

OPINION

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Plight of Black Americans is No Joke

Bill Cosby doesn't wholly understand leadership

by Phillip Jackson

Bill Cosby's remarks at the 2006 Spelman College graduation were widely reported but not challenged in the media. In short, Mr. Cosby wrongly told the 500-plus female graduates that it was "their turn" to save the black community in the United States and that black men were incapable of doing this.

He said to the women graduates, "It's your turn. We want you to lead in business. We

want you to lead in medicine. We want you to lead in everything." He anchored his comments around the misstatement that most black men are in jail. While I agree with Mr. Cosby that too many black men are in jail, a more accurate representation of this number is between seven and eight percent.

His solution of women taking control over time will only in-

crease suffering, pain and divisiveness. Mr. Cosby should have recommended research-based, viable

of the educational process of our children in the home.

Mr. Cosby is wrong to saddle black women with the

black women is inarguably a good thing, but it does not fix the problems that are plaguing the community.

women and the government of the United States, can solve the problems in the black community.



Apparently, Mr. Cosby doesn't realize that only black men, with the help of black women and the government of the United States, can solve the problems in the black community.

solutions for solving problems, such as rebuilding family structure, economically revitalizing communities and taking control

unenviable task of saving the black community by themselves, because they can't. Improving and empowering

behind—a dead weight on their community. Apparently, Mr. Cosby doesn't realize that only black men, with the help of black

I am, like Mr. Cosby, terribly frustrated with the lack of positive and productive leadership by black men, but the solution is not to destroy, ignore or wrestle leadership from all black male leaders. The solution is to find or support new black leaders, men and women who will do the real work of saving our race from annihilation. Telling black women "It's your turn" is no solution.

Phillip Jackson is executive director of The Black Star Project, based in Chicago, Ill.

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Wonder Why We Don't Vote Republican

Look at poor handling of Voting Rights

BY MICHAEL K. FAUNTROY

The Republicans' handling of the renewal of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 represents a unique ineptness that has resulted in their adding yet another brick in the wall that separates them from African Americans.

Even though the House and Senate ultimately voted to renew the Act, Republicans damaged their ability to build a serious relationship with African Americans by flirting with the possibility of killing the most important piece of civil rights

legislation since Reconstruction.

Politically, the GOP handling of the renewal provided a significant impediment for black Republicans seeking office this year and sends the message to African Americans that their votes are welcomed, as long as they don't expect much in return.

If this is what Republican National Committee Chairman Ken Mehlman has in



mind when he goes to black communities saying, "give us a chance and we'll give you a choice," then heaven help us all.

Along with the controversial 2000 and 2004 presidential elections that clearly disenfranchised black voters and the GOP's weak standing among African Americans, the GOP proves, yet again, that it just doesn't get it with regard to black voters.

The conservative uprising was

led by a group of Texas Republicans who objected to the continuance of Section 5 preclearance requirements, among other concerns.

These requirements, which have protected minorities from onerous and unfair electoral administration decisions, require states to win federal approval of any electoral change before it is instituted.

The Texans, arguing that the requirement is no longer necessary, wanted the requirement dropped. Their fallback position was that if their state should be subject to this rule, then the entire nation should as well. Calling for national coverage seems reasonable on its face but, upon further scrutiny, can only be seen as an effort to dilute federal protections for disenfranchised voters who live in jurisdictions with continuing histories of shaky electoral administration.

Some of the representatives

who participated in the uprising were clearly delusional about the reality of voting inequities. One lawmaker, Rep. John Carter, was quoted in "The Houston Chronicle," saying, "I don't think we have racial bias in Texas anymore." Rep. Henry Bonilla said, "It would be dumb to discriminate, that is the last thing anyone is trying to do."

These assertions fly in the face of America's recent electoral history and shows either an arrogance or ignorance about how elections are administered.

If the Republican Party wants to overcome its low favorability ratings in the black community, then responsible party members in Congress will have to step up and do the right thing - wrest control of the party from those who want to move the country backward.

Michael K. Fauntroy is the author of the upcoming book, "Afros and Elephants: Republican Party and the Black Vote."

Use DNA to Resolve Old Cases

Innocents are wrongly convicted

BY JUDGE GREG MATHIS

22 years ago, Alan Newton was convicted of rape, robbery and assault. For 22 years, he maintained his innocence and, as a result, was denied parole.

For nearly 12 years, Newton fought for DNA testing, certain it would clear his name. It did. And now Alan Newton is free. But he's lost 22 years of his life - years that he can't ever get back.

While the government can't make up for Newton's lost time, it can do right by the thousands of men and women who have, for years, been rotting in cells around this country, holding on to their innocence. The criminal justice system must ensure that DNA testing be made available to defendants in older cases. There

are sure to be many more Alan Newton's out there; they deserve a chance to be heard.

Across the country, there are thousands of defendants, convicted 20 or so years ago, fighting—just like Alan Newton—for DNA testing in their case. The courts, in the interest of true justice, should see to it that those requests be honored in a timely manner.

Far more often than our criminal justice system would like to admit, innocent people are falsely accused and wrongfully convicted for crimes they did not commit. Yet many, including Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia, would argue that the number of false convictions in the nation's courts is insignificant when compared to the number of times the system gets it right.

But these mistakes cost the country in more ways than one: tax dollars are spent to bring the wrong person to trial, while a criminal is left free to walk the streets, threatening our safety.

DNA testing is not a perfect science. Much is left up to forces that can't be controlled. However, with more and more people being exonerated by the testing, the criminal justice system should make it a priority to use the technology, whenever possible, in older cases. If someone was falsely convicted, the truth needs to be brought to light immediately. Like Alan Newton, those wrongfully accused men and women can never get the lost years back. But, by quickly providing access to testing, the system can ensure that more time won't be lost.

Judge Greg Mathis is national vice president of Rainbow PUSH and a national board member of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.



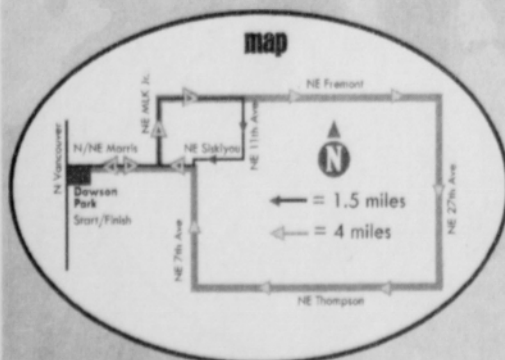
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