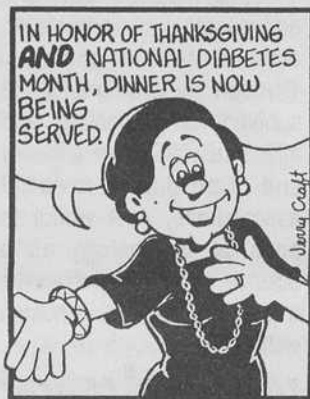


EDUCATION

MAMA'S BOYZ by JERRY CRAFT



Education: Key to empowerment

By James Clingman

While participating in a panel discussion recently, someone asked for my opinion about the primary role of African-Americans as consumers in this country. The implication of the question was that since we are such a massive group of consumers, accounting for very little manufacturing, we are at a great economic disadvantage and have minimal economic power.

I beg to differ. Sure, we spend nearly \$400 billion a year in the marketplace, some 95 percent of that amount going to businesses owned by someone other than a black person. Sure, we are the most brand loyal of any other consumer group. Sure,

when we travel, we stay longer, spend more, and take more people with us than other groups.

However, those glaring realities do not, by any means, suggest we are powerless. As the largest minority group in this country, second only to Hispanics in rate of increase in our population, we have tremendous power. Our problem is that we have not yet learned to harness that power and make it work to our advantage. We have been too busy, for quite some time now, making it work for other folks.

Until we realize that we, African-American consumers, provide the profit margin for major companies in this country and around the world, we cannot

begin to understand the impact of any single dollar that we might spend in this economy.

Until we rally behind our awesome consumer power and being to do what is best for our collective prosperity rather than our individual affluence, we will always be divided and distrustful, and envious of one another. Those are characteristics that will surely keep us down — as they have done for the past 50 years.

We must become more educated on who we are as a group of consumers. We must commit to understanding, at a minimum, what happens to the money we spend. We must be attuned to the positive effects our dollars have in the larger

community and the negative ramifications we produce by not circulating our dollars among ourselves more.

Just as we need to be educated politically, we need economic education, to an even greater degree. We will never achieve a viable, collective political position in this country until we exploit our own consumer power, and stop allowing others to exploit it.

The next time you make a purchase, ask yourself a few questions: Where is this money going?; who is this money going to help?; will my money be used to hire African-Americans?; will it be used to assist some community program for our children?; is there a probability that my money will be used to purchase products or services from another black person's business?; does the person or company getting my money really respect me as a valued customer?; does the salesperson treat me fairly?

Those and many other questions should be posed by black consumers as we exercise our \$400 billion spending power. Until we understand the very basic principle of reciprocity in the marketplace — and *quid pro quo* in the political arena — our collective power will continue to be squandered.

No, we are not weak merely because we are primarily consumers. We are weak because we do not act in a collective manner, and because

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American Education Week to be celebrated Nov. 17-23

Special to Sentinel-Voice

The annual nationwide tribute to public education, American Education Week, is being celebrated locally in the Clark County School District with a variety of activities.

American Education Week is November 17-23. This year's theme is "The Future Begins in Today's Schools."

One of the local highlights is a recognition ceremony and reception honoring 41 of the district's top graduating seniors. These students were selected National Merit Scholarship Semifinalists based on their performance on a national test. Their recognition ceremony was held Wednesday, at Southern Nevada Vocational Technical Center.

"At a time in our nation's history when public education is being seriously challenged, it is even more important that we ballyhoo the good things that are happening in our schools," said Ray Willis, director of the district's Public Information Office, which coordinates local American Education Week activities. "It's almost a best-kept secret, but the fact is that our

students just keep getting better and better," he said. For example, Willis said that 41 of Clark County's 44 National Merit Scholarship Semifinalists this year are public school students.

American Education Week has been celebrated since 1921, when it was established to increase public understanding and appreciation of the nation's schools, to encourage parents and non-parents to visit schools, and to build civic and community pride and support for public education. Co-sponsors of the week include the National Education Association, the National Parent Teacher Association, the American Legion and the National School Public Relations Associations.

This year's theme echoes the sentiments of many citizens who believe the future of the country is tied to the viability of public schools. "More and more people are realizing that our hopes for a better tomorrow depend on the quality of education that we provide our public school students," Willis said. "Community support of public education ensures prosperity and a bright future for us all."

Slow learners are great achievers

By Teresa Thorne
Special to Sentinel-Voice

There are some areas where special education programs are being questioned for their value vis-a-vis their costs. I could accept an honest dollars-and-cents evaluation critique, but sadly, some criticisms come very close to saying that the programs are largely wasted on youngsters with physical or mental problems, and they might as well be taught simple skills that will earn them a living later on.

If that were true, we would never have been inspired by the genius of Helen Keller, who was considered unteachable until a dedicated young teacher named Annie Sullivan broke through Keller's blind, deaf world; nor would we have had Thomas Edison's inventions because he was considered mentally slow, and good only for hawking candy

and papers on trains, until it was discovered he was hard of hearing. And James Earl Jones would never have become one of the world's great actors if dedicated teachers hadn't encouraged him to deal with his speech problems. Besides, where can one get a job these days with "simple skills"?

It seems to me that it's far cheaper to teach a child to come up to his or her potential, then to give up on a child and send him out to make a meager living and pay meager or no taxes, or get into trouble and cost society far more than his education would have.

Parents who worry that TV shows tend to mislead youngsters into believing that crooks lead glamorous lives, and drive big cars, and wear great clothes, have a friend in Daniel Butler, host of the weekly syndicated series, "America's Dumbest Criminals" (based on his best-selling book of the same name). Butler says, "Many of us who watch a lot of television and movies can often get the wrong idea about criminals. The life of a criminal can often appear to be bold, daring, even glamorous. But I can tell you it's not like that at all. In doing research for our show, we learned that most criminals fail miserably and nearly all eventually get caught."

He suggests telling youngsters who consider crime glamorous: "You will screw up; you will get caught; and you will feel like an idiot. I promise."

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