

OPINION

THE CHRONICLE

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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

4 things we can learn from Kobe's life

BY BRIDGET ELAM
THE CHRONICLE

It's an unfortunate truth that a person's life often speaks volumes after his or her death. That truth resonates even more with the untimely passing of Kobe Bryant.

Bryant was killed in a helicopter crash on Sunday, Jan. 26. The news of his death and that of his young daughter sent shock waves around the world. Many celebrities and athletes chimed in on social media to offer their condolences and pay tribute to Bryant and his family.

While I'm only a basketball fan to the extent that my son has dedicated half his life to the game, I am, by no means, a stranger to Kobe Bryant, the basketball player. However, since his death, I have been introduced to Kobe, the man. His contributions can teach us valuable lessons about living life to the fullest.

Here are four areas in which Bryant excelled and consequently became the reasons for his success.

1. Discipline: Kobe Bryant was drafted 13th overall in the 1996 NBA Draft, being drafted right out of high school. It is reported that he would put up 1,000 shots per day, regardless of what kind of day it was. That is discipline. If you commit to that level of discipline in your respected area(s) of expertise or passion, how much further along would you be?

2. Commitment to family: Bryant had four daughters with his wife Vanessa. Even during his hectic professional schedule, he made time to attend his children's school and extra curriculum activities. In an interview, he recalled how he would play a game, fly home to attend a birthday or event, and then fly back to the team. By doing so, his family members felt loved and valued. In what instances should you make your family a priority?

3. Charity: Bryant supported several charities. There is the Kobe and Vanessa Bryant Family Foundation whose goal is to provide scholarships. Then there's the After-School All-Stars, that partners with schools to extend school hours for low-income children. Kobe also supported the Make-A-Wish Foundation by granting more than 250 wishes. You may say that Bryant had enough money to be philanthropic; how can I give on that level? In reality, charity is not as big of a feat as we may think. Time is just as valuable to give as money. What worthy cause can you give your time, talent and treasure?

4. Inspiration: Bryant inspired so many by his discipline, commitment to family, and philanthropy. Just check out social media to see examples. If all we do is satisfy ourselves and our own desires, have we really done anything at all? As we walk this brief phase called life, we should do so in a way that those around us are inspired by our actions.

Was Kobe perfect? No, none of us are. But there are snapshots from his short life from which we can glean the principles he lived by and be inspired to be better people. Paying attention to his life can change the trajectory of our own lives while we are still able.

Thank you, Kobe Bryant, the basketball player. But more importantly, we honor Kobe, the man, for his contributions to the sport of basketball and to our society. May you rest in peace.

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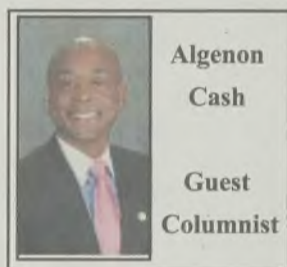
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5 key initiatives on which elected officials and candidates must focus



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The primary election season has arrived — current elected officials and candidates for public office are showing up at forums asking for your vote. We have deeply inflicted economic wounds in our community and the only way to remove many of the disparities that divide large groups of citizens is to focus on healing key areas.

Early voting kicks off Feb. 13 and primary election day is March 3, so you have limited time to evaluate candidates, understand their platforms, and decide who to support.

Here are five key initiatives to focus on when making your decision:

Workforce Development

Winston-Salem was built on the backs of hardworking people who invested much of their time in helping manufacturers grow by leaps and bounds. Hanes, RJR, Krispy Kreme, and many others found early success in our community.

As these companies grew and eventually relocated primary operations to foreign and domestic communities, the laborers responsible for their success were forgotten; these people were not retrained for the jobs of the future.

Now the high paying jobs in our community are mostly technology-based and housed in the same warehouses utilized by the companies of yesterday, but these historical properties have a

new brand - Innovation Quarter.

Lab technicians in the Quarter earn on average \$70,000 annually, but you won't see many of the poverty-stricken locals filling these jobs - they mostly go to individuals migrating to Winston-Salem from California, New York, and all points in between.

We must identify strategic ways to leverage our bustling universities and community college to help local workers obtain the necessary skills to transition into the jobs of today and tomorrow. Free or deeply reduced tuition for residents could be a great step in the right direction.

Entrepreneurship

Not everyone wants to work for a major employer for life - some people have a desire to develop their own workplace, create jobs, and provide opportunities.

However, doing so in Winston-Salem can be incredibly frustrating, especially if you don't possess the important connections to investors and capital. Our community historically is cliquish, with many roadblocks and obstacles preventing an entrepreneur from cultivating a good idea.

We somehow must tear down the "good ole boy" network that serves as gatekeepers in Winston-Salem and moreover allow capital, talent, and resources to flow naturally to entrepreneurs with the best and brightest ideas - regardless of race, background, or whether or not you graduated from the "right" university.

Economic and Financial Literacy

Knowledge and simple access to information has dis-

united communities for ages. Some of the richest people in the world only had one advantage - they discovered some information that others largely were unaware of or just ignored. Knowledge is truly power.

One of the best ways to insure balanced growth and diverse wealth is to help undereducated citizens to gain access to vital pieces of knowledge that enables them to make better daily choices and develop positive habits.

In most communities across the nation, individuals and families don't fully understand how their local economy or personal finances may work. So their lack of knowledge leads them to make bad decisions that don't drive wealth creation. Helping more citizens to have a basic level of economic and financial literacy can position them to make life changes that can have a generational impact.

Transportation

The greatest obstacle to economic mobility is lack of transportation. Access to reliable transportation can not only affect your bank account, but it can also be mentally and emotionally discouraging. Imagine not knowing how you'll get to work daily, make an important doctor's appointment, or simply pick up your children from school - decisions that most of us take for granted, but can provide real barriers to the least of us.

A good friend challenged me to use public transit for a week. I'm sad to admit that I only made it two days. Not all of us have the luxury to jump back in a car as easily as I did.

The current public transportation system is confusing, doesn't provide enough timely stops, and largely inefficient. We must pressure elected officials to become more innovative with their approach to public transportation, while also discovering a funding mechanism that gives residents fare-free access.

Regional Cooperation

Mecklenburg, Wake, and Durham counties are growing at unprecedented rates for many reasons, but the primary one is that they have a regional community vision and all the municipalities are working cohesively to achieve the objective, unlike Forsyth County, where small rural communities don't play so well with the larger anchor, which is Winston-Salem.

Undoubtedly the conservative nature of these smaller communities when it comes to corporate incentives, taxes, and quality of life drives their willingness not to partner with the urban core, but we must somehow find a way to focus more on what unites us while ignoring the minor differences separating us.

All communities in the county must strive to get on the same page and row in the same direction, which largely benefits thousands of residents that mostly ignore the imaginary lines detaching us.

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