attend Atkins to attend. There will be incentives for first 30 parents at each church. Refreshments will be served. Bring the children.

*Dr. Virginia Newell, a retired educator, is a former City Council Member and longtime community advocate.*



President Obama returns to Andrews Air Force Base after delivering a speech on Afghanistan at West Point on Dec. 1.

## What's Changed in a Year?



**Al Sharpton**  
 Guest Columnist

(NNPA) - It was regarded as one of the most historic days in our nation's history. Unprecedented numbers of young people and minorities hit polling stations and cast their ballots in a national election. After an intense, seemingly endless campaign cycle, the populous was engaged and actively participated in our political process in ways previously unheard of. And for the first time a majority - Whites included - attempted to rectify our tumultuous and troubling past by electing the first African-American President of the United States. A little over a year later however, I ask, have things on the ground really changed all that much?

The Labor Department recently reported a loss of

some 11,000 jobs in November, and rejoiced that the unemployment rate fell to 10 percent - down from 10.2 percent in October. President Obama himself just completed a half-day brainstorming session with more than 100 CEOs, business and union leaders, academics and more as he laid out plans for increased energy efficiency that would in turn spur more job creation. During this summit, the President highlighted possible new tax incentives and other mechanisms that could further slow down record high unemployment rates. But what gets lost sometimes in all the summits, discussions and stats on our dwindling labor situation is the continued dilemma of racial inequality.

Several days ago, the NY Times published an in-depth article on the continued difficulties among Blacks to gain employment - despite having equal education and experience to their White counterparts. In addition to highlighting methods some qualified Black job seekers have implemented to 'mask' their

ethnicity, this piece discussed the stark disparity in the job market. According to the NY Times' article, the unemployment rate for Black male college graduates 25 and older this year has been twice that of White male college graduates (8.4 percent to 4.4 percent). The piece further emphasized studies that indicated applicants with Black-sounding names received 50 percent fewer callbacks, and that White males received substantially more job leads for high-level supervisory positions than women and people of color.

We live in a unique and perplexing time in history. As the nation works to rectify its many wrongs against the disenfranchised, minorities continue to suffer discrimination in the most basic sectors of society. You would think that when we have reached such heights as the highest office in the land, that equality would permeate throughout housing, employment and the financial realms of our lives. Instead of a 'post-racial' environment however, race is just as dan-

gerously utilized to promote inequality and the status quo as it has ever been used before.

There are those who have argued through the years to eliminate affirmative action and in effect rid any semblance of opportunity to rectify acts of institutional racism. Their insistence on ending these vital programs that help to level the playing field for people of color gained renewed strength following the 2008 Presidential Election. But, as the NY Times article so aptly portrayed, injustice in the workforce during such a dire economic time is astonishingly high and we cannot continue to shut our eyes toward reality. Affirmative action is a must. Though we may not blatantly be called the 'N word' to our faces in a job interview, the subliminal acts of discrimination have just as detrimental results as if we were. The facts just don't lie.

*The Rev. Al Sharpton, a noted social activist, is head of the National Action Network.*

Submit letters and columns to:

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