



the Constitution

OPINION

\*\* Friday, October 9, 1992 A13

TO THE EDITOR . . .

### Atlanta Project is opening doors, giving hope to those who need it

The Editors: After reviewing all of the recent negative publicity about the Atlanta Project, I feel compelled to offer another point of view.

I have seen the Atlanta Project, through former President Carter's influence and prestige, make a positive impact on this city by touching the conscience of the community, causing it to respond to this effort. I have seen the sensitivity threshold of corporate Atlanta become elevated and doors open that normally would not have been. And I have seen the project generate hope within people and change their circumstances.

The most dramatic example of this that I know involves Alfreda Capers, founder of the Changed Living Recovery Residence, a house that she established to help rehabilitate pregnant and post-partum women and their children addicted to crack cocaine.

She came to the committee meeting and informed everyone of what she is doing, and that she was about to lose this house because she funded the effort out of her pocket and had run out of money. The committee voted immediately to solve her problem, sending committee members the next day to see what she needed. Upon viewing her operation and seeing the women and children, she gave us her needs list.

Mr. Ted Renner, chairman of the Atlanta Area Business Council and the Marriott Corp., took the list and said "We will take care of everything on it." That included renovating the house, her supplies, and furnishings.

The project is helping her with her non-profit status and the means to purchase the house. This process did not take months of deliberation or a feasibility study, it just took the will of the people and a corporate partner like Marriott and Ted Renner, who want to make a difference. Because of the project, people are receiving access to financial resources through the commitment of NationsBank and other financial institutions.

None of the problems that have been mentioned with the project is insurmountable. This process is too important. The prevailing attitude should be one of coming together, resolving the differences and continuing onward. Were it not for the fact that so many people are falling through the cracks, the Atlanta Project would not have been necessary. This process can work. There are too many people that need it to work.

**In my opinion**



Leroy Tyler, formerly with the Black Yellow Pages, is an entrepreneur currently working with a group on a new agricultural invention.

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## The Importance of "The Message For The Moment"

by LeRoy Tyler

Of the numerous events that have occurred throughout history, the ones that had a message attached to them stand out in the minds of humanity and caused them to respond to it. The message by the founder of UNIA, the Universal Negro Improvement Association, Marcus Garvey, was "Up you mighty race, you can accomplish what you will." His messages were so motivating that it galvanized Black people throughout America, to strive to return to Africa. It

was estimated that 200,000 people in North America and the Caribbean supported his message which caused him to organize the Black Star Line, a shipping operation to transport people back to the Continent. What was amazing was Garvey building his following without major media outlets to carry his message. Basically small media outlets and word of mouth grew his movement. The only thing that could hinder it was those within our community who betrayed him.

When a young Baptist minister was asked to lead a congregation and community suffering from discrimination during the 1950's in Montgomery, Alabama, he accepted the position and endured the adversity that came with it. Through the hard times his messages and actions kept the The Movement alive and in motion, which caused it to be seen. The March on Washington on April 28, 1963, was the event that placed this preacher on a large public stage, but The Message he gave is what caused the turning point for the entire Civil Rights Movement. Google's AI evaluation of The Speech gives the following observations: It Nationalized the Movement from the focus in the South to including the entire country. It Changed Attitudes making people feel more strongly about racial justice. It Influenced Legislation, it helped in passing the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and other civil rights legislation. The Preacher used rhetorical techniques to make the speech memorable. It combined Sacred and the Secular ideas to convey to America that it is at a historic Moment for change that is needed.

The most compelling Message was what this Preacher delivered on the night before his death. It is so moving that it is hard to see it without ones tearing up. For the past fifty six years this Preacher's final Message has so captured and amplified the essence of his work and his sacrifice, that it is not necessary to mention him by name. The overwhelming majority of humanity around the entire world who reads this will know who he is.

My own experience in having a Message for The Moment was when I was working with The Atlanta Project, a program created in 1991 by the late President Jimmy Carter, for economic and social development in Atlanta's under-served communities. Atlanta's corporate business and social service communities pledged to work with TAP in helping it to meet its goals. As this process was being organized some of the leadership in Atlanta's Black community started criticizing the program, and made accusations of it being disrespectful and patronizing to that leadership. These accusations started causing distrust of the program which hindered its progress.

I started working with the program just as this conflict started. I saw the negative impact it was having with the staff and its leadership. As this scenario was growing I observed that there was no plan to effectively deal with it. While considering what could be done to solve the problem, I attended a meeting for organizing the program's ability to determine what projects would be identified and adopted to receive help, mandated by the program and the community residents. In the middle of the meeting a woman named Alfreda Capers came into the meeting

and told the participants that she has dedicated her home to helping Crack Cocaine addicted mothers, who were having Crack Cocaine addicted babies. It was called the Changed Living Recovery Residence.

She stated that she was about to lose her house, due to running out of money because of the service she was providing to these mothers. When she told us this, the participants voted that her problem would be dealt with immediately. The next day the leadership committee and its corporate partners visited Ms. Capers house and saw her operation and what her needs were. She presented her needs list to the committee and Ted Renner, the Chairman of the Atlanta Area Business Council and the Marriott Corporation stated, "We will take care of everything on it."

The help that Ms. Capers needed to help others was committed to her without any deliberation. We saw a process that could turn on a dime to help people yet it was still being criticized. At this point I decided to craft a message to be sent to the Metro-Atlanta community, that describes what I witnessed. I wrote a letter to the editor of the Atlanta Journal-Constitution newspaper. Mr. Neil Shorthouse, who I worked for and who was the co-founder of Communities in Schools of Georgia, helped me by getting it to his contacts at the AJC.

I forgot about the letter until Neil came up to me and said that I should be looking out for a letter from President Carter, I asked him why and he said "He liked your article." I still had not thought anything about it until the day a letter from President Jimmy Carter was delivered to me. It was to the point and stated that he did indeed like the article. I was not aware of how it was received by our staff or the community at large until I heard it come from Ms. Gwen Davis, an executive on loan from Georgia Power, to help in developing TAP.

She recited how on a Friday morning, the environment was gloomy and dejected at TAP headquarters because of the criticism and accusations from some members in the community. She said that the morning paper started circulating around the office and as it was being read, it helped to change the mood of the office and lift up the spirits of the staff. Hearing this helped me see that the article did what I was aiming for, which was helping people see that what we were doing at TAP mattered. I knew that TAP had grabbed the attention of Atlanta and the rest of the country, on the days that I saw Jane Fonda and Michael Jackson strolling casually through the headquarters building, observing the activity.

The most amazing reaction to me was that Neil came up to me and said, "President Carter wants to meet you and take a picture with you." I had no dreams about that article at all, neither wildest or tamed. But when I was told the former President of the United States wants to meet me and take a picture with me, that was mind-blowing. It is gratifying to have an effort that was meant for good to be viewed as significant. I was later invited to attend a meeting with President and Mrs. Carter, and with other members of the community to discuss and give my opinion, on how we could deescalate a planned protest at an event planned by President

Carter.

It was also gratifying that my opinion was heard about things related to promoting the activities of TAP, which led me to me being placed on the Media and PR Committee for TAP. A case in point was Ms. Gwen Davis suggested that we have that event, a block party with food, music and dancing for the East Atlanta community where President Carter was developing TAP. I raised my hand and told her, our community doesn't need another reason to boogie, we need information also about how we can obtain banking services where they are not prevalent, sources to reveal housing and job opportunities that are available, and healthcare that is accessible. She said, "Your right, lets add that to the party and have all of these resources present." The event was well attended and successful.

I'm not trying to present the idea that my actions were crucial for the community acceptance of The Atlanta Project. I believe the only reason that my article was considered was because of it being connected to President Carter, and Neil Shorthouse, who reported directly to him, was behind the scenes pushing what I was doing. No doubt the ideas of President Carter writing me a thank you letter and taking a picture with me were Neil's ideas, because he subscribed to the concept that progress can happen when those working to make it happen, don't care who receives the credit.

This is also the objective of the Carib Voice Radio Network, and its founder, Aubry Padmore. We want to help in delivering your Messages to the people, if they can benefit society and cause it to turn from destruction to construction.

The only way this will happen is by allowing the the truth to be heard by the people. What must stop is the tendency of people making judgments on what they here, without having any knowledge of understanding of what was said. We can't afford to keeping doing this because this year a lot of information will be presented to the world, which will deal with subject matter that many of us are not may not know about. We must listen to understand in order to solve the problems that trouble the entire world.

If you have your own "Message For the Moment" that can accomplish any of the above, we want to help you expose it, by all means.