

OPINION

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Buy Local First

Helping the community when it's needed most

BY DEBBIE MANNINGS

Negative economic news is everywhere today. It's difficult for the average person to have any influence in the larger trends, but one way to control our economic destiny is to patronize local merchants.

Studies show that buying close to home will have a positive effect all through the community. When people spend their hard earned dollars in local stores they circulate wealth in the community making it richer and healthier.

"Buying Local First" encourages neighbors to stay in their neighborhood before going outside the area to buy products.

This kind of shopping bolsters our local economy when it's needed most. A consumer doesn't have to be motivated by communal interests - Our neighbors will benefit handsomely by shopping locally as often as they can.

Some of the reasons why this is a sensible idea is that you can save gas shopping local and it is easier on your environment. You get better service with merchants in your community. Its easier dealing with someone you know.

In supporting local merchants, consumers also support those nonprofit agencies depending on local business donations to keep them running. When you buy local you strengthen your government services such as police and fire. All business taxes and fees come back into the community to support better services.

Local shopping also means local jobs. This is where neighbors directly benefit from the economics. More jobs in the neighborhood leads to more money being circulated locally which then leads to added business and more neighbors being employed.

Our local neighborhoods have many products anyone would want on an everyday basis. Realistically a person might not purchase 100 percent of their merchandise within a 10 mile radius of their home, but it would be worth their while to try to change their shopping habits and get their neighbors to consider what's available at home before taking their money elsewhere.

Debbie Mannings is the owner and operator of the Bungalow Rose Floral & Gift Shop, 7545 N.E. Sandy Blvd.

Stop the Foreclosures

Time to support homeowners

BY JUDGE GREG MATHIS

The federal government recently bailed out Wall Street's failing financial institutions, using more than \$700 billion in taxpayer dollars to do so. But the bailout does nothing to assist the millions of Americans who are facing home foreclosures.

Tired of waiting on help from Washington, some states took matters into their own hands, seeking legal action against the nation's largest predatory mortgage lender. Those actions are paying off.

Finally, buyers at risk of losing their homes have some support. Led by Illinois and California Attorney General's Lisa Madigan and Jerry Brown, 11 states filed lawsuits against Countrywide Financial, the country's largest mortgage lender.

Though the lender didn't admit any wrongdoing, it did settle the suit and created the largest home loan modification program ever. \$8.4 billion will be divided

among Arizona, California, Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, Iowa, Michigan, North Carolina, Ohio, Texas and Washington. The money will provide loan relief to roughly



Thankfully, leaders at the state level took matters into their own hands. Because of their work, we now have a foundation onto which we can build a mortgage relief program that serves the entire country.

400,000 homeowners across the country.

The program will waive nearly \$140 million in late fees and prepayment penalties while also suspending foreclosures on delinquent borrowers. Additional funds will be set aside to help those who've already been fore-

closed on to find and move into new housing.

The Countrywide program is a strong model that should be expanded. Not only is it mandatory, unlike programs supported by the federal government, it will also be monitored by state officials. It is a viable program that serves to

seemed federal efforts to offer a solution were nonexistent.

Thankfully, leaders at the state level took matters into their own hands. Because of their work, we now have a foundation onto which we can build a mortgage relief program that serves the entire country.

Write and call your attorney general's office. Find out if they are planning legal actions similar to those taken in the California and Illinois. If they are, learn which lenders they are targeting. If not, demand that they go after the mortgage companies that are foreclosing on homes during this crisis.

Our federal leaders have made it clear, with the passage of the financial industry bailout package, that the well-being of the average American is not their first priority. Instead of looking to them for assistance, it is time we turn to our local lawmakers and ask that they work on our behalf.

Judge Greg Mathis is vice president of Rainbow PUSH and a board member of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

A Threat to Justice Everywhere

Death penalty case is troubling

BY M. LINDA JARAMILO

"A threat to justice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." These words were shared over 40 years ago by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., but they ring as true today as they did then. Troy Davis is a prime example of how the justice system does not seem to work everywhere; nor does it work for everyone.

Mr. Davis was tried and convicted in 1991 for the murder of police officer Mark Allen MacPhail some two years before. Murder trials, especially those asking for the death penalty, require a higher degree of rigidity or at least they should.

I always thought that physical evidence was essential in a trial that could result in the state mandated death of another. I always thought that "beyond the shadow of a doubt" was the minimum standard in such cases. It does not seem to be true in this one.

Looking back on the records of Troy Davis' trial, we see that his conviction was not based on any physical evidence; in fact no



murder weapon was ever found.

The conviction was reached after jury members heard the testimony of nine witnesses. Seven of those witnesses have now taken back or contradicted their original testimony. Some of them now say that they were coerced or harassed by the police. In fact, one of the nine has now been implicated by others as the murderer.

Appeal after appeal has been denied. The Georgia Supreme Court heard Troy Davis'

Why has no court been willing to hear the new evidence in this case? Is it because Mr. Davis is African American and the police officer was white? I hope not, but I can't help but wonder.

motion for a new trial in November 2007, but rejected the appeal based on technicalities that were considered by a dissenting judge who set an impossibly high bar for the recantations to be considered.

The U.S. Supreme Court recently declined to hear the appeal of Troy Davis, meaning that a new execution date can be scheduled at any time by the Department of Corrections of Chatham County, Georgia. Even though this appeal will not be heard by the Supreme Court, serious doubt remains as to Mr. Davis'

guilt. Members of the Georgia Board of Pardon and Paroles can still reconsider their decision to deny him clemency.

Mr. Davis is entitled to have his case heard again, especially because the primary testimony against him has now been recanted. Troy Davis simply wants his case heard again. He is scheduled to die for a crime that he did not commit; most of the witnesses agree and they are no longer afraid to say so.

Why has no court been willing to hear the new evidence in this case? Is it because Mr. Davis is African American and the police officer was white? I hope not, but I can't help but wonder.

Troy Davis has claimed his innocence for all these years but he has been unable to convince authorities, because he cannot afford a high priced legal team to defend him. Severe cuts to Georgia's legal defense resources have resulted in only two lawyers to represent 160 people on death row.

Death row appeals are time-and-energy-consuming for any attorney. Imagine having a caseload of 80 people to represent! What it comes down to is, "how much justice can you afford?"

The family of Officer MacPhail certainly deserves justice and our deepest condolences for their loss. But a wrongful conviction is not the way to bring about that justice.

M. Linda Jaramilo is Executive Minister of Justice Ministries for the United Church of Christ.

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