

OPINION

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King Legacy Grows

Honor his memory, but don't give up on his dream

By MARCH H. MORIAL

I was only 10-years-old the day a single bullet was permanently lodged into the psyche of the United States of America. With a Nobel Peace Prize and the admiration of millions under his belt, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was already the nation's undisputed champion of freedom. But, on April 4, 1968, Dr. King became a martyr for a global movement that continues to strengthen over time.

Forty years have passed since our great "drum major for justice" was assassinated on the balcony of the Lorraine Hotel in Memphis. But his drum beat



Four decades later, my own three children are growing up in a much different world thanks to the movement Dr. King led. The number of African-American college graduates and political leaders has grown significantly. The black middle class is now a major force in America. And, we are in the midst of a historic presidential campaign in which, for the first time, an African American and a woman are leading contenders for the White House.

But if Dr. King were still alive today, he would not be silent in the face of the prevalent and tragic disparities in jobs, homeownership, entrepreneurship and the well being of our children that continue to impede African-American progress. And neither should we.

For 98 years, the National Urban League has stood with those who have fought for equal opportunity. Our own Whitney M.

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continues to call us to the march of freedom, not only in the United States, but all over the world. Dr. King's legacy of non-violent resistance has played a part in the end of apartheid in South Africa, the fall of the Berlin Wall, as well as the continuing fight for equal opportunity here in America.

For African Americans, Dr. King's life and legacy have special significance. He symbolizes that moment in time when America was compelled to come to terms with the hypocrisy of a constitution that proclaimed all men as equal, except us. His relentless demand for civil rights and universal human rights put the face of dignity on an Alabama woman just trying to take a bus ride home after a hard day's work. It put the heart of humanity into the struggles of sanitation workers in Memphis. It gave moral authority to leaders in Washington who knew the time for change had come.

Young was one of the "Big Six" civil-rights leaders, along with Dr. King, who organized the 1963 March on Washington. And we are very proud to be a part of keeping the dream alive today.

One way we continue to uplift the African-American community is through our Opportunity Compact, a comprehensive set of principles and policy recommendations designed to expand economic opportunity and bridge the gap between the promise and the reality of the great American Dream.

Underlying all that we hope to accomplish is Dr. King's refusal to believe that there are "insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this nation."

Forty years later, let us honor his memory by refusing to give up on his dream.

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



Knocking Down the Barriers

No cost program makes college a reality

By ALGIE C. GATEWOOD

"If you want to make something of yourself, go to college."

It's one of the oldest sayings in the book, right up there with "eat your vegetables" and "look both ways before you cross the street." But there's a reason such slogans become embedded in our collective consciousness — because they're true.

As an educational administrator, I can talk all day long about the virtues of higher education — about the doors it opens, about the possibilities it reveals, about the ways in which it can lead to a deeper understanding of one's self and surroundings. But all of these things are abstract. What do they really mean to a young person living in the real world? Most of all,

what do they mean to a young person who believes college to be too expensive, something reserved for the privileged?

These questions are all too real for many young people, particularly those from traditionally underserved communities. And too often, the barriers between these young people and higher education — whether it's a lack of funds, a demanding

life that leaves little time for school, or the belief that college is simply not an option — are enough to deny the potential that college might unlock.

But here in Portland, concrete steps are being taken to make education's abstract virtues a reality. Through the Middle College program, students from Jefferson and Roosevelt high schools are able to enroll in college classes at Portland Community

Coordinator, who helps them with everything from course selection to study habits. And because each Middle College student is also a PCC student, they are entitled to all of the commensurate benefits, such as access to counselors, and use of Campus technological and research resources.

And even better, once they're up to speed, Middle College students earn ac-

Beyond helping Jefferson and Roosevelt high-school students become acclimated to college life and coursework, the Middle College program helps them to succeed.

College's Cascade Campus while they're still attending high school.

The program makes college studies possible for its students by removing some of the more significant barriers that stand in their way, most notably cost — the Middle College is free to all participants. Perhaps more importantly, Middle College students get hands-on assistance navigating the sometimes-intimidating world of college admissions and registration.

This can have a profound effect on the minds of young people who may have believed college to be beyond their reach. Suddenly, college is not so mysterious and remote, its processes not so complicated. Suddenly, higher education becomes a tangible possibility. And once these young people are in the classroom, studying alongside other PCC students, college is a concrete reality.

Beyond helping Jefferson and Roosevelt high-school students become acclimated to college life and coursework, the Middle College program helps them to succeed. Each student receives one-on-one attention from the Middle College

tual, transferable college credit that they can apply toward an eventual two- or four-year degree, professional certification, or skilled apprenticeship.

There is no doubt that education is the means by which anyone can transcend their circumstances, but if opportunities to do so are not present — or, if such opportunities are not perceived — even the most brilliant mind can fail to reach its full potential. And if that happens, we all fail to reach our full potential.

This is what the Middle College is about: perceiving — and taking — opportunities. With the opportunities available to them at Cascade Campus, young Jefferson and Roosevelt high-school students can indeed make of themselves whatever they wish.

But they should still remember to eat their vegetables.

Algie C. Gatewood, Ed.D., is president of Portland Community College's Cascade Campus. If you are interested in learning more about the Middle College program, call Damon Hickok, the Middle College Coordinator, at 503-978-5552, or e-mail dhickok@pcc.edu.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO BUILD YOUR SMALL CONSTRUCTION BUSINESS?



The City of Portland is Re-opening the application period for the Construction Sheltered Market Program. Certified Minority, Women and Emerging Small Businesses (M/W/ESB) in business for two years or more may apply for the program. Program participants will have opportunities to bid on City of Portland construction projects, and can receive free technical assistance to improve their business management skills.

The following areas of work will be open for applications from Monday April 7 to Friday May 30

Street Improvements
Concrete flat work
Reinforced concrete construction
Excavation

Sewerage treatment lines
Building construction
Structural Demolition
Plumbing

For more information, contact:
Gene Jackson, Program Coordinator
(503) 823-9166, Eugene.jackson@ci.portland.or.us



No More Saggin' for Youth

By JUDGE GREG MATHIS

Sad truth for self-defeating behavior

We've all seen him: A young black male wearing a white T-shirt and jeans sagging so low that his underwear was on display for the whole world to see.

And we've all shaken our heads, wondering what he was thinking, coming outside dressed like that. The sad truth is that he probably wasn't thinking. He was simply emulating popular fashion, not knowing where the trend originated and not understanding the potential social and personal consequences of blindly following the masses.

The sagging pants trend started in prison. Inmates, not allowed to have belts, wore their pants slung low.

Once home, they kept up the practice. Young boys in their neighborhood saw the look and took it as their own. The trend grew and is immensely popular in both urban and suburban areas; many white teens can now be found with their pants

dropping below their butts.

Consciously or unconsciously emulating prisoners, or any other group for that matter, without understanding what you're doing is dangerous. For young black men, who are preyed upon by the prison industrial complex, the trend is especially self-destructive.

Copying prisoners can often times contribute to a prisoner mentality. Already, our young men refer to a prison stint as a state paid "vacation" or time away at "school." To be clear: prison is not luxurious and the education received there is not one that will serve the inmate well once he returns home. Prison, for many, is an unfortunate rite of passage.

Instead of fighting against the odds and working to stay in front of the bars, too many of our boys are embracing the street mentality.

Perhaps they should be told that prison is nothing more than modern-day slavery. Inmates in some prisons in this country are made to produce products sold on the open market. For their work, they receive just one dollar a day. The prison system is highly privatized; large corporations make millions while our young boys waste away mentally and spiritually.

Women beware: you cannot criticize our boys for wearing their pants

low when our girls — and some grown women — are wearing low-rise jeans, cut so low the top of their thongs peek out. That particular style has its roots in prostitution. As a community, we must be consistent in what, who and how we criticize and encourage our young people.

Our youth overuse the phrase "keeping it real" and they are big on demonstrating just how "street" they are. What many do not realize is that they are engaging in self-defeating, self-destructive behavior.

The current generation of young African Americans is one of the most talented we've ever seen. Our people dominate athletics, music, fashion and now politics.

We have repeatedly proven that we can rise above obstacles and do whatever it is we set our minds to.

Unfortunately, too many of our youth are still trapped in a mindset that ultimately puts them at competitive disadvantage against those who are more privileged.

Our young people already have enough to deal with: crime-ridden neighborhoods, poorly funded schools and more.

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