

News, Views & Commentary

"God makes three requests of his children: Do the best you can, where you are, with what you have, now." African American folklore

Health Notes

SMOKE-FREE HOUSING PROTECTION FOR TENANTS: LEGAL AND EASIER THAN YOU THINK!!!

Dr. George T. Rowan

Michigan is now a national leader in the number of smoke-free apartments. This means that the landlord creates a policy that all common areas, plus the inside of rental units are smoke-free. Tenants actually have a right to live in a healthy environment; free of passive smoke. Based on Michigan Law and the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act, those with breathing and health problems such as asthma, emphysema, heart disease or circulation problems can hold the landlord liable for exacerbation of illness, if smoke exposure is causing the tenant health problems. Landlords own and control the property and there is a liability if the landlord has created an environment that makes tenants ill. There is no legally protected right to smoke. Smoking is a behavior, not a physical condition.

Are you part of the 83%? In the tri-county area the total number of homes that are smoke-free is 83%. The majority of smokers in our community also maintain a smoke-free home (55% Behavior Risk Factor Survey 2003). Non-smokers maintain a smoke-free home 93% of the time (BRFS 2003). This survey included people in the tri-county area that rent and own their own home. Most tenants do not smoke and the data shows that most also maintain a smoke-free home policy. The 17% that are smoking inside their homes and apartments are making others sick, costing you money and damaging your health and property.

Where do smokers take their smoking behavior if the apartment building where they stay is smoke-free? If a landlord creates a smoke-free apartment there is usually an outside ashtray designated as the smoking area. A smoker may live in a smoke-free apartment; they just can't smoke inside the building.

What if I want to quit my nicotine addiction but need help? The Ingham County Health Department provides a free one-time two-hour class twice a month for those wanting to learn more about easy ways to quit. Free information on how to quit-smoking, smoke-free housing help, festival and church prevention outreach are all available by calling the Ingham County Health Department at: 517.887.4315. The New Year is a great time to commit to learning more about how to create a healthier set of behaviors. What step can you take to move yourself to better health? Call, we can help!

Amy Ann Moore contributed to this column. Amy works in the Health Promotion Unit of the Ingham County Health Department and supports smoke-free housing, quit-tobacco services and tobacco and alcohol prevention projects. Help is always available, just call 517.887.4315.

George T. Rowan, PhD is a professor in the College of Agriculture at Michigan State University. He is also chairperson of the Ingham County Board of Health.



Money Walk

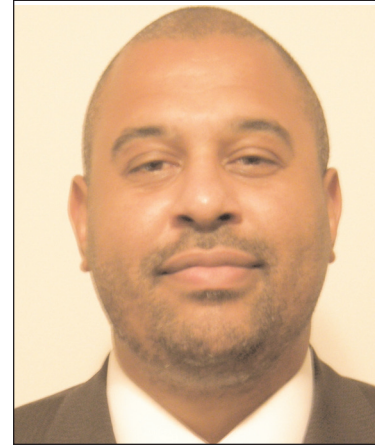
By Rev. Randy E. Parlor

This column deals with the biblical principles needed to obtain freedom from financial bondage.

From everlasting, the LORD worked to create everything and set the spiritual and natural realm in motion. Then, He commanded man to work in order to be fruitful; cultivate the soil, raise animals, and engage physical and mental labor in many ways. Adam and Eve's worship, including their work, was totally enjoyable.

After man chose to sin, he and his seed would eat by the sweat of his brow. Though work would still be enjoyable in many ways the deteriorating conditions that sin caused man to live in on earth would seem to make work more physically and mentally demanding and in some instances unpleasant.

From the time that Adam



disobeyed God's command, the perfect communion they had has been broken for all mankind and man might now choose work that was not meant for him to do in fulfilling the purpose for which God made him. Though he might choose the right line of work, he might also have unclear motives, attitudes, and actions or utilize the fruit thereof for purposes that were not intended.

There is a truth about work that remains constant from the perfect beginning until

now and into the saints' everlasting future; a person will always be fulfilled and thus have peace and joy when working as unto the LORD in the calling whereunto he is called by God. The word of God spoken through King Solomon and the Apostle Paul confirm that the diligent person shall be made fat (have everything that he /she needs to complete his /her purpose on earth) and that a person who doesn't work (is lazy / idle / irresponsible) will not eat (won't have what is necessary for fulfillment or comfort on earth)!

There is an abundance of scripture confirming that you should engage work (both physical and mental) for as long as you live. Total abstinence from work is not healthy for your body and mind. Lack of challenging work and daily regimen can bring about sickness, mental illness, and premature death.

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States denying food stamps and public assistance to drug offenders

By Dr. Henrie M. Treadwell and Elisabeth Kingsbury, J.D.

Each year, hundreds of thousands of people released from U.S. prisons after felony drug convictions discover that serving time isn't their only punishment. They are permanently denied the life-sustaining benefits of food stamps and other public assistance. The restrictions come from the 1996 welfare reform legislation, which was adopted at a time when politicians in Washington were maneuvering to be perceived as tough on crime. It's clear that their fight for political survival blinded them to the negative impacts this ban would have on men and women trying to reestablish their lives after prison stays. Needless to say, it also has a huge impact on their children. Plain and simple, this is public policy at its worst. With ex-convicts already facing monumental hurdles to overcome, ranging from dealing with health concerns to trying to find jobs to readjusting to their families and communities, this policy makes successfully doing any of those even more difficult. Researchers have found that policies such as these are particularly hard on women, at a time when the female inmate population is rising. Juliana van Olphen, of San Francisco State University, says that punitive policies related to employment, housing, education, welfare, and treatment for mental health or substance abuse make it

extremely difficult for drug users and former users to live normal lives and reintegrate into society. "These policies have adversely and disproportionately affected women, especially poor women, ruining their chances of finding employment, housing or education upon release," van Olphen said after her research was published earlier this year in BioMed Central's open access journal, Substance Abuse Treatment, Prevention, and Policy. Some states, however, have discovered that they can limit or remove the federal ban. Under the law, anyone convicted of a federal or state felony involving the possession, use or distribution of drugs is permanently banned from receiving food stamps or assistance under Temporary Assistance for Needy Families. But states are allowed to enact legislation changing or eliminating the ban. Unless they do, people with drug felony convictions can't receive food stamps or welfare assistance. A recent review of the state policies indicates that: * Eleven states have adopted the federal restrictions without any changes. In these states, benefits are permanently denied. It doesn't matter how long ago the crime was committed or successful the rehabilitation whether through a strong work history, drug and alcohol counseling, or by avoiding

repeat offenses. * Thirty states have altered the ban to allow people who meet certain conditions to receive food stamps or welfare assistance. Most times, the conditions include participating in alcohol and drug treatment sessions, passing drug tests, or staying out of trouble for a certain period of time. * Nine states have lifted the ban entirely. Across the country, advocates are also pushing state legislatures to ease or eliminate the ban on people convicted of drug felonies receiving food stamps or welfare, because it is the right thing to do. How can elected officials, civic leaders and community activists encourage ex-convicts to reestablish ties with their families and communities when laws such as this one make that task harder and, at times, even impossible? It's time to change the laws. (Dr. Henrie M. Treadwell is director of Community Voices of Morehouse School of Medicine. This organization works to improve health services and health-care access for all. Elisabeth Kingsbury, J.D., is an attorney and senior researcher for Community Voices. Media seeking interviews with Dr. Treadwell or Ms. Kingsbury should contact Alicia Ingram at ingramalicia@bellsouth.net or 404-493-1724 to schedule.)

The Civil Rights Review

by Bettye Thomas Gilkey

ENOUGH ALREADY WITH SENATOR REID'S COMMENTS!

What did U.S. Senator Harry Reid say that was so incorrect or offensive as to remain newsworthy for more than a week? Did we not think that racial attitudes and issues would be more pronounced once the White House became Black? President Obama inherited a horrific mess from George Bush and is having a hard enough time watching his back around his skinhead secret servicemen and their security breaches than to get hung up on comments made by a staunch POLITICAL supporter. He's REALLY got much bigger fish to fry.

Perhaps I'm settling in age and taking a more realistic view on racial issues. Or it could be the fact that I have bi-racial grandchildren that bleed red just like my friends and family do. But I wasn't offended.

Senator Reid didn't lie. President Obama IS "a light skinned African American with no Negro (black) dialect unless he wants to have one." So am I and you, you and you! We survive by being bilingual and bi-cultural in this society. Most of us were taught to "talk proper" (i.e., minus the Negro dialect) outside of home and especially around white authority/business figures. I haven't talked to a Negro yet who cannot immediately transform into Ebonics when reconnecting with the "Village." So what's the big deal?



Black Voices.com writer Paul Shepard said "the use of the word NEGRO was unsettling." Didn't we just bury the N word a few years ago? Supposedly, but I still hear it an awful lot and it's not from white people. Shucks, I began using the word NEGRO after the funeral so I won't say the N word. What about you?

Keep in mind that Senator Reid is a white Democrat who not only supports Mr. Obama, but is trying to learn, along with his colleagues on both sides of the aisle, to be politically correct with the nation's historic first Black President. I believe we have to keep that in mind and understand that racial attitudes are a challenge for ALL of us. We live in an historically racist society, but what Senator Reid said was racial, not racist. There is a difference.

DYSON SAYS 'OBAMA RUNS FROM RACE...'

As a follow up to Senator Reid's comments, outspoken Georgetown University Professor Michael Eric Dyson accused President Obama of "avoiding racial issues". He says the President "runs from race like a black man runs from a cop." Dyson believes "we should ask Mr. Obama to stand up and use his bully pulpit to help us."

President Barack Obama probably is reluctant to discuss race at this time, since he blew his race-neutral strategy when Harvard University's Henry Louis Gates was insulted by the police several months ago. President Obama retorted that the police "acted stupidly" without even knowing all the facts. I believe he made white folks a little angry with him for that one and now he can't really go there for a while, if ever. TheNationalConversationonRace.com is probably the best venue for the American people to discuss race.

In a recent blackspin.com poll, 634 respondents were asked whether they agreed with Dyson that President Obama needs to face the conversation on race? The following results were posted:

Yes, he needs to use his political clout to get these issues finally addressed 47%
No, does he want the brother to get fired 40%. Not Sure 13%
Email me at Thomasgilkey@aol.com with your comments, please.
"Farewell my deep and Africanic brothers and sisters. Be brave. Keep freedom in the family and do what you can for the White folks. And write me in care of the post office." (Where did this quote come from?)
And may the peace of God that passeth all understanding be with us all until the next time. Be Blessed. I am!