

# OPINION

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CARTOON BY BEN DIBB

## Failing in Healthcare

### Solutions from both political parties fall short

BY JUDGE GREG MATHIS

As the country prepares for the national Democratic and Republican conventions this summer, 44 million uninsured Americans are undoubtedly waiting to hear of a healthcare plan that will provide medical insurance for them and their families.

Unfortunately, the proposals made by both parties thus far, fall short in meeting the desperate need for major changes in our national healthcare system. In the meantime, uninsured families, small business employers, as well as corporate leaders are all holding their breath hoping that the government will intervene in what is rapidly becoming America's number one domestic crisis.

As our economy struggles to recover from nearly four years of business and job loss, increased health care costs threaten to stall any meaningful economic recovery and cause more American workers to lose their coverage. Healthcare premiums have increased by double digits over the past few years.

The Congressional Budget Office reports that for every 1 percent increase in healthcare cost to businesses, 200,000 workers lose healthcare coverage because their employers can no longer afford to pay the high insurance premiums. The situation has gotten so bad that even the leaders of the nations' largest corporations are now calling on the government to

intervene.

Free market capitalists, such as General Motors Chairman Richard Wagoner and Bill Ford, chairman of Ford Motor Company, are both looking to the government to reform a healthcare system they say hurts corporate America's ability to compete in the global economy.

The current proposals from both major political parties and their Presidential candidates appear to fall short of meeting the healthcare and insurance needs of our citizens. President Bush's

proposals to help people buy insurance through tax credits and health savings accounts would have little impact for the working poor, who are the majority of the uninsured. Democratic candidate John Kerry's plan would expand healthcare coverage for more people but still falls short of an overhaul that would provide universal access to health care.

Both political parties regard universal healthcare, which pro-

vides healthcare coverage to all U.S. citizens, as too expensive. However, emergency room treatment, which is where most of the uninsured go when they are sick, costs nearly as much as it would to provide insurance to those without coverage.

When people without insurance obtain high cost emergency care, U.S. taxpayers end up footing the bill – so we might as well pay on the front side by investing tax dollars in a program that provides access to quality preventative healthcare and treatment to all Americans.

Judge Greg Mathis is chairman of the Rainbow PUSH-Excel Board and a national board member of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.



Judge Greg Mathis

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## Quiet Form of Racism Persists

BY RON WEBER

For decades I have heard how well African Americans are doing today in comparison with earlier times. Reports tell of how the Civil Rights era of a

the surface, much racism remains underneath.

Today, minority students have better access to college grants, scholarships and low interest loans than ever before. Lending

racism as possible and hope someday it is eradicated completely.

We don't have to look very far these days to hear about the prisoner abuse in Iraq. If our



Ron Weber

*Our job as humans is to try to limit as much racism as possible and hope someday it is eradicated completely.*

few decades ago did so much for black Americans. I have even preached this myself. However, a few years ago I decided to take a closer look. What I found was that although we have seen many positive changes on

agencies in the housing market no longer "redline" the way they did in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Employment opportunities have opened up for more minorities. Many black Americans are better off than they were decades ago.

prisoners of war had been white British or Russian soldiers, I doubt they would have been treated nearly as bad as the Iraqis. There always seems to be some kind of myths surrounding people who are different than us. Preconceived ideas of entire populations keep racial hatred alive.

So things are much better now, right? Think again. Behind this façade of hypocrisy, fear and stupidity continue to lurk. While African Americans and other minorities may be free to pursue their portion of the American dream, it does not mean that they will necessarily get it. Although discrimination may not face us as outwardly as it once did in America, a quiet form of racial hatred still exists.

Like many U.S. wars before, thousands of black soldiers helped win the peace so that America could be free. Asians and Native Americans have also fought in this country's battles. Right now, American soldiers of all races, including Hispanic and Middle Eastern are over in Iraq and Afghanistan fighting and dying for the American way.

Most people do not want to admit it, but racism is there, and sometimes it cuts both ways.

It's time the "whites only" signs come down for good; even the ones still in our heads.

Whenever you have a minority situation, there will always be some mistrust between majority and minority. Our job as humans is to try to limit as much

Ron Weber is a regular contributor to the Portland Observer. He is a writer and speaker on African-American history.

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