

# OPINION

Opinion articles do not necessarily reflect or represent the views of The Portland Observer

## Give Aspiring Entrepreneurs Hope Improve access to needed resources

BY MARC H. MORIAL

One guiding principle of the National Urban League's recently released Opportunity Compact is the opportunity to prosper. We contend that every individual in America who possesses entrepreneurial vision, ingenuity, drive and desire should have access to the resources needed to establish and grow a viable business enterprise.



Administration's Office of Advocacy report found that minority business owners are less likely to get bank loans of any kind and that African-American and Hispanic owners face loan denials at a higher rate than that of white males.

The importance of minority-owned businesses to urban economic development is well-documented. They're more likely to be located in urban communities so they're more likely to hire local residents and use minority-owned suppliers, thereby lowering local unemployment rates and boosting business growth. Despite these benefits, minority entrepreneurs continue to face major obstacles to their start-up and growth, including lack of financial capital, among others.

A little more than 30 years ago, economics professor Muhammad Yunus launched an experimental project to reduce poverty by lending very small sums of money to landless peasants in remote rural villages of Bangladesh to help them start their own businesses. Within a decade, it grew into a formal bank known as Grameen Bank, which by 1996 had roughly 1,100 branches in Bangladesh and loans in excess of \$2 billion, which were repaid at a rate of 90 percent, serving more than two million clients, according to a 1998 Federal Reserve Bank report.

Wages rose, borrowers increased their savings and school enrollment went up. In 2006, Yunus received the Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts.

nearly 23.5 million micro-enterprises -- firms with less than five employees -- employing nearly 30.2 million -- or 18.2 percent of total non-farm employment, according to the Association for Enterprise Opportu-

Since the beginning of the decade, they've been under constant threat of budget cutback or elimination. One of the most comprehensive is the U.S. SBA's Microloan Program, which provides a combination of

ing 1,031 clients -- 61 percent Hispanic, 27 percent African-American and 40 percent female, with a repayment rate of nearly 96 percent. Since 2000, the group has made nearly 5,000 loans totaling

ated with micro-loans is much lower than that of traditional bank loans, the sting of failure isn't as lasting or as devastating.

It offers hope to scores of would-be minority entrepreneurs of breaking down some of the barriers faced by them in starting businesses.

The Aspen Institute has suggested that micro-lending is a less expensive way of boosting business development than traditional public policy mechanisms such as tax breaks and public subsidies -- up to one-tenth as costly.

For a minimal public investment, micro-lending would be a helpful way to put low-income entrepreneurs on the road out of poverty and toward fiscal independence.

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

*Every individual in America who possesses entrepreneurial vision, ingenuity, drive and desire should have access to the resources needed to establish and grow a viable business enterprise.*

nity. Of black-owned businesses in 2002, roughly 70 percent could be considered micro-enterprises, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

In the 1990s, several federal government programs emerged to advance micro-entrepreneurship.

technical assistance and loans for micro-entrepreneurs. Since 1992, roughly 22,000 loans -- totaling more than \$254 million -- have been made.

In 2006, the nation's largest microlender, ACCION USA, disbursed \$5.65 million in loans, serv-

\$18.6 million.

Microlending in the United States hasn't seen the success that it has in developing countries but it still shows some promise in improving the lot of struggling entrepreneurs. Because the risk associ-

### NEW BIPARTISAN SURVEILLANCE BILL TO EXPAND SPYING ON U.S. CITIZENS



The Portland Observer Established 1970  
 USPS 959-680  
 4747 N. Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd., Portland, OR 97211

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF, PUBLISHER: Charles H. Washington  
 EDITOR: Michael Leighton  
 DISTRIBUTION MANAGER: Mark Washington  
 CREATIVE DIRECTOR: Paul Neufeldt  
 ADVERTISING: Kathy Linder  
 OFFICE MANAGER: Sharon Sperry  
 REPORTER: Raymond Rendleman

The Portland Observer welcomes freelance submissions. Manuscripts and photographs should be clearly labeled and will be returned if accompanied by a self-addressed envelope. All created design display ads become the sole property of the newspaper and cannot be used in other publications or personal usage without the written consent of the general manager, unless the client has purchased the composition of such ad. © 1996 THE PORTLAND OBSERVER. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. REPRODUCTION IN WHOLE OR IN PART WITHOUT PERMISSION IS PROHIBITED. The Portland Observer--Oregon's Oldest Multicultural Publication--is a member of the National Newspaper Association--founded in 1885, and The National Advertising Representative Amalgamated Publishers, Inc., New York, NY, and The West Coast Black Publishers Association

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Portland Observer, PO Box 3137, Portland, OR 97208

CALL 503-288-0033 FAX 503-288-0015  
 news@portlandobserver.com ads@portlandobserver.com  
 subscription@portlandobserver.com

## THE SPINA COLUMN™

An ongoing series of questions and answers about America's natural healing profession.

Part 19. The Golden Years: Keeping in full swing throughout the autumn of life

Q: Back when I was younger, I loved playing golf. Now something is always hurting so I don't dare play! Could you help?

A: It is so unfortunate that millions of our senior citizens have worked and saved and give to their Community only to find the "golden years" more "old" than "gold". Right at the height of their freedom, they often find it difficult to get around, their old activities. Unfortunately, it is often thought that they must "learn to live with it" or be given yet another pain pill. Actually that may be anything but true. In our office we commonly see people in their seventies and eighties. And they love the spring in their step and the twinkle in their eyes they get through Chiropractic. Why don't you get back in the swing of things again? Give us a call today. Isn't it time you stepped up to Chiropractic? Life's "golden years" truly can be golden once again!

**Flowers' Chiropractic Office**  
 2121 Lloyd Center Mall, Portland Oregon 97212  
**Phone: (503) 287-5504**

## FEMA Fails as New Orleans Rises

### A bureaucratic mess two years after storm

BY JUDGE GREG MATHIS

This month marks the second anniversary of Hurricane Katrina, the now legendary storm that struck the Gulf Coast, flooding the city of New Orleans, killing thousands and causing billions in damage.

In the last two years, we've watched residents struggle to return to the Big Easy to rebuild their lives. Some progress has been made.

The city's population is at 66 percent of its pre-Katrina numbers. The labor force has reached 79 percent of its pre-storm levels. Money earned from sales taxes are at 84 percent of their pre-Katrina numbers.

Despite these promising trends, residents and city officials still face obstacles to rebuilding. The biggest obstacle of them all: The Federal Emergency Management Agency.

In the aftermath of Katrina, FEMA inflicted additional pain on the storm's survivors, scrambling to send aid to the hardest hit areas and failing to provide adequate housing and other resources. Two years later, the bureaucratic mess that is FEMA is still failing the people of New Orleans.

Last month, elected and appointed officials from both Louisiana and Mississippi testified in Washington about delays in getting FEMA money to rebuild area schools and police stations. Less than half of New Orleans' schools are open; an-

other 25 schools are set to open in the fall, but many of the repairs on these schools are not yet complete.

Additionally, public buildings such as courts and police stations are in need of serious repair. City police headquarters are currently operating out of FEMA supplied trailers.

More astonishing is that only 22 percent of the 180,000 agency's support.

But why? Why are the people of New Orleans dealing with so much red tape? Is FEMA truly overwhelmed? Is this simply bureaucracy? Or is it racism?

When the first Katrina images were sent around the world -- brown faces, begging to be rescued -- race became an integral part of this story. There are still many who believe the government's slow and unco-

**Interstate 5 is under construction!**

Be safe, be prepared and be patient as the Oregon Department of Transportation repairs and modernizes our highways and bridges.

Between Portland and Medford, drivers will pass through 19 active construction zones on I-5 in 2007. In the Portland metro area,

crews are currently replacing two highway bridges outside Wilsonville, and a paving project between Capitol Highway and the Tualatin River will be complete this fall.

How can you prepare? Stay informed with up-to-the-minute information about traffic and construction by visiting TripCheck.com or calling 5-1-1.

**ODOT IS KEEPING OREGON ON THE MOVE**

**SLOW DOWN! BETTER ROADS AHEAD**

**OTIA**  
 OREGON TRANSPORTATION INVESTMENT ACT

*There are still many who believe the government's slow and uncoordinated reaction to the disaster is directly related to the fact that the city was predominantly African-American and poor.*

applicants who applied for federal funds to rebuild their damaged homes have received any money.

That FEMA is adding to the problems in New Orleans -- instead of helping -- should not be a surprise. In the months after the storm, several housing organizations publicly criticized FEMA for not educating evacuees on the types of federal housing programs available.

Thousands of residents complained that they received FEMA trailers, but didn't get the keys they needed to access it. It has been very clear that FEMA could not -- or would not -- meet the needs of the hundreds of thousands New Orleans residents who so desperately needed the

ordinated reaction to the disaster is directly related to the fact that the city was predominantly African-American and poor.

Whatever the reason for FEMA's inept handling of the situation in New Orleans, it is a testament to the will and the strength of the city's residents that they've been able to come so far, so quickly with what seems to be little support.

Rising, despite obstacles, is something our people have been doing for centuries. The people of New Orleans have continued that legacy.

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