

# OPINION

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## Electing a President who isn't White and Male

I'm encouraged by the progress

BY MARC H. MORIAL

The 2006 midterm elections have set the stage for some historic developments for women and minorities in the political arena.



With the Democratic Party's takeover of the U.S. House of Representatives, Rep. Nancy Pelosi stands to become the first female Speaker, while Rep. Charles Rangel is poised to take over the helm of the powerful Ways and Means Committee - the first African American to have the job. And in Massachusetts, Deval Patrick, a former official with the Civil Rights Commission under President Clinton, won his bid to become the second African American governor in U.S. history after former Virginia Gov. Doug Wilder, who served in the 1990s.

By the same token, Tennessee Rep. Harold Ford Jr., who ran a remarkable campaign, lost in his

bid to become the first African American senator from the South since Reconstruction. Ohio Secretary of State Kenneth Blackwell, Maryland Lt. Gov. Michael Steele and former Pittsburgh Steeler Lynn Swan were all defeated in their respective races for governor. And in Michigan, voters gave affirmative-action foes a victory

by barring use of preferences by state colleges and universities as well as governmental agencies.

But the recent electoral outcomes still beg the question - if the nation is willing to have an African American lead one of Capitol Hill's most influential committees, a black female Secretary of State and a female Speaker of the House, is it ready to elect a female and/or African American to be president?

According to a recent Gallup survey, the answer is a resounding yes: 58 percent said they believed the U. S. was ready to elect a black president and 61 percent - a female president. But are voters ready to put their vote where their mouth is?

With over 9,000 public officeholders nationwide, blacks have made major progress on the political front since the civil rights movement of the 1960s.

In 1967, Edward Brooke of Massachusetts became the first popularly elected African American to serve in the U.S. Senate. In 1969, the Congressional Black

fringe to the mainstream within the Democratic Party.

"White folks were indignant that he was running," said Eric Easter, who worked on both of Jackson's campaigns, in a 2003 Village Voice story.

"And then black folks got indignant that they were indignant.

*It won't be too long before a person of color or woman does serve our nation's highest office - or at least that is my dream.*

Caucus was formed with 13 members. In 1972, New York Rep. Shirley Chisholm, the first black woman elected to the U.S. House, showed that a black woman could throw her hat into the presidential ring "in spite of hopeless odds" to demonstrate her "sheer will and refusal to accept the status quo."

By 1984, Rev. Jesse Jackson galvanized the black community and liberal democratic base in bringing his candidacy from the

There was this very strong visceral reaction to his presence in the race, over whether this was the right time and right place for an African American to be, and that galvanized his base."

By 1988, he more than doubled his 1984 results, winning 11 primaries before losing to Massachusetts Gov. Michael Dukakis. In 1996, Alan Keyes ran for the GOP nod but had better success in 2000, taking 14 percent of votes in the Iowa

caucuses and 21 percent in the Utah primary. Some news organizations even declared him the winner of the presidential debates.

In 2004, the Rev. Al Sharpton and former Sen. Carol Moseley Braun, the first black woman elected to the Senate, vied for the Democratic nomination, collecting few delegates.

Not since 1988 has a minority candidate seen Jackson's success. Now, two decades later, Illinois Sen. Barack Obama may be just the candidate to make history.

Largely unknown in 2004, Obama emerged from a very crowded field to win a U.S. Senate primary, paving the way for keynote speaking opportunity at his party's national convention.

A December 2005 article in The New Republic argued that Obama would have his best chance of winning the White House in 2008, with no incumbent president or vice president in the race.

But does an African American like Obama or Keyes or even Secretary of State Condoleezza

Rice have a realistic chance of taking the White House in 2008 or 2112 or even 2116?

A study that appeared in the latest Quarterly Journal of Economics concluded that the U.S. electorate is still hesitant about voting blacks into congressional office. It found that whites of both major parties are less likely to vote for their parties' candidates when they are black and that Republicans are 25-percent more likely to cross party lines in senatorial elections when the GOP candidate is black. White Democrats were 38-percent-less likely to vote for black congressional candidates from their own party.

Can Americans really look beyond race and gender when it comes to choosing their national leaders? That remains to be seen. Still, we can be encouraged by the progress. It won't be too long before a person of color or woman does serve our nation's highest office - or at least that is my dream.

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

### New Day Dawning

Victory gives black caucus more power

BY U.S. REP. MELVIN L. WATT

The American people have spoken and African Americans, in particular, have overwhelmingly voted for new leadership in Congress and around the country. We will now have a Congress that works for all Americans.



In the new Congress beginning in January, the Black Caucus have three new members. I congratulate and welcome U.S. Representatives-elect Yvette Clarke of New York, Keith Ellison of Minnesota and Hank Johnson of Georgia. These new representatives will all be powerful forces to help us move forward with our agenda.

In addition, we expect the new committee leadership in Congress to include several of our members: U.S. Rep. John Conyers, D-Mich., as chair of

Judiciary; U.S. Rep. Charles Rangel, D-New York, as chair of Ways and Means; U.S. Rep. Alcee Hastings, D-Fla., as chair of Intelligence; U.S. Rep. Bennie Thompson, D-Miss., as chair of Homeland Security; and U.S. Rep. Juanita Millender McDonald, D-Calif., as chair of House Administration.

Additionally, U.S. Rep. James Clyburn, D-S.C., the current Democratic Caucus Chair, is positioned to become the Majority Whip, the third highest ranking position in the U.S. House. Mr. Clyburn would be the second African American member to ever hold this important position.

"Overall, the members of the Congressional Black Caucus will continue to be leaders in making America work for all Americans and will help enact legislation that will close the disparities gap between the rich and poor in our country.

We look forward to working with Democrats, Republicans and Independents to advance our agenda."

Congressman Melvin L. Watt, D-N.C., is chair of the Congressional Black Caucus.

### Change In Leadership, Not Values

Respecting differences at Clark College

Editor's note: R. Wayne Branch, a local African American leader, was terminated as president of Clark College in Vancouver after a 'no confidence' vote by faculty amid criticism of his commitment to shared governance.

BY RHONA SEN HOSS  
CLARK COLLEGE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

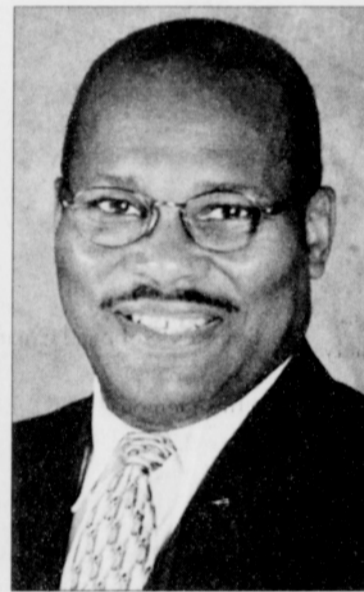
We know that people may be asking that question following the change in presidential leadership at the college. We want our students and the community to know that Clark College remains committed to the mission and vision of our institution - including a respect for differences. That commitment is more than just words.

At Clark College, "Respect for Differences" is so critically important that it was established as one of our six mission imperatives, used to drive planning and decision-making at the college.

As Trustees, we are committed to realizing, in day-to-day terms, what it means to truly



Clark College Board Chair Rhona Sen Hoss



Former Clark College President R. Wayne Branch

*We are developing strategies to increase the number of students of color and international students who attend our institution. In addition, we have adopted an institutional goal to lead and promote diversity initiatives in hiring and training.*

- Clark College Board Chair Rhona Sen Hoss

fostering a welcoming, accessible and inclusive learning environment for everyone. Respect for differences means working proactively to embrace differences and to understand and respect the many ways that we are both similar and unique.

As part of our commitment to those values, we will conduct a diversity audit of the college early in 2007. We want to hear honest feedback from our students, our faculty and our staff on the ways in which Clark College truly reflects a respect for differences - and ways in which we are not yet living our vision.

The data from this college-wide survey will help us create a diversity plan for Clark College. We are developing strategies to increase the number of students of color and international students who attend our institution. In addition, we have adopted an institutional goal to lead and promote diversity initiatives in hiring and training.

Working in partnership with our Director for Equity and Diversity and our College Pluralism Committee, our college leadership team is committed to every step of this journey, just as we are committed to providing the best education and the best experience possible for our students, enhancing their opportunities for success, valuing their individual aspirations and helping each student fulfill their own special dreams.

Rhona Sen Hoss is chair of the Clark College Board of Trustees.

respect differences.

Respect for differences means that our students, faculty and staff reflect the rich diversity of our community. Respect for differences means that everyone feels valued for who they are. Respect for differences means

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