

## Still in the storm after hurricane

At a recent meeting in Houston with survivor children from New Orleans at New Orleans West, a school operated by the KIPP Academy, I asked the students, whose wounds, words and dreams are shared in a new Children's Defense Fund report on Katrina's children, what one or two things they wanted to tell America's people and leaders about their needs.

One young boy responded quickly: "Tell them we need hope." Another child asked how I felt about our visit together. I told them honored and moved and motivated and determined to do whatever I can, in every way I can, for as long as necessary, to make sure our nation — their nation — does not forget them, ignore them, neglect them, and continue to leave them behind, invisible and uncared for, like the debris still littering New Orleans' Ward 9 and other devastated Gulf Coast communities.



MARIAN WRIGHT EDELMAN

I promised to tell their stories over and over and over again until they are heard, and to bring others to hear and meet them and children like them through Katrina

and children like them through Katrina Child Watch visits and mobilizing and organizing until our nation meets their emergency mental health, health and education crises.

It is long past time for our federal and state governments to construct strong health, mental health, early childhood development, education and economic security levees denied millions of children in the Gulf Coast, before and after Katrina, and all across our nation. Katrina simply ripped off the veil of America's massive, legal child neglect and injustice which let over 13 million children live in poverty and 9 million go uninsured, a majority in working families. Katrina's children of the storm are a cry to right these festering child wrongs.

Immediately after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the world and nation rallied to assist those in need with emergency mental health teams and prompt governmental action within weeks — cutting through senseless bureaucratic, categorical eligibility barriers in Medicaid. To ensure immediate health and mental health coverage, in the early months after the 9/11 tragedy, hundreds of thousands were presumed eligible and were helped. Yet over seven months after Katrina, not only have our national leaders in the White House and Congress and state houses and legislatures not responded with urgency and compassion to meet the mental health and health crisis faced by tens of thousands of Katrina children and families, many threw up barrier after barrier and are still dragging their feet.

It's time to stand up and demand they treat Katrina's children justly and compassionately. It is a moral scandal and practical disaster that over seven long months after children in our nation's poorest states suffered horrifying flood devastation, tens of thousands of them have been left to wrestle with their horrifying losses without adequate mental health and health support.

Seven months is a lifetime for a child. Seven months is an unending nightmare for thousands of Katrina's children denied the chance to share their bad memories and clear their psyches battered by loss of family members, friends, homes, schools, and neighborhoods. Imagine being shunted from pillar to post with stressed families struggling simply to survive.

Imagine trying to process the witnessing of so much death and fear of your own death from swelling waters threatening to engulf you. Imagine walking and swimming through toxic, germ infested water and waiting to be rescued atop bridges in grueling sun without water and food. Imagine being on constant alert in the crowded, putrid Superdome from predatory adults trying to touch you. Imagine waiting, waiting, crowding onto buses going you knew not where. Imagine waiting, waiting, waiting in new places for shelter, for food, for clothing, for lost prescriptions, for a school to attend. Imagine wanting to go home but scared to, wanting to stay in new states and schools but sometimes feeling unwelcome or picked on. Imagine wanting to hope for and see a better future but finding it hard to trust that either is possible. One Katrina survivor child in the nation's capital wrote, "I want to believe but I can't."

We need to help her and all Katrina and America's poor children believe in a better future, in themselves, and in our country's professed values and promises. Children need to believe that adults entrusted with their care will protect rather than neglect and mistreat them at home, in school, in our social services systems and in our public policy and budget choices.

We adults need to conduct personal, collective, professional and national moral audits to see if we are part of the problem our children face or the solutions they need. And we need to use our vote this November to elect political leaders who will guarantee health and mental health coverage for every child.

Bennettsville, S.C., native MARIAN WRIGHT EDELMAN is president and founder of the Children's Defense Fund

## Who speaks for black people's concerns?

I posed this question to my black entrepreneurship class at the University of Cincinnati, and much to my chagrin, after a long period of silence, only one young lady had an answer.

Even sadder is the fact that I did not posit the question in the context of entrepreneurship. Rather, it was just a general question. While I am not surprised at their lack of response, in the larger context of black leadership, that response spoke volumes — their silence was deafening. So I ask you: Who does speak for black people? Who stands up for Black people?

The one student who did have an answer, not surprisingly, named a national personality, which is where we usually gravitate when it comes to determining who our leaders are. But don't you think there should be folks who speak up and stand up for black people on the local level? I am not talking about brothers and sisters who refer to themselves — and us — as "people of color" or "minorities" or any of those other namby-pamby words used to define who we are and, ultimately, what we deserve. I am referring to local leaders who are unwavering in their commitment to black people and those who are not confused about their — and our — identity. So maybe a better question is: "Who defines black people?"



JAMES CLINGMAN

I recently attended a workshop conducted by one of this nation's outstanding minister-scholars, Tony Roach, of Abilene, Texas. The five-day event titled, "You are God's Love Bank," was sponsored by our congregation, the Gray Road Church of Christ, here in Cincinnati. During that workshop, my eyes were opened to many things, but among all the outstanding strategies for living a spiritual life, presented by Roach, one thing he noted reminded me of our plight in this country. Roach kept emphasizing: "He who defines you controls you." I probably could stop right here, couldn't I?

There is also a point to be made about "what" defines you as well. Roach's "New Self Love" versus "Old Self Love" segment helps us understand how incidents that took place in our lives long ago shape our personalities and determine to a large extent how we act and react as adults. He points to four conditions that have affected each of us in some way or another: Abandonment; Worthlessness; Abuse; and Rejection. These "Old Self" conditions have defined us for years, both individually and collectively. Thus, we should look at not only "who" but also "what" defines and controls us.

Before I continue, allow me to make a pitch for Tony Roach and his workshop curriculum. See [www.godslovebank.com](http://www.godslovebank.com). His approach to spiritual growth is comprehensive and insightful. In addition to its application in our individual lives, Roach's curriculum also applies to our collective status. Of course, Roach's teachings are applicable to all persons. But, relative to my message to Black people and our collective condition, his call for introspection and self-assessment, realization and love of self, and the powerful attributes of our spiritual heritage vis-à-vis what we are and who we really are, struck glorious chords with me. I am sure you will find something in the God's Love Bank program that you can use to empower yourself, your children, and your entire family.

As for the collective black family, it is obvious that we are allowing other people and past events to define us. Based upon that reality we find ourselves as a people who constantly look for a national leader to rescue us from local dangers. Because we have so few who are willing to speak for black people alone, we succumb to being defined by folks who do not have our best collective interests in mind.

Because we fall prey to the "minority" game, being defined by a term that connotes deficiency, subjugation, and subordination, we collectively lose out on the benefits that accrue to those who proudly rally around their own heritage and culture, and stand together on issues of reciprocity and self-determination. Our collective acquiescence to the power plays by the "majority" and its overseers does not say very much about new self-love, but it sure does speak volumes about our old self-love.

A prime example is how black people work tirelessly and dedicatedly on building minority inclusion programs and minority set-aside programs that provide, say, 25 percent to the entire "minority" group. In most cases, the programs never deliver even that meager portion of benefits, but even worse is the fact that 75 percent of the benefits go to white males, without question or contesting by black people. Many of us are afraid to tread on that particular ground because of historical court rulings (Adarand and Croson) and the "threat" of being sued by white contractors who wave the "racial preferences" banner before the courts. But, who speaks for black people? Who will stand up and use that same argument by asking, "Isn't giving white males 75 percent a racial preference?"

As Roach says, "He who defines you also controls you." He also teaches the Seven Laws of Sowing and Reaping. "What you see is what you say; what you say is what you sow; what you sow is what you reap; what you reap is what you are; what you are is what you give; what you give is what you get; and what you get is what you deserve." Black people must start speaking up for who we are and what we are, positively and affirmatively, and change the way we think and act. Then, as we get what we deserve, we will be empowered.

JAMES E. CLINGMAN, an adjunct professor at the University of Cincinnati's African American Studies department, is former editor of the Cincinnati Herald newspaper and founder of the Greater Cincinnati African American Chamber of Commerce.

## If U.S. attacks Iran, there will be some consequences

So, let's get this straight. The Washington Post reported, with a great deal of fanfare, that should the USA attack Iran (because of Iran's processing of nuclear material), Iran will more than likely hit back through terror attacks in Iraq, the U.S.A. and Europe.

What is the surprise? Why should anyone be startled? If the USA attacks Iran it will have been after successive warnings TO THE USA, that there is no accurate information as to whether the Iranians have a peaceful or military objective in processing nuclear materials. It will also be after successive warnings TO THE USA that the Iranians are at least five years away from producing a bomb, thus providing sufficient time for a peaceful resolution of this dispute.



BILL FLETCHER

The only surprise would be that there would be an assumption that the Iranians would role over and play dead after a military assault by the U.S.A. This is a completely bizarre expectation particularly in light of Iranian political and military capabilities. Thus, it would only be out of arrogance that one would assume that a country that is attacked by the USA — an unprovoked attack I might add — would simply accept it.

We then hear through the British that they believe that a U.S. and possibly a US/Israeli military assault on Iran, is inevitable. This is starting to sound like the lead up to the invasion of Iraq all over again. Have we not learned anything from the Iraq disaster?

The Bush administration seems to be intent on moving us into an environment of mutually assured terror. Thus, the USA threatens to terrorize Iran if Iran does not do what the Bush administration demands. The Iranians possibly threaten to utilize terror against the USA and its allies if attacked. What will this mean? It could mean more 9/11s, London subway bombings, Madrid railway bombings, and it could mean worse. After all, we have no idea what other countries will do. As I discussed in an earlier column, both Russia and China have expressed opposition to a military solution, and Russia is getting increasingly nervous about how itchy the Bush administration's trigger finger seems to be these days.

As outrageous as it may seem, it increasingly feels as if the Bush administration is set upon bringing about a cataclysm. Whether for fanatical religious reasons and/or for reasons of world domination, the Bush administration is acting more and more like the school-yard bully, pushing opponents and even frightening its own friends.

Last month, the Bush administration issued a revised version of their September 2002 National Security Strategy Doctrine. There were no fundamental changes. What is made very clear is that in the view of the Bush administration, the world must conform to the dictates of the USA and the manner in which the USA believes that the world should proceed. There is a word for this sort of thinking: irrational.

I am getting worried. There is a perverse enjoyment of war and things military that seems to be rising from the White House. The havoc of war seems to mean little to those leading the country. We are sitting here watching the deaths of somewhere between 30,000 — 100,000 Iraqis, and more than 2,000 US personnel, yet this Administration seems to be prepared to launch into another inferno.

Isn't it time for those of us who have not lost our minds to say "no!"

BILL FLETCHER is outgoing president of TransAfrica.

### There is a perverse enjoyment of war and things military that seems to be rising from the White House.

### Connect with The Post

Send letters to The Charlotte Post, P.O. Box 30144 Charlotte, NC 28230 or e-mail [editorial@thecharlottepost.com](mailto:editorial@thecharlottepost.com).

We edit for grammar, clarity and space. Include your name and daytime phone number. Letters and photos will not be returned by mail unless accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

