

OPINION

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Nobody Raises a Child Alone

Helping adults become better parents

BY MARIAN WRIGHT EDELMAN

Parenting offers the most wonderful and daunting challenges in the world. Parents are their children's most important teachers and mentors, and they bear primary responsibility for nurturing their sons and daughters while keeping them safe.

Yet parenting is one of the most undervalued and least prepared-for roles in America. Virtually everyone who has children wants to be a good parent, but some do not know how to do that, and many lack the support of extended family or community resources. So instead of judging or assigning blame when parents come up short in providing care and protection to their children, we should recognize that what many parents need is help.

Nobody raises a child alone and many parents need support from a spouse, parent, sibling, friend or neighbor. That support may come in the form of respite for an hour or two of alone time once a week or the ability to attend church while a friend sits with their children.

Parents, grandparents or other caregivers of children or teenagers can benefit from support groups organized by faith-based or other community organizations where they can find help for coping with the challenging behaviors of their children or extra support to address their children's special needs.

Many parents are plagued by poverty or unemployment that can make it particularly difficult for them to balance parenting with job searches or work. Parents may worry about the impact on their children of an impending job

lay-off or eviction and at some point vent their frustration on a child. Stress grows as parents become more isolated.

Help for many families can come through home visiting programs that engage parents and keep them from being isolated. Home visitors work with parents to understand and address their children's developmental needs while strengthening their parenting skills.

Some home visiting programs offer a variety of supports to families with differing needs, but most seek to help parents beginning right after childbirth when they are especially receptive to advice and assistance.

The Nurse-Family Partnership, a successful home visiting program, has the longest track

record. It engages young women during pregnancy, focusing on improving the health, well-being and self-sufficiency of low-income, first-time parents -- many of them young single mothers -- and stays with them through the child's second birthday.

The nurses work with mothers on health-related behaviors during pregnancy such as cigarette smoking, drinking and drug abuse, and educate them about the physical and emotional needs of their children.

The Healthy Families home visiting programs target mothers at risk, connecting with them at

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Save the Voting Rights Act Wrong time to dismantle law

BY JUDGE GREG MATHIS

A key section of the Voting Rights Act, which has been shown to reduce discriminatory voting practices, could be dismantled if the U.S. Supreme Court sides with city officials in Austin, Texas.

The small municipality has challenged the law's constitutionality, arguing it is no longer needed.

While America has come far in the last 40 plus years, voting irregularities still exist and we must urge the Court to rule in favor of the Act.

Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act requires states, with a long history of flagrant discriminatory practices, to clear any changes it makes to the electoral process with the U.S. Justice Department.

Nine states, most of them southern, and several counties, cities and smaller political locales are covered under the Act. The Austin municipality argues that the Act is unconstitutional because it infringes on state's rights and over extends federal power.

Furthermore, it argues that because America elected Barack Obama as president, the country is dramatically different from the America that existed when the Act was passed in 1965, implying that the country has moved beyond its race issues.

We must not forget that it has not even been a decade since the 2000 Florida voting scandal, where African Americans and poor people were disenfranchised. Four years later, in Ohio, there was a similar debacle.

In both instances, voters lost faith in the system and George W. Bush was victorious. In 2006, before renewing the Act, Congress held 22 hearings and determined there was enough evidence to support extending the law.

The Voting Rights Act was passed to counter, and put an end to state practices like poll taxes and literacy tests, used to prevent blacks from voting. While those specific barriers may no longer exist, voter discrimination and intimidation do.

We all long for a 'post racial' America but those of us who have been burned too many times are cautious.

Let's wait another decade and continue to monitor voting practices before we begin dismantling the Act. America may have changed but she is far from perfect.

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



Letters to the Editor

Unwelcome in Oregon

As we celebrate Black History Month we must ask ourselves why does Oregon have such a white population. This is my theory:

In 1844, an "all black" wagontrain of free slaves came to the Oregon Territory to start a new life.

The wagonmaster was George Washington Bush. His wagontrain, which endeared many hardships along the Oregon Trail, was halted at The Dalles where they were forced under the threat of bodily harm to cross the Columbia River into what is now Washington State.

One hundred and thirteen white

settlers signed a petition to allow the free slaves entry. But after two years the Oregon Territorial Legislature agreed to allow "only" Mr. Bush entry.

I believe this is the reason Washington State has a larger population of African Americans than Oregon.

Future black immigrants avoided entry into Oregon and went south into California or north avoiding Oregon since land ownership was forbidden and laws allowed severe punishment before exile.

Thomas H. O'Keefe
North Portland

Won't Lose Free TV

Confusion reigns regarding the switch to all-digital broadcasting, especially since Congress acted recently to move the conversion deadline from Feb. 17 to June 12. Among peoples' big concerns is the fear they'll lose free television.

Let me assure you that OPB's signal has been and will continue to be free for all over-the-air viewers. In fact, OPB offers three free channels -- OPB, OPB HD and OPB PLUS -- which means viewers have greater choice when it comes to the best of news and public affairs, lifestyle, environment and entertainment programming.

Add to this the superior picture and sound quality of over-the-air reception and viewers not only save money and the time spent scanning hundreds of

channels, but enhance the time they do spend watching television as well.

Until June 12, OPB will continue to operate both its analog and digital signals. Viewers who have already prepared for the digital switch by installing a small, inexpensive digital converter box for their conventional analog TVs, or viewers who have new digital TVs, can start watching OPB's three free channels today.

OPB is here to help all viewers to prepare now for the switch. If you have questions about how to receive digital OPB, our digital experts can help. Call us weekdays at 800.241.8123, e-mail us at membercenter@opb.org or find out more online at opb.org/digital.

Steve Bass, OPB president and chief executive officer.

Offense Editorial Cartoon

The editorial cartoon published last week in the New York Post was insensitive and offensive.

Comparing President Obama and his effort to revive the economy in a manner that depicts violence and racist inferences is unacceptable.

Ignorance, like this, is still prevalent and makes the work of the National Urban League even more relevant in the 21st century.

Marc H. Morial, National Urban League president and chief executive officer.

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