

# Portland Observer Auto Review

News and reviews on new motor vehicles

## 2009 Nissan Maxima 3.5 SV

BY KATHLEEN CARR

Nissan brings out its seventh-generation Maxima for 2009, a sedan that's had to cope with an identity problem the last six generations as Nissan debated whether it should be the luxury flagship or the sporty companion to the midsize Altima sedan. The Maxima also looks exactly like the Infiniti's. It has several of the same elements.

For Generation VII, Nissan has opted for the sporty designation, saying that Generation VI had become too entry-level luxury and not enough mass-market sports sedan. So now it has what Nissan calls a "breakthrough exterior design" that imparts a feeling of



Specifications: 290-HP 3.5 Liter DOHC 24 Valve engine; Continuously Variable transmission; 19 city mpg, 26 highway mpg; MSRP \$33,935

"liquid motion" and gives the sedan the look of an "exotic sports car."

Nissan's 3.5-liter engine is found in practically all the manufacturer's models and has been often been hailed as one of

the best engines in the world. The V6's smooth, linear powerband makes it one of the silkiest in its class. But as satisfying as the VQ V6 is, it's a wonder Nissan chose to mate only a continuously variable transmission (CVT) to its

side. The gearbox is smooth and predictable, but it hardly helps actualize the car's sporting intentions.

The four-mode, CVT transmission is fantastic, especially in sport mode with the steering wheel paddles. Steering is markedly more dynamic than that of the previous generation. The torque effect remains considerable nonetheless, typical of such powerful drives. The suspension has also been modified; helped by a much more rigid chassis, it successfully combines both firmness and comfort. Handling is consistent. The car corners with confidence, and while it isn't a racecar, it's still fun to drive.

The interior is superbly done and very sumptuous. The double wave effect of the upper half is a success. Again, and far

from being a bad thing, this pure Infiniti. The interface is the same, framed by the G35's air nozzles; the dashboard configuration, it's all the same. Only the steering wheel seems overloaded for its size.

Maxima's strengths are performance, ride and handling; a se-

dan with the soul of a sports car, Nissan likes to say. Ride is smooth and handling precise. Stability control with traction control are standard to deliver sure-footed manners on roads wet, dry, straight or twisty. Four-wheel anti-lock brakes and side-curtain air bags complement the package.

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# OPINION

## Common Sense and Faith Trumps Fear

Now the real hard work begins

BY MARIAN WRIGHT EDELMAN

A cartoon published in the early 1960s depicted a black boy saying to a white boy: "I'll sell you my chance to be President of the United States for a nickel."

At the time, Barack Obama was a toddler. There were only five black members of Congress and about 300 black elected officials nationwide. The Voting Rights Act hadn't been passed and the overwhelming majority of black Southerners were disenfranchised.

It is with great pride that I, along with Americans of all races, religions and ethnic backgrounds across our vast nation congratulate President-elect Obama on his historic election.

Obama's road to the White House has led Americans from all



walks of life to embrace a new hope for national unity, and this transformational election of-

Throughout America's history, race has been a noose choking our capacity to soar. At a time when we face a great litany of problems, it is moving to see the American people's common sense and faith trump fear. It is truly a

health coverage, that will work to end child poverty, and that will stop funneling children down a prison pipeline that threatens to re-segregate our nation.

Now the real hard work begins. As President-elect Obama charts his course during this transition period, I urge him to place our nation's children at the center of his administration's priorities.

We must fight to create a level playing field for every child in every corner of America and invest in our human capital, which will determine the vibrancy of America's leadership in the new century.

It is a new day in America, and it is a time for all of us to step forward together for children since they own the future.

Marian Wright Edelman is president of the Children's Defense Fund.

*We must fight to create a level playing field for every child in every corner of America and invest in our human capital.*

fers the promise of moving the country in a new direction.

The presidential election is a reminder that the United States is still a place of bold ideas and a beacon of hope. It says to every child of color and every poor boy and girl that you belong too, and you do have a future.

triumph that on Nov. 4 Americans voted for competence and a new vision, regardless of race.

But President-elect Obama cannot do the job alone. Leaders are only as good as citizens demand them to be, and we must create a citizens' movement that will fight to provide every child in America with

## Blinded by Color, Not Color Blind

Racism still pumps in veins of America

BY VELMA M. GREEN,

This year's election started off with a bomb: Oh my goodness, a black president. There is an African American running for president of the United States.

The fact that Sen. Barack Obama is black was a bigger issue than the state of the economy, the stock market fall and even the fact that we had our very first female vice presidential candidate. This proves that racism is still pumping in the veins of America.

Barack Obama has rocked the

boat in America simply because he has the qualifications to run. His leadership has been proven and he stands for what he believes in.

The fact that we have never had an African American president in office or any other race for that matter says something about the country that should be addressed. Are we racist or not? If we are not, then what is holding up the flow?

This issue has clouded the minds of our citizens. It is the classic case of acceptance when a person like Barack Obama, who has dealt with a life of being biracial, still suffers some hardship of not being accepted.

In the words of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., "Injustice any

where is a threat to justice everywhere."

In my years of seeing presidents come and go, there has never been a black candidate who I believe was so qualified. There is an honesty in Obama's eyes that says, "I will do my best to serve my country and to do it with honor."

There is a fire burning in his soul and it lights up the dim hope of prosperity. I believe Obama is

a person with the prudence to get the job done to the end.

Now it's time for a complete turnover in the way our country thinks about race.

Racism has to be buried like an old ghost; it must be put to rest. There is no room for it. We do not have a choice.

Velma M. Green is a grandmother and returning student attending Portland State University.

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