

OPINION

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New Blood for the GOP?

Voters want leaders of varied backgrounds, complexions

BY MARC H. MORIAL

Who would have thought that amid the great spectacle of the presidential election another fascinating contest for national office would suddenly develop?

Who would have thought that when issues that revolve around race appeared firmly set on the backburner of the season's political discourse, the issue of race would take center-stage in unusual ways? And be grounded in the state that was the home of Abraham Lincoln, the "Great Emancipator?"

And who would have thought that that state's Republican Party, which, like its counterparts everywhere has continually publicly bemoaned its inability to field viable black candidates for virtually any office, would act in a way that guaranteed its selecting a high-profile one?

Of course I'm referring to the contest for the U. S. Senate in Illinois—a contest which, barring a completely unforeseen development, will produce only the third African American to sit in the U.S. Senate in the last 100 years and only the fifth since the end of the Civil War.

Because both the Democratic and Republican candidates are African Americans—the first time this has happened in a race for the U.S. Senate in American history—it is important in unusual and potentially expansive ways.



The catalyst for this stunning turn of events has been Barack Obama, a 42-year-old Illinois state senator from Chicago who swept a crowded Democratic primary field to capture the party's Senate nomination.

Obama's rising political star—he was already heavily favored in Illinois to win the General Election—shot across the national political landscape when he was picked to give a major speech at the Democratic National Convention and electrified not only the convention delegates but a national audience as well.

One product of Obama's star-turn was the quick decision of the Illinois GOP to appoint a black candidate to oppose him: Alan Keyes.

True, GOP officials dutifully declared that Keyes' race was not a factor in his selection. According to a Chicago Sun-Times report, one

spring, to choose Keyes. The second is that Keyes, a prominent conservative activist who's twice run for president, has never lived in Illinois. He lives in Maryland, where in the 1980s and 1990s he twice ran for U.S. Senate, garnering only 29 and 38 percent of the vote, respectively. Keyes' non-residency in Illinois is legal. In fact, he doesn't have to move into Illinois until election day.

I welcome the Illinois GOP's move, because it underscores what Barack Obama's achievements thus far have illuminated: that many voters in Illinois and elsewhere are entirely open to appeals to think about and act on more than their own bread-and-butter issues, and to recognize that those qualified to represent them can come from all sorts of backgrounds and bear all sorts of complexions.

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top state party official said, "It just turned out to be that way. We don't look at color the way the Democrats do. We look at the candidates and where they stand on the issues."

Media editorial reaction to such comments for the most part has ranged from incredulity to scorn. One reason was that state GOP leaders bypassed nearly a dozen white candidates, some of whom had run in the Republican primary this

Obama's appeal is so refreshing precisely because he's integrated his diverse ethnic heritage, his civic involvement and record of service in office, and his positions on issues of concern to voters into a formidable political persona.

Will the GOP, not just in Illinois, but across the country, get the message? Has it finally awoken to the fact that it needs to act forcefully on its rhetoric about inclusion—that there's political hay to be made from it? Does importing the highly-visible Alan Keyes to Illinois represent, as some suspect, a cynical sacrificial-lamb maneuver? Or is it evidence that Republicans really recognize their political need for new blood?

Marc H. Morial is president and chief executive officer of the National Urban League.

A Word from the World

Our global village is in pain

BY BERNICE POWELL JACKSON

I have just returned from an international meeting of church leaders from around the world—from Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Pacific as well as Europe and North America. As so often happens, they have a different message for us than the one we read in the newspapers or see on television. Their message is that security is indeed a problem for the rest of the world—but for most of the world security means whether families will have food to eat, clean water to drink, control of their own natural resources, a clean environment as well as the right to choose their own governments. And for most of the rest of the world, the U.S. right now is seen as a threat to that security.

That's a pretty sobering message. But there are reasons for it and it would be wise of us to listen closely to them.

Security to the rest of the world, especially the developing world, is tied to economic justice.

We heard many stories about how their people are suffering greater gaps between the wealthy few and the many poor. In some of these cases, church leaders traced their nations' participation in World Bank re-financings and development schemes which required, for example, poor nations to use multinational corporations and accounting firms to privatize water and other public service, thereby costing the people much more to just buy water. They pointed to the fact that many developing nations have been required by the World Bank and others to downsize their governmental payrolls, thereby increasing the number of unemployed in nations struggling to create jobs. They pointed to the fact that public education, health care and social security are collapsing in many of these nations, as they struggle to pay off even the interest payments on debts incurred.

The global village is in pain and our ears seem to be deaf to that pain.

Our meeting took place in Africa, where HIV and deaths from AIDS imperil the Sub-Saharan continent. There are some 42 million people with the disease and 35 million of them are Africans. Most of them are women.

President Bush promised \$15 billion in U.S. aid for HIV/AIDS work in Africa, but closer examination reveals that the pledge was not for new dollars and nowhere near that amount has yet reached Africa.

The message for us is that security for the rest of the world means that we must find ways to understand that our responsibility as the world's superpower is to be peacemakers. We cannot turn our backs on the fact that most of the world, including our closest allies, now look warily at the U.S. and are fearful of what the future holds for the world if we remain on our present course.

Security for the rest of the world is tied to finding ways to live peacefully in a multi-faith world. It is imperative that leaders of all faiths around the world work together for peace with justice in a world where there seems to be too little of both.

The people of the world have a message for us. The question is do we want to hear it.

Bernice Powell Jackson is executive minister for Justice and Witness Ministries for the United Church of Christ.



Where is Today's Muhammad Ali?

BY JUDGE GREG MATHIS

From athletic shoes to sports drinks, today's major athletes can and do, hawk everything under the sun. Unfortunately, when it comes to political and social issues, these celebrities are uncharacteristically silent.

It was not always the case that sports figures collected major endorsement paychecks and remained silent on other issues. Muhammad Ali changed his name from Cassius Clay in an act of social and political consciousness. His outspokenness cost him much in his career, yet he continued to speak out. His bravery and conviction is missing from the great majority of current sports stars.

Not all entertainers fall victim to the slave mentality of "take the money and shut up." Musicians and actors alike speak out in the media. Danny Glover has been recognized by numerous organizations for his humanitarianism

and activism. Sean "P. Diddy" Combs has launched a "Vote or Die" media blitz in an effort to reinforce the importance of voting with young people. Russell Simmons is a highly vocal political and social activist. With musicians and



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actors actively speaking out on social and political issues, one cannot help but to look at professional athletes and wonder why they are so silent.

One does not have to be the "greatest of all time" in order to speak out and help influence those who watch, praise and cheer every slam

dunk, home run and touch down. All one has to do is be politically aware and socially conscious.

In this election year, there is much to debate: the economy, the real reasons behind the war in Iraq, genocide in African nations, education and so forth. These are issues that affect and impact our community. Remembering the brave legacy of Muhammad Ali, a man who was stripped of his boxing title because of his stand against the Vietnam War, today's athletes should be empowered to take similar stands against the major issues of the day. This is not just the right thing to do, it is the essential thing for these athletes to do.

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 screenshot shows a web browser window displaying the Portland Observer website. The page includes a navigation menu on the left with categories like Metro, Sports, Focus, Health, Opinion, Police/Vancouver, Religion, and General News. The main content area features a top story titled "Adams High Awaits Wrecking Ball" with a sub-headline: "The Portland School District has proclaimed that there will be a new Whitaker Middle School to replace the empty and former Adams High School at 5700 N.E. 39th Ave. Of course the new building will look very different and will bring new housing with it — something that makes nearby existing neighbors a little nervous." Below this is another article titled "Keeping a Close Eye On Crime" and "Spraying Makes Progress in Mosquito Fight". A sidebar on the right contains a "Top Stories" section, a "Call us at:" box with the number 503.288.0033, and a "THE WEEK REVIEW" section.