

OPINION

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Letters to the Editor Remembering the Dream

Bush's Attack on Affirmative Action

Target this time is school diversity

BY JUDGE GREG MATHIS

Over three years ago, the Bush administration announced that it would file legal briefs challenging the University of Michigan's affirmative action program. The announcement was made on what would have been Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s 74th birthday; the papers were filed the very next day. The Supreme Court



ferent programs for ensuring diverse schools, but each has quotas for minority enrollment. The parents in each city lost in the lower courts but the Supreme Court agreed to hear the cases, an unusual move. It's rare for the Supreme Court to consider a case when the lower courts are all in agreement. This move leads many experts to believe that school desegregation plans and affirmative action, as set forth by Brown is at risk. The current court is very conservative; the two newest judges were appointed by the President and oppose affirmative action. It is also

a quality education. Since Brown, the country has struggled to integrate its schools. There has been progress, however, and many of the early programs are still in effect. But, since the 1980s, the nation's schools have steadily re-segregated. Courts have pulled back from the issue, leaving individual school districts to test different programs designed to promote integration. In communities of color, there is often some confusion as to what 'integration' really is. It is not a desire to go to schools with whites, to be white. Integration is a gateway to a better education.

President Bush has, on several occasions, spoken of his desire to 'uplift the poor.' One pathway out of poverty is education. The president has also insisted that he is committed to an America that provides jobs and opportunities for all, regardless of race. The better educated you are, the better your chances of finding a sustainable job. If Bush is to keep his promises to people of color in this country, he has to support school desegregation.

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

After attending the Aug. 28 "Remembering the Dream" program sponsored by the Northeast Coalition of Neighborhoods at the Convention Center, I am moved to make a few comments.

First of all, I enjoyed the program immensely. I was impressed with the presence of so many prominent African American people, but extremely disappointed with the overall attendance.

As a participant in the Montgomery bus boycott of 1955-56, the program gave me cause to remember those days of many years ago. I consider myself very fortunate to have been able to see and listen to Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King weekly during the year long boycott. All of the meetings were held in black churches and in some instances people had to stand outside and listen through loudspeakers.

I believe Dr. King was the best speaker I have ever heard. He inspired us to love our persecutors and to act against bigotry with non-violence. In short Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. is a saint in some circles.

Considering that we live in one of the whitest big cities in America, I think it is amazing that we have a Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard and a Martin Luther King Jr. statue at the Convention Center.

Sam Jackson Jr.
Northeast Portland

The Bush Administration took this extra step to make sure the court understood just how badly they want the practice to end.

eventually ruled in favor of the University. The ruling, for the time being, preserved the legacy of Brown v. the Board of Education, the 1954 landmark case that ended legal segregation in the nation's public schools.

The Bush administration, hell bent on making sure affirmative action is done away with for good, is back in the courts and, this time, they pose a significant threat to affirmative action and efforts to desegregate schools to achieve equal education.

Paul D. Clement, the solicitor General of the United States, filed a brief last month opposing school desegregation plans in Seattle and Louisville, Ky.

White parents in both cities say the public school systems discriminate against children based on skin color. The districts each have dif-

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HIV/AIDS Now in Our House

We must build a new sense of urgency

BY JULIAN BOND

It's been 25 years since we first learned of a disease that was killing a handful of white gay men in a few of our nation's largest cities - a disease that later became known as AIDS.

But lulled by media images that portrayed AIDS mainly as a white, gay disease, we looked the other way: Those people weren't our people. AIDS was not our problem. It had not entered our house. We had our own problems to deal with, so we let those people deal with their problem.

But a lot has changed. Now almost 40 million people worldwide have HIV and 25 million are dead. And most of those who have died and are dying are black. That's not just because of the devastation the pandemic has wreaked upon Africa.

The face of AIDS in the United States is primarily black as well. The majority of new HIV infections here are black, the majority of people who die from AIDS here are black, and the people most at risk of contracting this virus in the U.S. are black. AIDS is now in our house. It's now our problem, and we must come up with solutions.

Black leaders at the recent International AIDS Conference in Toronto put AIDS in our community at the top of the national agenda. All of Black America must do the same. Every African American must stand with us, take ownership of AIDS and fight

this epidemic with every resource we have.

When AIDS hit the gay community, its members couldn't afford to wait for the government to save them; they instead worked to save themselves - in part by using tactics and strategies out of our civil rights playbook. AIDS is a major civil rights issue of our time.

We cannot wait for the government to come and rescue us either - that help may never come. Part of our response must be to eliminate the rabid homophobia that lives in our schools, our homes and especially our churches.

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Our inability to talk about sex, and more specifically homosexuality, is the single greatest barrier to the prevention of HIV transmission in our community.

Intolerance has driven our gay friends and neighbors into the shadows. Men leading double lives - on the "down-low" - put our women at extreme risk.

We must also overcome our resistance to safer sex practices that can help prevent the spread of AIDS, and we must ensure that our young people know exactly what AIDS is and how to protect themselves against it.

We must build a new sense

of urgency in Black America, so that no one accepts the idea that the presence of HIV and AIDS is inevitable.

We're calling on Black America to get informed about the science and facts about AIDS. Knowledge is a powerful weapon in this war.

We're calling on black Americans to get tested and find out your HIV status. I have - it took 20 minutes and was bloodless and painless. Knowing your HIV status and the status of your partner can save your life.

We must also pressure our government and elected officials - at local, state, and national levels - to be far more responsible partners than they

have been in the past. We must lift the federal ban on funding for needle exchange programs that have been proven to slow the spread of AIDS. We must also work with elected officials to promote comprehensive, age-appropriate, culturally competent AIDS prevention efforts that give young people the tools they need to protect themselves.

We must heed Martin Luther King's warning, originally meant for others, but right for us now: "Nothing in the world is more dangerous than sincere ignorance and conscientious stupidity."

Julian Bond is chairman of the NAACP Board of Directors.