

OPINION

THE CHRONICLE

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Our Mission

The Chronicle is dedicated to serving the residents of Winston-Salem and Forsyth County by giving voice to the voiceless, speaking truth to power, standing for integrity and encouraging open communication and lively debate throughout the community.

GUEST EDITORIAL

Gov. Cooper should pursue gun control

A half dozen years ago – although it seems like a lifetime – our nation waited to see how leaders in Washington would respond to the horrifying shooting deaths of 20 children and six educators at Sandy Hook Elementary. Washington, as we know, did little – as Washington has continued to do through an onslaught of gun massacres since. Connecticut, however, decided to act.

In the aftermath of Sandy Hook, state lawmakers passed, and Democratic Gov. Dannel Malloy signed, a package of strong gun measures. The package expanded a ban on the sale of assault weapons and required the registration of existing assault weapons and high-capacity gun magazines. It launched a registry of weapons offenders and mandated background checks for all sales of firearms.

It worked. As the New York Times reported Sunday, gun deaths started to drop after the laws passed. In four years, the number of deaths resulting from firearms – including homicides, suicides and accidents – fell from 226 to 164.

Now, with Congress ready for another round of inactivity in the wake of 17 more students and educators dying in Florida, it will once again be up to states to protect their citizens from gun violence. With few exceptions, states with the strictest gun control measures have the lowest rates of gun deaths.

North Carolina does not; we're 23rd in the country in firearm deaths per capita, according to the Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence.

To be more precise: In Connecticut, Nikolas Cruz could not have legally purchased the AR-15-style rifle and high capacity magazines he used to mow down the victims in Parkland, Florida. In North Carolina, he could have.

Changing that – and passing other tough gun control measures – is harder in our state thanks to North Carolina's Republican-led General Assembly. But that doesn't mean Gov. Roy Cooper, a Democrat, shouldn't try. As North Carolinians grapple with the possibility of a Florida mass shooting happening here, Cooper should call for lawmakers to address the spiraling toll of gun violence. He should follow up by working to help legislators introduce tough gun measures like Connecticut's, as well as other sensible measures, such as raising the minimum age for gun purchases. If we don't think 18-year-olds have the maturity to hoist a beer, they sure shouldn't be able to lift and fire their own semi-automatic weapons.

That legislative package also should include measures that address the mental health issues that Republicans often cite as the cause of mass shootings. Confronting gun violence shouldn't be about choosing one party's preferred approach, and there is no one law that will prevent gun violence. But a package of measures that help lessen the chance of the next deadly day is one worth passing.

Will Cooper succeed? It's a long shot. Republican leaders Phil Berger and Tim Moore probably won't even let such bills get to the floor of their chambers. But the governor – and all North Carolinians – should force legislators to declare which gun violence measures they don't support. Make lawmakers go on the record if they don't think it's a good idea to protect their constituents in any reasonable way they can, so that N.C. voters can know come election time.

The Charlotte Observer



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

How being black and vegan honors my ancestors' struggle

To the Editor:

Somewhere along the line, while getting through this thing called life, I came across these words by the late, great Maya Angelou and turned them into a personal mantra: "I did then what I knew how to do. Now that I know better, I do better."

I've relied heavily on this quote for personal development. It's helped me choose where to spend my money and how to treat other human beings, and yes, practicing these words has a lot to do with why I'm vegan. Once I understood that just like humans, chickens, pigs, cows and all other animals feel pain, experience fear and value their own lives, I banned dead animal parts from my life. I knew better, so – for animals – I did better.

However, black vegans certainly "do better" for more than animals. No matter if I'm recognizing Black History Month, an ordinary April or even National Doughnut Day, I understand that I'm only here

because of my ancestors and the struggles they endured – and I owe every one of them my best, to honor their legacies.

Right now, America in general, but African-Americans in particular, face a health crisis. According to the American Heart Association, Black Americans are disproportionately affected by obesity and more likely to have diabetes than their white counterparts. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention states that African-Americans have nearly double the risk of dying early from heart disease and strokes as whites.

These aren't arbitrary statistics. My own father – who eats a stacked plate of ribs for a meal – struggles with diabetes. Most people can hardly understand my grandmother when she speaks due to multiple strokes. My uncle Harrison prided himself on his signature mustard and collar greens with ham hock, and he also died of heart disease. These are all links in my ancestral lineage ravaged by an unhealthy diet.

It's a shame when folks mistake slave food for soul food. "Foods" like chitlins (animal intestines) or hog maw (pig stomach), lard and pigs' feet harm our bodies. Our enslaved ancestors had to consume

these disgusting body parts to survive horrifying atrocities and in no way could they "do better." Here in the 21st century, however, there's zero excuse. Consuming sickness and filth is not our true heritage and should not represent blackness.

These types of culinary dishes – which were given to us as scraps by our oppressors and later hijacked African-American culture – kill us. So I do better. A vegan diet reduces the risks of heart disease, obesity, strokes and diabetes. And trust me, vegan soul food is alive and well. I still eat greens, fried "chicken," gumbo and sweet potato pie just like I did growing up. We can still have all the flavors we crave without the death, suffering and disease that come with eating animals.

Living as a black vegan is a practice in "sankofa" – a traditional West African term that reminds us to learn from our roots in order to move forward. If we really want to honor our brothers and sisters, we must strive to be our healthiest, greatest, most compassionate selves.

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Photo provided by Algenon Cash

Embrace disruption in the state of the economy

Algenon Cash
Guest Columnist

The Winston-Salem Chamber of Commerce hosted its annual "State of the Economy" luncheon at the Benton Convention Center in Downtown on Feb. 22. The event attracted over 1,000 business and community leaders from companies, nonprofits, government and educational institutions that all have a deeply vested interest in the local economy.

The keynote speaker was Tim Lowe, president of Lowes Foods, and unlike most economic presentations that may be littered with statistical analysis, numbers, and predictions – Mr. Lowe spent a half hour highlighting shifting consumers' habits and the impact those changes are having on the retail industry. Not a week goes by without a retailer announcing major layoffs and shuttering units in response to consumers migrating to buying online.

Lowe has an extensive background in the retail industry with over 26 years in various executive roles at Supervalu, Walmart and Meijer. He delivered an informative presentation

that centered on the disruption in the macro economy from companies that don't produce anything or have any physical infrastructure.

Amazon is the country's largest retailer, but it owns no stores; Uber is the country's largest taxi company, but owns no vehicles; Airbnb is the country's largest hotel chain, but owns no real estate; and Facebook, the country's most popular media owner, creates no content.

Disruption innovation is a term in the field of business that refers to an innovation that creates a new market and eventually disrupts an existing market, displacing established market leading firms, products, and strategic alliances.

The practice has existed since the dawn of time, but revealed itself more pronouncedly in business during the early 20th century's Industrial Revolution. Henry Ford's Model T disrupted the market for transportation in 1908 because the mass-produced automobile lowered costs, reduced barriers to entry for ordinary families and eventually altered the way cities were developed.

Historically disruptive innovation was produced by market outsiders and serial entrepreneurs, rather than existing market leading companies. Well performing companies strug-



gle to be innovative because they are focused on maintaining current market share.

Railroad companies were the first leaders in transportation, but failed to predict the impact personal vehicles or airlines would have on passenger volume. IBM was a driver in technology long before Apple, Google and Facebook – but lacked the ability to see around the corner like some of the later startups.

Amazon, however, is on a different pathway. The company generates \$200,000 in gross sales daily, so it is clearly a market leader – but the company refuses to be disrupted and remains concentrated on being the disruptor. President and CEO Jeff Bezos says, "The outside world can push you into Day 2 if you won't or can't embrace powerful trends quickly. If you fight them, you're probably fighting the future. Embrace them and you have a tailwind."

Bezos' corporate philosophy simply means that every company must focus on being excited about the business and constantly

(Below) The Winston-Salem Chamber of Commerce hosted its annual "State of the Economy" luncheon at the Benton Convention Center in downtown on Feb. 22.

seek out unmet needs in the marketplace. Not to mention Bezos shares that entrepreneurs need to focus on results and not process, make decisions quickly, look outside the company and do less customer focused market research.

Small businesses are driving the U.S. economy – with over 70 percent of the new jobs created by this sector. My advice to rising entrepreneurs is don't fear change, embrace it, and then use changing attitudes, habits, and desires to build a great business that delivers value to the marketplace. Our nation would not be the most advanced country on the planet without disruption innovation.

My grandfather used to say, "All we know about change is that it's coming."

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