

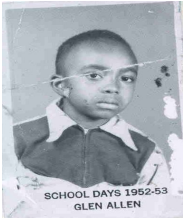


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"The Foundation"™



Then

Now



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The Last Train North
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TIME-OUT

In my workshops, I often start out by asking participant's to employ the 'time-out' hand sign and then when I count to three, I ask them to give me a rousing 'time-out.' Often times, they do just that. It's a great sound-one that brings with it silence and focused attention. Why such a reaction? Athletics has trained us to expect something strategic to be discussed during this inclusive huddle-the results of the call for 'time-out.' Before I go further, my personal friends who are sharing this 'November' conversation are no doubt in shock that I'd resort to an athletic metaphor for my purposes. You see I am the probably the only male on the planet who would have talked with Michael Jordan without recognizing him. Yes, you read correctly, several years ago, I found myself in San Antonio, Texas at the 'final four' a gift trip for my son. While there, my good friend, assistant coach to the Spurs, Paul Pressey had us to come out on the floor before the game started. While on the court surrounded by tall athletes, I found myself in the circle with Michael Jordan and was just talking away, shaking hands and making commentary and not recognizing him until my son showed up. No, I shouldn't use this metaphor, but it is absolutely appropriate! I'm calling for all of America to take 'time-out.' The circumstances of our economy are serious. We must focus-put our shoulders together, align our thoughts and listen intently for the strategy we need going forward. How will we live out the next period, the next quarter, the next half of our lives?

At this juncture, as in basketball, America needs everybody in the huddle. We need the known players, the bench-warmers, the trainers, and the well-dressed assistant coach who proudly parades up and down the sidelines without breaking a sweat. The outcome of this game is too important to not be a willing participant in the strategy to win. America, none of us can afford to sit this one out. South Hampton or Watts, we are citizens all! Corporate CEO, custodian or the elementary teacher, this is our life-our future. Regardless of who did wrong or played poorly, the rest of the game we call 'our way of life' is dependent upon each of us understanding that we all have a vested interest in the outcome-the social and economic stability of our nation. Likewise, it is incumbent upon our elected leaders who stand in the center of our huddle to lay party politics and personal egos aside and take heed to the words of the visiting Frenchman who came to America over one hundred and seventy years ago, Alexis de Tocqueville. He said and I quote, "America is great because America is good, if America ceases to be good, she'll cease to be great." Today, our 'greatness' is in question. Our strategy must be to once again define and embrace the 'good' that is essential to the restoration of our 'greatness.' The headlines we read and hear, both mornings and evenings talk about an erosion of confidence- spurring the economic nightmare that we currently face. As we ponder our tomorrow, many of us are reminded of stories we once heard from our grandparents who remembering the depression would often scold us to be prudent, thoughtful and unselfish on our shift. We should have listened!

During these times, we feel vulnerable. I know I do. However when vulnerability shows up, we tend to have a clearer picture of our interdependence and our shared humanity. When 'stuff' starts disappearing, we are still left with the people in our lives. Laughter and kind acts will not fall prey to the economic meltdowns. Vulnerable times show selfishness and greed for what they really are...the drivers of out-of-control ambition. In Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, he questioned the long endurance of a nation so conceived as ours and reminded those gathered of the task before them. He called 'time out' and a nation huddled. And it was obvious that the endurance he wished for, lived within each of us. He led America onto the court with his resolve for this nation that this government of the people, by the people and for the people would not perish from the earth. He called 'Main Street' to action. And now we must huddle again and hold accountable those who took unfair advantage of the positions of trust our nation provided them. During this 'time out' we want to hear clearly what will be required of them and each of us, after all, this is one game we must win, not just for ourselves, but for the generations not yet born and the world that still watches us.

Is it too late? As long as time is on the clock, and the 'confidence' to win defines the huddle. As 'one' nation, we can play harder than ever, jump higher than before, make more points than we thought we could and when the buzzer sounds, America can once again give the collective winner's 'hi-five.' The 'confidence' needed cannot be legislated or voted in. This is indeed a clarion call to 'honest action' at all levels of our society. We have within each of us the gift of 'good' our nation needs to continue the 'greatness' observed so long ago and revive our confidence in this incredible way of life that has been entrusted to each of us. We are the Citizen-Trustees of this Democracy and as such we are duty bound to ensure that it does not disappear from the earth and that it long endures. The Power of Community builds and strengthens our 'team' and as we contemplate and decide our next play to ensure we endure, it is critical that it involves all of us. Now is the time, more than ever, to come together and play the next period, quarter or half of our lives as a United 'team.'

- Clifton L. Taulbert