

OPINION

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A Dream Deferred

Reflections on Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

BY BISHOP H. L. HODGE

Once there was a dreamer who proclaimed, "I have a Dream" and the masses shouted out in unison, "We Shall Overcome."

One needs only a cursory glance to discover we live in the shadow of a dreamer denied and a dream deferred.

It is true that Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. lived in a time fueled with so much obvious despair, hate and hurt that it was easy to perceive change and/or give promises of change as an answer to the despairing cry of those who were so long buried over the mask of nullification.

What happen to the dream? Where did the expectation "one day" disappear to? How can we "be free" when credit and upward mobility are nothing more than buzz words and catch phrases designed to pacify and deceive. For those who would dare search for truth regarding the real reasons for wars and why the cost-of-living soars, there is red-lining, boundaries and other limits.

Freedom is the expression of a double standard designed to look as if there are choices to be made, when in reality we're like ducks following the imprints provided for us and never breaking through the ceiling, so cleverly set by the larger community naively believing "we

shall overcome."

The Dream seems to be an illusion. The name Negro has changed in use but not in connotations. African American, black or person of color, it still reflects the debili-

tating impact of "the chains" of discrimination.

One has only to take a cursory glance to see the black race is still entrapped and crippled due to the chains of discrimination held captive on a pretentious island that limits the potential and promotes the shameful condition that make the dream seem to be a rhetorical chant that says, "We shall overcome, some day." In the words of "the Rock," it's "time to smell what I'm cooking."

The Dream is but a shadow; we are still reading the note that promises "all men, black and white will be guaranteed their unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

It is obvious today that America's so-called leaders have once again defaulted. One has only to take a look at our current elections and listen to the theme songs of the campaign, calling for change and overcoming.

Our mind must turn back and wonder, will we overcome 'some day' or has the dream escaped once more? Shall we overcome or have we been overcome (duped)? —Just one man's reflection on the "Dream" of a King.

Bishop H. L. Hodge, Ph.D. is the pastor of Northwest Voice for Christ Community Church, serving Portland and Tigard.



Gender or Race First?

Choosing between Clinton and Obama

BY JUDGE GREG MATHIS

Many people vote for what they believe to be best candidate. "Best" is defined in different ways—some base their decisions on experience and qualifications, some look at the policies the candidate supports and some even consider the candidate's "it" factor or charisma.

In an ideal world, voters should support the candidate whose political ideology would help create a better life for their families. In American society, however, race, gender and religion also play a role in electoral politics. One would be naïve to think that it doesn't.

My question: If all candidates were created equal, with the only difference being race and gender, which would you choose?

Historically, both African Americans and women have been denied access to equal opportunities. For many years, women were denied an education, the right to vote and were relegated to a life as a homemaker.

Once allowed to pursue careers, women were denied equal pay for equal work and many had to endure the unwanted sexual advances of men in their workplace.

Additionally, for many years, women were

denied reproductive rights and, despite the support of millions of American women, the Equal Rights Amendment, which would guarantee equal rights under the law, regardless of gender, was not passed.

African Americans have endured generations of slavery and oppression and the psychological traumas associated with both. After emancipation, American apartheid limited the educational, social, political and economic

both groups continue to fight for justice.

In the political arena, candidates draw from their experiences as members of these groups to form the basis of their political ideologies. These value systems are what attract voters.

Many voters support candidates they identify with, candidates who understand their personal struggles and who have a plan for easing their burdens.

Knowing this, I'd like to pose a question to



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growth of African Americans, creating an education and wealth gap between blacks and whites that is still a reality in today's society.

Though the Civil Rights Act was passed in 1964, African Americans were still denied access to opportunities in the workplace and in the educational system. Furthermore, current practices within the criminal-justice and school systems perpetuate a cycle of inequality.

Both groups - women and African Americans - have overcome seemingly insurmountable obstacles to get where they are today. And

black women: If you believe Hilary Clinton and Barack Obama's beliefs and policies equally benefit your interests, who do you vote for? The white female or the black male? If each candidate supports a platform for change, change that you believe is necessary, who do you support?

You be the judge.

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

Politics Frames Debate in Congress

Presidential election adds to equation

BY MARC H. MORIAL

With the 110th Congress convening soon, the race for president is likely to heavily influence activities on Capitol Hill in 2008.

From the president's annual State of the Union Address and submission of the fiscal 2009 federal budget to formulation of a congressional budget resolution and allocation of funds to federal agencies, it all will take place in anticipation of an electoral and largely partisan storm front.

This year's session is "do or die" time for major bills introduced last year. Big-picture policy issues and unfinished business from last year will likely dominate the political landscape, leaving little room for innovative or breakthrough domestic and foreign policy.

Storm clouds hovering over this year's session include, first and foremost, wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The costs associated with them and what course to take will be major issues in the presidential race and key influences on funding decisions. A new Joint Economic Committee report puts the total cost at \$3.5 trillion if the nation stays the course.

The home foreclosure crisis also threatens to keep the economy

under a cloud. The impact of the crisis has spurred introduction of and action on many legislative initiatives, including ones involving anti-predatory lending strategies.

Legislation to address an acute lack of affordable housing for the poor also faces an uncertain fate this year. The House-passed National Affordable Housing Trust Fund Act of 2007 would assist in the construction, rehabilitation and preservation of 1.5 million affordable housing units over the next decade.

A big question mark is whether presidential politics will spur na-

indexing the minimum wage to the inflation rate will be introduced so that poor and working families no longer have to depend on the whims of Congress.

Despite the fact that 47 million Americans lack health insurance, Congress is unlikely to act on universal healthcare proposals but the presidential race is likely to raise the issue's visibility, setting the stage for debate in 2009.

On the education front, after a number of congressional committee hearings, efforts to reauthorize the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act are likely to come face-to-face with

among others.

The Workforce Investment Act, which is the nation's front-line employment and training vehicle for youth and dislocated workers, desperately needs more congressional champions. Without a reauthorization, funding for employment and training services becomes increasingly vulnerable to the budget ax.

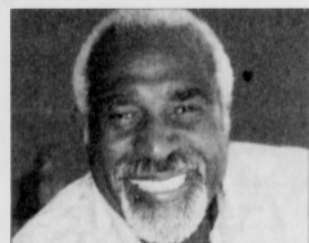
For thousands of low-income Gulf Coast residents who are still - after more than two years - trying to find their way home after hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the sun won't shine until Congress completes work on



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tional discussion of how to put 36 million Americans living in poverty on the road to financial independence. Nearly one-fourth of blacks and over one-third of black children live in poverty.

And employment does not guarantee escape. In 2006, 7.5 percent of working families were living below the poverty threshold. Those with a minority parent were three to four times as likely to be poor as those with a white parent.

It is the National Urban League's hope that legislation

presidential politics this year. While the law expired last September, it provided for an automatic one-year extension.

Progress was made toward reauthorizing the Higher Education Act, the law that provides for expanded access of low- and middle-income students to higher education.

Key issues include: controlling college costs, simplifying the student-aid process, improving teacher training, increasing the Pell grant and expanding college preparation programs for low-income students,

hurricane housing recovery legislation.

And finally, supporters of the D.C. House Voting Rights Act in 2008 are going to try to break a Senate roadblock and get the bill on the chamber's floor for a final vote. In 2007, the Senate failed to overcome a filibuster—on the first of a voting-rights bill since the end of segregation—by a mere three votes.

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

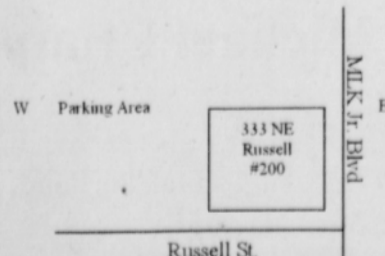
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