

OPINION

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Olympic Gold Swimming

Diversity in sport saves lives

BY MARC MORIAL



One of the most thrilling moments of the 2008 Summer Olympic games in Beijing was the Gold Medal performance by swimming phenom Michael Phelps and his teammates, Jason Lezak, Garrett Weber-Gale and Cullen Jones in the 4x100 freestyle

beside a pool and one decides it would be funny to push the other one in," said Jones. "If the one who gets pushed can swim, maybe it's funny. If he can't, you've got a real problem."

Statistics show that about 58 percent of black children don't know how to swim. Clearly, more African Americans need to know how to sur-

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relay.

While most of the adulation has rightfully focused on Phelps and Lezak, whose record setting come-from-behind surge earned

vive in the water and Cullen Jones is on a mission to see that they do. One way he plans to deal with that problem is through the Cullen Jones Diversity Tour, a Bank of



The U.S. men celebrate winning gold in the 4x100 meter freestyle relay. Pictured are Jason Lezak (from left), Garrett Weber-Gale, Cullen Jones and Michael Phelps.

the team a split-second victory, there was another notable member of that team who deserves recognition not only for his part in bringing home the gold, but also for his commitment to ensuring that more African-American boys and girls make it home safely from the pool or the beach.

Twenty-four-year-old, Bronx-native, Cullen Jones is only the second African American to ever win Olympic gold in swimming.

Jones began swimming at age 5 after he nearly drowned at an amusement park in Pennsylvania. He subsequently developed a love for the sport, becoming a star member of the North Carolina State swim team and has been a standout amateur and professional competitor.

While he is a fierce competitor, Jones does not just swim for personal glory. He wants to make sure that more African-American youth learn to swim and keep from drowning.

"Let's say two kids are walking

America backed effort that will include swim meets and clinics for minority youth throughout the country.

Jones adds his golden touch to efforts by such pioneers as Jim Ellis, the legendary founder of the Philadelphia Department of Recreation Swim Club, whose commitment to turning out world-class black swimmers was chronicled in the 2007 movie, "Pride," starring Terrence Howard.

And this year, the National Black Heritage Championship Swim Meet attracted more than 500 African-American swimmers to its annual event in Orlando, Fla.

As the summer winds down, we are reminded that every day, nine African American children drown and that number is rising. Cullen Jones' Olympic win gives us a golden opportunity to teach our children that learning to swim is not only fun, it can save lives too.

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



Too Many Kids Struggle With Bad Diets

BY MARIAN WRIGHT EDELMAN



In America, millions of low-income families struggle each month to obtain a minimally adequate diet. In 2006, 12.6 million children and 22.9 million adults lived in households struggling against hunger, and those numbers are expected to grow amid a weakening economy, rising joblessness, and increased food prices.

It is an outrage that hunger would plague so many in one of the world's biggest food exporters, where more than enough food is produced to feed every American.

While few Americans actually endure starvation, chronic, mild malnutrition takes its toll on children, damaging their physical, mental and psychological health.

Poorly nourished children often suffer from stunted development and impaired learning. What we need for all of our people is food security—assured access at all times to enough food for a healthy life without having to resort to skipping

meals or cutting back on the quality or quantity of food bought.

The growth of hunger is related to the growth of poverty and stagnant and declining wages among low-income working families. While incomes have fallen, the cost of food, gasoline, housing and health care have skyrocketed.

The cost of food rose 5.1 percent from February 2007 to February 2008, according to the Department of Labor. The percentage hikes in the cost of basics, such as milk, eggs, bread, rice and cheese, have reached double digits.

Subsistence supports like food stamps are insufficient for many families' nutritional needs. As more and more require assistance to purchase food, those already receiving food stamps are finding they are able to buy fewer groceries. Food pantries' supplies are stretched to bare shelves.

Vital food supplement projects supported by the federal govern-

ment need to be fully funded to accommodate the growing need to provide basic nutrition for children in low-income families. Programs with long track records of success are the WIC program, the

cutbacks, and shifting national policy are denying eligible families access to benefits. And about a third of those eligible for food stamps do not receive them.

The president has proposed

Our nation must end this cruel paradox of hunger in the midst of plenty.

Food Stamp Program, and the School Lunch and School Breakfast programs.

This combination of services has been shown to improve a child's chances of having a healthy start in life by increasing the likelihood that pregnant women will seek early prenatal care, reducing the rates of infants born pre-term or at low birthweight.

As effective as they are, all of these programs are coming up short of providing the nutritional support many low-income families require, and the benefit most families receive is not enough to support a healthy diet through an entire month.

In addition, red tape, funding

to cut Food Stamp eligibility for three years in a row, although Congress has consistently rejected that.

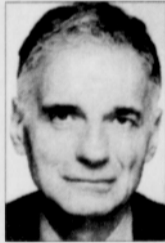
Our nation must end this cruel paradox of hunger in the midst of plenty. We have both the economic means and the governmental resources to ensure everybody an adequate diet. It is past time to correct and strengthen national nutritional programs if we are to prevent families in need from being abandoned.

Hunger must no longer plague American households.

Marian Wright Edelman is president of the Children's Defense Fund and a working committee member of the Black Community Crusade for Children.

Rosa Parks, Hail to Thee! We need your righteous example

BY RALPH NADER



The Troy University Rosa Parks Museum is located on the side of the old Empire Theatre in Montgomery, Ala., where this courageous African-American woman declined to "move to the back of the bus" in 1955.

A visit to the museum honoring her and other civil rights champions is a sobering re-

minder of just how courageous such a refusal was in that very segregated South. Mrs. Parks was promptly arrested and thus was launched the historic Montgomery Bus Boycott, which is credited with igniting the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s.

What most people do not know about Rosa Parks is that she was a trained civil rights worker who knew the significance of staying in her front seat and

not giving it up to a white man. But she could not have predicted what happened after the police took her away.

Political Council of Montgomery noted the arrest of Mrs. Parks and two teenage "Negro" women—Claudette Colvin and Mary

Each historic, citizen-moving movement has its own style and personality.

Four days after she was arrested, the bus boycott started on Dec. 5, 1955. A flyer distributed on that date by the Women's

Louise Smith—who earlier that year were arrested and fined for refusing to give up their seats.

The flyer went on to urge "every Negro to stay off the buses Monday in protest of the arrest and trial. Don't ride the buses to work, to town, to school, or anywhere on Monday." They stayed off in the thousands.

Since three-fourths of the Montgomery bus riders were "Negroes," the growing boycott grew to become a serious economic drain on the bus company.

Each historic, citizen-moving movement has its own style and personality. Granted, the mass media can be very picky indeed, as it has been with the soldiers who have refused to return to the unconstitutional, illegal war-occupation in Iraq.

One must believe there is always a way to produce the human spark for a broader public morality and a deeper commitment to a more just society.

Rosa Parks, hail to thee!

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