

OPINION

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The Portland Observer

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Tuesday, April 13
Portland Center: 12753 S.W. 68th Ave., Room 260, Portland



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Equality Gaps Persist

Lack of progress in jobs, wealth, education and health

How much closer is America to achieving equality between blacks and whites since the civil rights movement? Not close enough, and black progress is precarious at best according to a report released by the National Urban League, "The State of Black America 2004."

As part of the report on black progress, the league unveiled its first "Equality Index" a statistical measurement of the disparities that exist between blacks and whites in economics, housing, education, health, social justice and civic engagement.

The report found that despite substantial progress, the status of African Americans is 73 percent of white Americans.

Marc H. Morial, president and CEO of the National Urban League, said African-American progress has been precarious since the civil rights era.

"While there have been increases in business formation, home ownership and educational

attainment, equality gaps remain between blacks and whites, particularly in the area of economics," Morial said. "As our nation becomes more racially diverse, we must work together to close these disparities. This is crucial if America is to maintain its position as an economic power and world leader."

The urban league report found



Urban League President Marc H. Morial

vice at 1.08 percent.

The report also surveyed the attitudes of African Americans, Hispanic Americans and Asian Americans concerning quality of life, education, finances, discrimination and pertinent social issues.

It found 52 percent of minority respondents believe the country is headed in the wrong direction. The same figure rated public education as fair to poor. 55 percent of the minority respondents want voting bans for ex-felons lifted and 88 percent believe in alternatives to imprisonment for non-violent offenders

Forty percent of African Americans believe "little progress" has been made since the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 with the same amount of respondents feeling "very little or no improvement" has been achieved in economics and social mobility.

The Urban League said it is committed to filling the equality gaps through measures such as job training and housing development assistance.

"The point is to keep our eyes on the prize of African Americans and all people of color striving to achieve their full measure of American citizenship and opportunity," Morial said. "It is time to dream bigger dreams."

Supreme Court Opens Itself to Corruption

BY JUDGE GREG MATHIS

Everyday in America, dozens of lower court judges throughout the country recuse themselves from a case that may represent a conflict of interest or give the appearance of impropriety. The judges withdraw from such cases voluntarily to avoid the embarrassment of being ordered off the case by a higher court.

Court rules and the law provide such protections in effort to avoid the possibility of corruption in the justice system. Unfortunately, the U.S. Supreme Court, the highest court in the land, has no such safeguard against corruption.

Supreme Court Justices cannot be forced to recuse themselves from a case that presents a conflict of interest for them. The court rules and the law provides that only the Supreme Court Justices themselves can decide whether they should withdraw from a case, and if they decide for themselves that they have no conflict, their decision is final and they cannot be forcefully removed from the case.

This lack of safeguard in the U.S. Supreme Court is currently creating cause for concern because of a case involving Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia and Vice President Dick Cheney.

The case involves a lawsuit by the environment group Sierra Club

against Vice President Cheney in effort to force him to release information on private meetings he held with energy executives while creating Federal energy policies. The Sierra Club and many others believe that corporate executives from energy companies may have unlawfully influenced those energy and oil policies and want to force a reluctant Dick Cheney to disclose who was at his meetings and what was discussed.

The conflict for Cheney and

despite calls for his recusal from lawmakers, news media and many in the legal community.

Clearly Justice Scalia's presence on this case creates a potential for corruption and certainly gives the appearance of impropriety. Nevertheless, Justice Scalia refuses to recuse himself from the case and there is nothing in the law that can force him off the case.

The only action possible is his impeachment and that can only occur if there is evidence that

The conflict for Cheney and Justice Scalia occurred when the two of them decided to go on a private hunting trip three weeks after the U.S. Supreme Court agreed to hear the energy task force case involving the Vice President.

Judge Greg Mathis



Justice Scalia occurred when the two of them decided to go on a private hunting trip three weeks after the U.S. Supreme Court agreed to hear the energy task force case involving the Vice President. The two of them flew together in a government plane accompanied by Justice Scalia's sons.

The two claim they did not discuss the upcoming case and as a result, Justice Scalia refuses to remove himself from the case

indicates he may have committed a crime. His reluctance to remove himself from this case undermines the credibility of the U.S. Supreme Court. No wonder people are so suspicious of our Justice System. It appears the highest Court in the land has the highest potential for corruption.

Judge Greg Mathis is Chairman of the Rainbow PUSH-Excel Board and a National Board Member of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

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The Regional Coalition for Clean Rivers and Streams: Cities of Gresham, Portland and Vancouver, Clean River Partners of Clackamas County, Clean Water Services, Clark County, Multnomah County and Metro.

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