

# OPINION

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## Give the Gift of Sharing and Caring

Reflecting on what really matters



BY MARIAN WRIGHT EDELMAN

No matter what faith traditions we come from or celebrate—Ramadan, Christmas, or Hanukkah—this time of year is one of reflection on what really matters.

It's wonderful to share special times and gifts with friends and family, but for many adults this holy season has been commercialized and become defined by shopping for the "in" toys, clothes, and other material gifts we think our children want. And while it's fine to give children these things when we can, we should never forget to give them the more important gifts of ourselves—our time, attention, and family rituals—that children need.

We also should be teaching them the importance of sharing with others. Too many children are afflicted by physical poverty, but too many are afflicted with "affluenza", the spiritual poverty of having too much that is worth too little. Perhaps this season we can teach that the greatest gift is one of caring, sharing, and service.

Let us commit to standing up and caring for the millions of children in our midst who are destitute, homeless, and hungry, and threatened by violence in our rich, powerful nation today. A law enforcement officer is less likely to die from gun violence than a child under 10. Nine children and teens die from gun violence every day in our gun saturated nation.

Let's care and call for justice for the over 15.5 million poor children, millions living in extreme poverty and with daily food insecurity. It is time for all of us to do better: to reset our nation's

*Lord I cannot preach like Martin Luther King, Jr.  
or turn a poetic phrase like Maya Angelou  
but I care and I am willing to serve.*

*I do not have Harriet Tubman's courage  
or Franklin Roosevelt's political skills  
but I care and I am willing to serve.*

*I cannot sing like Fannie Lou Hamer  
or organize like Bayard Rustin  
but I care and I am willing to serve.*

*I am not holy like Archbishop Desmond Tutu,  
forgiving like Nelson Mandela,  
or disciplined like Mahatma Gandhi  
but I care and I am willing to serve.*

*I am not brilliant like Elizabeth Cady Stanton,  
or as eloquent as Sojourner Truth  
and Booker T. Washington  
but I care and I am willing to serve.*

*I have not Mother Teresa's saintliness,  
Dorothy Day's love or Cesar Chavez's  
gentle tough spirit  
but I care and I am willing to serve.*

*God it is not as easy as it used to be  
to frame an issue and to forge a solution  
but I care and I am willing to serve.*

*I can't see or hear well or speak good English,  
I stutter sometimes, am afraid of criticism,  
and get real scared standing up before others,  
but I care and I am willing to serve.*

*I'm so young  
nobody will listen  
I'm not sure what to say or do  
but I care and I am willing to serve.*

*Use me as Thou will today and tomorrow  
to help build a nation and world  
where no child is left behind  
and everyone feels welcome and justly treated.*

moral and economic compass to protect and invest in every child.

Let's pray that we may commit to acting on God's call through the prophet Zechariah "to see that justice is done, to show kindness and mercy to

one another, not to oppress widows, orphans, foreigners, who live among you or anyone else in need" by joining together and serving and caring.

Marian Wright Edelman is president of the Children's Defense Fund.

## Segregation Still Thrives America takes a step backward

BY JUDGE GREG MATHIS

In the 1980s, America's neighborhoods became more diverse as whites, blacks and other ethnic groups began to live in close proximity to one another. It was as if the ideals of the Civil Rights movement were finally coming to life. Twenty or so years later, things have changed...and not for the better. As far as integration goes, this country has taken a step backward.

Analysis of the most recent Census data tells us that segregation is alive and well. In fact,



most people, regardless of their ethnic group, live in neighborhoods that are overwhelmingly made up of people who look just like them. Blacks are the most seg-

regated minority group in this country; more than 60-percent live in majority black neighborhoods while only 48-percent of Hispanics and 45-percent of Asians live in monolithic communities. The average white American lives in neighborhood that is 74-percent white.

This isn't the segregation of the 1960s, though some of the

deep seeded feelings and policies that created that system still affect us all today. Rather, many Americans tend to self-segregate. It's not as if blacks are falling over themselves to live in all white communities. Our natural tendency to 'stick with our own', however, has its drawbacks. When racial groups are separated; that division creates unfamiliarity with the beliefs and culture of others. This lack of knowledge creates an environment where stereotypes and racial and ethnic bias thrive.

Additionally, segregated neighborhoods lead to separate

but wholly unequal services. For example, in communities where the majority of the residents are minorities, there is less funding available for schools. As a result, our children receive sub-standard instruction. Indeed, middle class black children living in majority black neighborhoods are less prepared for college than lower income white children living in majority white communities.

Anyone who lives in - or has visited - Milwaukee, New Jersey, Detroit, Chicago and New York will not be surprised that these cities lead the nation in

segregation. The mayor's of these metropolitan areas should form a task force and work together, along with the federal government, to address the divisions that segregation creates.

From purposefully creating diverse, mixed-income neighborhoods to developing a school finance system that equally funds each child, there are numerous steps cities can take to lessen the negative impacts of racial segregation.

Greg Mathis is a former Michigan District Court judge and current syndicated television show judge.

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