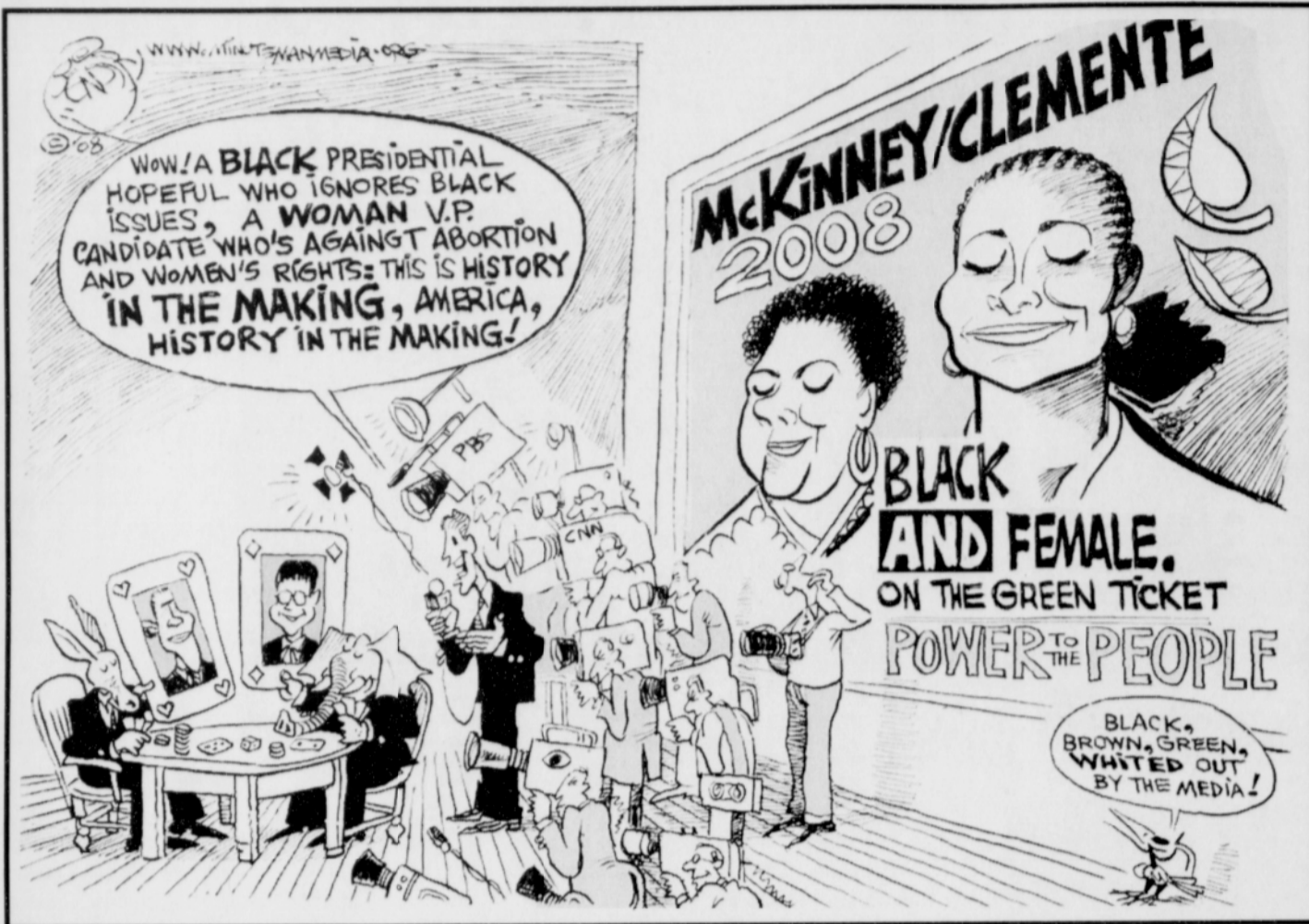


# OPINION

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## Clarence Thomas is at it Again

### Dismantling affirmative action

BY JUDGE GREG MATHIS

Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas recently spoke to a group of leaders from the nation's Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

True to form, the African-American conservative could not resist discussing his anti-affirmative views.

Thomas has often been commended by some for his support of the HBCUs and the opportunities they offer blacks to pursue higher education. However, his efforts to dismantle affirmative action leave many wondering if he truly believes in equal opportunity for all.

Affirmative action practices were instituted to counteract generations of discrimination in schools and the work place. Though the practice has come under fire in recent years, it is partly responsible for the large numbers of African Americans graduating from college and taking on management level positions in corporate

America.

Thomas has voted to outlaw the use of race in college admissions and in determining which public schools students will attend.

Appointed to the Supreme Court in 1991 by then-president George H. W.

Despite his education and status, Thomas is not an inspiration to most African Americans.

His viewpoints only serve to dismantle the work of our elders, who fought for equality so young men and women like Thomas could ascend to the heights they are at today.

Instead of paying homage

tant to know where candidates stand on critical issues, like affirmative action.

Sen. John McCain has said that he believes in equal opportunity but does not support affirmative action or quotas. Sen. Barack Obama supports affirmative action when there is evidence of prolonged discrimination. He also supports efforts to increase educational opportunities for all low-income individuals, regardless of race.

The next President of the United States may have the opportunity to appoint up to three justices who will serve in that post until they retire. Wisely choosing a presidential candidate will help to ensure the country also has a Supreme Court that works for and not against the people of this country.

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

*Despite his education and status, Thomas is not an inspiration to most African Americans.*

Bush, Thomas replaced outgoing Justice Thurgood Marshall, the court's first African-American judge.

It is believed that Thomas received the appointment, despite his lack of judicial experience, because he was, in fact, black. Thomas himself has said that he was allowed to attend Yale Law School in the 70s because of his race.

Despite knowing that affirmative action played a key role in his historic career path, Thomas says the practice is detrimental, not helpful, to blacks.

to those leaders through judicious use of his influence on the court, Thomas has, through his voting, slowly chipped away at and weakened affirmative action.

However, Thomas alone cannot be blamed for the current state of affirmative action. He and his fellow justices are simply doing the bidding of the president - and political party - who appointed them to their posts.

When you vote for President of the United States you are also playing a role in selecting future Supreme Court Justices. It is impor-

## Minimum Wage Hike Helps But won't make up for the rise in prices

BY MIKE LEACHMAN

The 45-cent hike to Oregon's minimum wage starting next year will be welcome news for the state's lowest-paid workers, who have been hit hard by escalating food and gas prices.

The increase from \$7.95 to \$8.40 means an extra \$936 a year for a family with one full-time minimum wage worker.

But the pay raise may not be enough to make up for the rise in prices at the supermarket or the pump.

During the 12-month period ending in August, it's estimated that the price of food leaped by 7.5 percent and gasoline by 36 percent.

The pain is greater for low-income workers because a larger share of low-income workers' overall spending goes to cover these two necessities, compared to the spending of better-paid workers.

More than four years after Measure 25 upped the minimum wage and pegged annual

changes to inflation, the dire predictions of its opponents have yet to materialize.

The restaurant industry argued that Measure 25 would dampen job growth and the farm industry claimed that Oregon agriculture would be rendered uncompetitive. Both industries have flourished.

*The pain is greater for low-income workers because a larger share of low-income workers' overall spending goes to cover [food and gasoline] compared to the spending of better-paid workers.*

From 2002 through this year the number of restaurant jobs in Oregon has grown by nearly 21 percent. Similarly, Oregon's net farm income nearly tripled over five years, easily outpacing national growth in farm profits over the same period.

*Mike Leachman is a policy analyst for the Oregon Center for Public Policy.*

## Improving Our Financial Health

### Unemployment demands economic changes

BY MARC MORIAL

Some very important news about America may have been drowned out in the din of high decibel speeches, celebratory music and balloon drops at the recently concluded national party conventions.

While the candidates and the delegates were focused on who is going to be the next president, millions of Americans were wondering who was going to provide them with their next paycheck.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics' August jobs report, released on Sept. 5, revealed a startling loss of 84,000 jobs for the month, putting the unemployment rate at 6.1 percent. With 9.4 million Americans currently out of work, the highest number of unemployed since 1992, the African-American unemployment rate is at 10.6 percent, its highest level since 2004. Both presidential candidates are promising change. There is no better place to start than with our economy.

*The next president must be ready on day-one with both a short-term and a long-range plan of his own to fix our broken economy and put America back to work.*

There's no doubt about it, we are in a recession. Unemployment continues to rise, consumer spending continues to fall, the housing market is in real trouble and it's tougher than ever to get a bank loan.

The next president must be ready on day-one with both a short-term and a long-range plan of his own to fix our broken economy and put America back to work.

During the National Urban League's annual conference this past July, both McCain and Obama endorsed our set of recommendations to close the economic gap between White and Black Americans - our Opportunity Compact. Additionally, both candidates agreed with our call for another stimulus package to address the flood of job losses and the rise in inflation.

In the next few weeks, the National Urban League will release a study conducted by our Council of Economic Advisors that outlines and analyzes the candidates' positions on jobs and the economy.

I urge all Americans to review our analyses and add it to your information tool belt. This year's election is not only a historical one, but an absolutely critical one as well.

Everyone needs to cast their vote for the candidate of their choice, not in a vacuum, but based on intelligent information that will help improve our nation's financial health.

We at the National Urban League intend to do our part to make sure you are armed with the right facts to make the right choice on Nov. 4.

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