

COMMENTARY

Improve life's quality

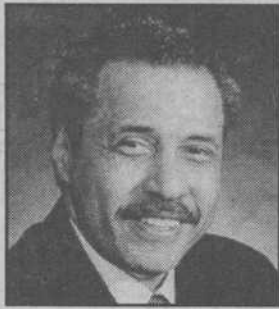
By Louie Overstreet
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Last week I shared with you the results of a study that indicated Nevada ranked 46th out of 50 states in terms of quality of life issues. Our state ranked at the bottom in categories measuring rates of high school dropout, teen pregnancy and unemployment. We were near the bottom in the areas of air pollution, persons with no health insurance coverage, and percentage of the population that devotes time to volunteering for worthwhile causes.

To change our negative ranking, I suggested there were six things we could do, not only to change our state, but our individual conditions in life as well.

The things we can do are as follows: work to strengthen the family unit; demonstrate a sense of charity; understand our history; understand and practice the meaning of two particular phrases; spend your money in ways that generate black wealth, and vote your interests.

In another generation, our very survival as a race will be at risk if we do not change some of our patterns of behavior, namely: black-on-black crime, drug use, and babies having babies. We must develop intergenerational support systems so that we do not fall prey to the criminal justice system or the demeaning aspects of public



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welfare as presently practiced by our federal government.

Demonstrate a sense of charity by helping persons that may not enjoy the blessings you have received in life.

Understand our history. For example, does your understanding of our history allow you to accept the belief that the Great Sphinx in Africa looks like the thing in front of the Luxor Hotel? If so, you do not know our history. The truth is, when Napoleon invaded Egypt, he blew the wide nose off the sphinx because it was that of a black man.

Understand and practice the meaning of two phrases. Frederick Douglas stated, "you may not get all that you pay for in life, but you will surely pay for all that you do get." Dr. Calvin Rolark was fond of saying, remember ten words, with twenty letters: "if it is to be, it is up to me."

We are the only group in America that spends our money at a 180-degree angle directly away from us. Other groups turn money over in their communities from five to twelve times. We should spend our money in ways that generate black wealth by understanding the fact that the only racists in America are those who can afford to be so. So, let us work to get rid of racism by recognizing that supporting black businesses and institutions are acts of salva-

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Cloning of humans portends bad things

By Armstrong Williams
Special to Sentinel-Voice

The Advanced Cell Technology Institute recently announced that it has successfully cloned the first human embryo.

Does this make man the most intelligent or most foolish of God's creations?

On that question, intense debate is brewing.

On one side are scientists who maintain that cloning procedures can help develop stem cells that would serve as replacement tissues for patients with a range of diseases including Parkinson's, Alzheimer's and diabetes.

On the other side are those ethicists who chafe at the notion of creating and then destroying human embryos in order to harvest the stem cells. They rightly point out that human embryos have a unique genetic code. Therefore, they regard embryos as living human beings, rather than a random collection of cells. By this way of thinking, the purposeful destruction of human embryos is no

different from, say, abortion or murder.

This rousing point has not been lost on Douglas Johnson, legislative director of the National Right to Life Committee. "Unless Congress acts quickly," warned Johnson, "this corporation and others will be opening human embryo farms."

Scientists seem comfortable with this. "We've taken the first step toward what we hope will be a whole new era of medicine," proclaimed biologist Michael West on CNN's "Late Edition." "It's been called regenerative medicine. The idea is to be able to give replacement cells and tissues, like the way we repair a car when it's broken."

That's very clinical of West. I would however suggest that there are some things in this life that we ought not be so clinical about, some things that cannot simply be reduced to right angles, such as poking and prodding at the raw material of life.

Consider: with the ability

to create life in a lab, man takes his rightful place alongside God. Just one thing: we're not God! Plainly, exerting our will over the very creation of human life propels science well beyond our ability to ethically and morally reason. Into this moral vacuum rushes human egotism, or the desire to exert our will over every aspect of our surroundings.

We cannot allow such egotism to obscure the moral consequences of destroying human embryos. Scientific advancement alone is no justification for the destruction of human life. Murder is murder—whether it occurs in an antiseptic science lab or on the street.

Such subtleties were lost on Nazi scientists, who routinely experimented with humans. In strictly pragmatic terms, their results were a triumph of science. In terms of moral consequences, their experiments formed this century's most frightful travesty of human dignity.

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Decatur update: Tracking expelled Illinois students

By Jesse Jackson
Special to Sentinel-Voice

On Sept. 17, 1999, seven African-American boys got into a 17 second fight and, in violation of Illinois education policy, they were expelled from school without an individual hearing, due process or an alternative form of education. This miscarriage of justice was done in the name of a policy called "Zero Tolerance." Recently, we marked the two-year anniversary of the Decatur expulsion and the successful mission to Decatur, Ill. We went there to help seven high school students return to school after having been expelled under the school system's "Zero Tolerance" policy, after a fight at a school football game. On Nov. 16, 1999, I was arrested and jailed during a protest at the school.

Our involvement drew the attention of Illinois Gov. George Ryan and State Superintendent of Schools Glenn "Max" McGee, who helped work out a solution enabling the students to re-

turn to school. The event was principally responsible for bringing Zero Tolerance policies, which impose absurdly harsh and inflexible penalties on students and deprive them of educational opportunities, into the national consciousness.

Today, three of the students are enrolled at Richland Community College: Roosevelt Fuller (majoring in electronics), Earl Bond (computer engineering), and Courtney Carlson (business administration). Carlson will be attending Blackhawk College in East Moline next year on a basketball scholarship. A fourth student, Greg Howell, is enrolled Parkland Community College in Champaign.

Our mission was to enable these kids to return to school, and let their own potential determine their opportunities, similar to what we did with the Rainbow/PUSH Coalition came to the aid of a student named Allen Iverson some years ago. The kids in Decatur misbehaved, but it was not premeditated, there

were no guns, no drugs, no chains, no knives, no bloodshed and no injuries. But their due process rights were violated, and these kids were going to be tossed out on the street for 2 years, virtually guaranteeing they would end up in jail or worse.

Research sparked by the incident showed African-American students are disproportionately targeted by school disciplinary policies, accounting for 32 percent of suspensions although they make up less than 16 percent of the nation's public school population. The disparity was much wider in certain cities, such as Phoenix and Los Angeles.

All African-Americans are born at risk: African-Americans are more likely to die of infant mortality, least likely to go to first class school, least likely to have first class teachers, least likely to get a scholarship. African-Americans are more likely to be economically profiled and the victims of hate crimes. Risk is not predicated

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Powell's push for peace hurt by U.S. spirit of war

By Ron Walters
Special to Sentinel-Voice

I'm not an expert on the Middle East problem, OK? But common sense tells me there is at least one thing that continues to complicate America's role in its solution.

Secretary of State Colin Powell made a speech on Nov. 19 at the University of Louisville in Kentucky laying out the American position on the peace process. In it, he affirmed the unshakable commitment of the United States to Israel as "ironclad," saying the two nations were "bound together forever by common democratic values and traditions... that will never change."

Then he went on to suggest a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian deadlock.

He said Palestinians must stop the violence, because the Intifada—i.e., their violent fight against Israel—had gone to such lengths as the lynching of an Israeli soldier in Ramallah, the assassination of an Israeli cabinet minister and the killing of Israeli children. He challenged the Palestinians, as a confidence-building measure, to indict terrorists and bring them to justice, since Israel had lost confidence in the proposition that the Palestinians truly desired peace.

By contrast, Powell said Palestinians must also live within secure borders in a state they controlled, challenging Israelis to end the occupation. But while noting that Palestinian violence had made a terrible impact on Israel, he made also made men-

tion of the Israeli atrocities against Palestinians, demanding that "this too must stop." He appeared to understand that these acts of the Israelis had prompted the Palestinians to renew the Intifada as a symbol of their own frustration, which deepened with the hard line adopted when Ariel Sharon's government came into power.

He warned that Palestinian demands would not be heard through the use of violence. On the critical questions of the status of Jerusalem and the Palestinian refugees, Powell had no solutions, but rather said such issues were the agenda for negotiation as a part of the peace process between the two countries.

On the whole, I find this speech a model of one-sidedness, on the one hand, with respect to the inordinate responsibilities placed on the shoulders of the Palestinians to engineer the start of another round of peace negotiations. But while not wandering into the thicket of challenging the historic commitment of the U.S. to Israel, there is also a path not taken.

It would establish that the U.S. has an equal stake in the security of other countries of the region, which acknowledges they too are as seminal to its interests and that they too are vital partners in an historic tradition. By continuing to affirm the fact Israel is the only regional carrier of American values, traditions and interests, the

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