

OPINION

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Supporting Equal Pay Obama will correct wrongs

BY JUDGE GREG MATHIS

One of Barack Obama's first presidential acts will be to sign a bill that will overturn a Supreme court ruling that makes it difficult for women and other minorities to challenge discriminatory practices at work, school and in their communities.

The president-elect, along with the Democrats in Congress are eager to step in where the Bush administration wouldn't and plan to challenge the court's sometimes narrow views on civil rights and justice.



desk; Obama, by contrast, welcomes the opportunity to correct this wrong.

During the presidential campaign there was much debate, among women, many of whom were white, about whether or not they should cast their votes for Obama or Sen. Hillary Clinton. Most came around and eventually supported Obama; they should be glad to know that he is committed to women's rights and has vowed to close the pay gap between men and women.

In some cases, judges, after originally ruling for the employee, reversed their decisions and ruled in favor of the employer, saying the Supreme Court decision left them no choice.

In May 2007, the court ruled that although Lilly Ledbetter, a white woman, was subjected to sex based pay discrimination by her employer, but ruled in favor of the employer because she had filed her suit beyond a 180 deadline.

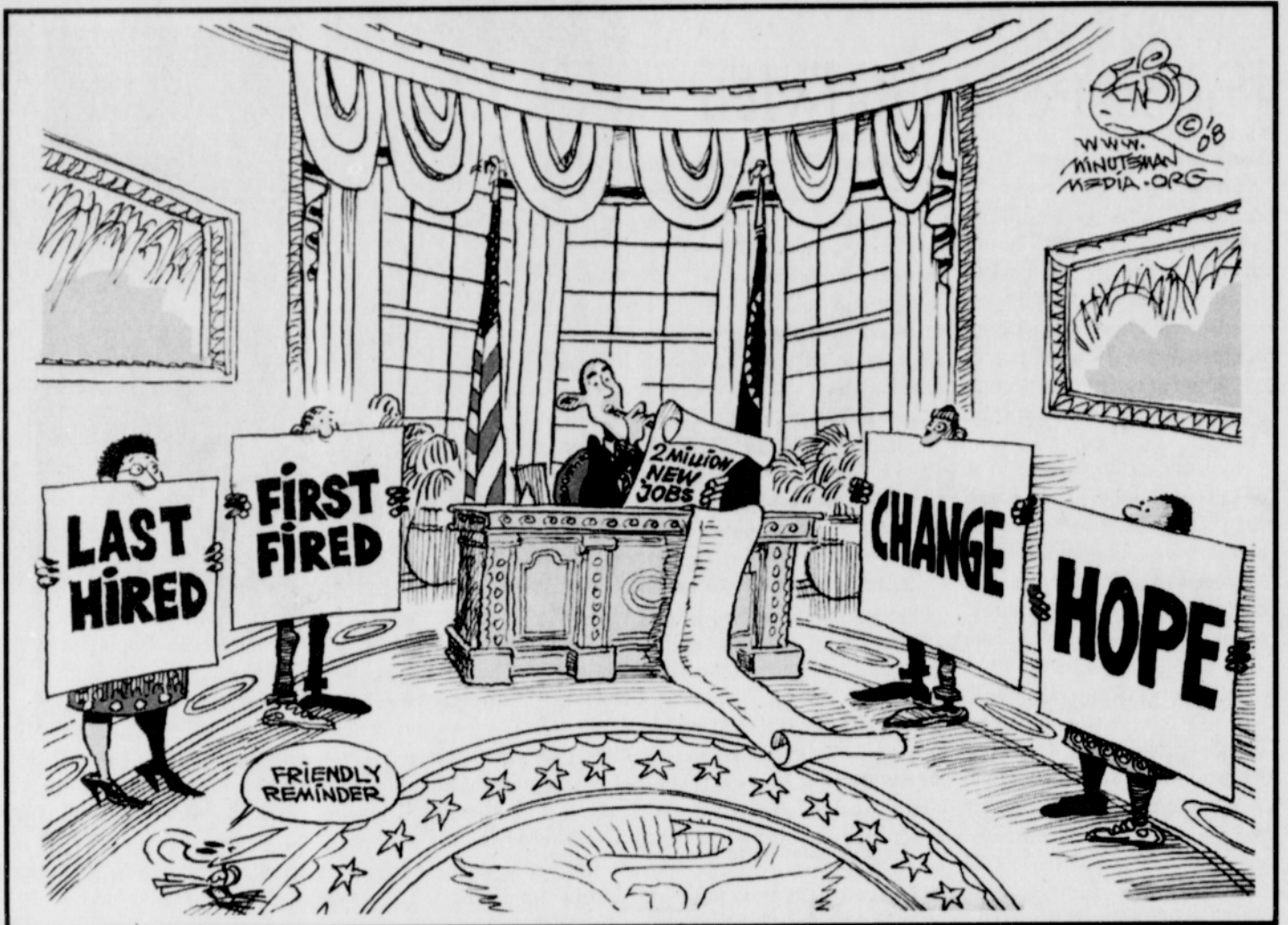
Since the ruling, many lower courts used the decision to argue for dismissal of race and gender-based education and housing discrimination suits. In some cases, judges, after originally ruling for the employee, reversed their decisions and ruled in favor of the employer, saying the Supreme Court decision left them no choice.

The proposed legislation will overturn that decision, increasing the statute of limitations, providing victims with more time to find justice in the courts. President Bush threatened to veto the bill if it ever made its way to his

This goes far beyond gender equality, however. Obama is committed to creating an equal and just America for everyone. In both 1988 and 1991, Congress expanded civil rights protections that were threatened by court decisions. We can look for the new administration to do the same, stepping in when the court fails to serve the needs of the people.

As a former civil rights attorney, the president-elect is familiar with the laws that both support and get in the way of true equal rights for all; this knowledge, along with his desire for real change, should bring about a broad effort to level the playing field for so many.

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



Ending the Cycle of Youth Violence

Public health approach needed

BY BARBARA BAYLOR

We could not make out where everyone was running to or why they were running.

We assumed a fight had broken out in the mall and youth were running to look at it. Then all of a sudden, we heard the shots!

For a delayed moment, it did not register. Someone shouted, "Somebody's shooting, everybody down!" Terrified, we began to run. People were frantically running for their lives, all trying to take cover anywhere we could. There was screaming



and crying echoing off the walls. I ran toward a corner in the mall and crouched down to shield my grandchild of 18 months. Allegedly, an argument had erupted between two teen males over a female. Presumably, the gunman felt that his option for resolving

the conflict was to shoot the young woman and her male friend. So with no apparent regard for the mall shoppers lives, the shooter fired his gun not knowing where the bullets would end up. Fortunately, no one was fatally wounded.

Violence affects everyone! The World Report on Violence and Health reminds us that violence can also affect the health of communities by increasing health care costs, decreasing property values and disrupting social services.

The National Center for In-

jury Prevention and Control in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention states that violence is a public health issue because of its tremendous impact on the health and well-being of our youth.

Youth violence is now a worldwide epidemic. According to CDC, "Homicide is the second leading

gan pondering if we, individuals who live in the community, failed to teach our children the value and sanctity of human life.

Have we failed to train them how to love and forgive? Have we moved away from "community parenting" where neighbors took responsibility for disciplining youth in their communities. Has the glamorization of violence in the media attracted our youth to unreal lifestyles?

We must do something about the proliferation of guns in our communities and illegal guns in the hands of our youth.

President-Elect Obama pledges to end the dangerous cycle of youth violence by financially supporting innovative local programs that implement a comprehensive public health approach that include community-based strategies to prevent youth violence.

Now is the time to write President Elect Obama with our creative ideas for ending youth violence in our communities.

Visit change.gov to share your ideas. Our children are depending on us.

Barbara Baylor is Minister for Health Care Justice at the United Church of Christ.

Having survived the traumatic mall shooting, I began pondering if we failed to teach our children the value and sanctity of human life.

For this age group, it is the leading cause of death for African Americans. Moreover, it is the second leading cause of death for Latino Americans and Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders; and the third leading cause of death for Native Americans and Alaskan Natives.

As a Health Care advocate and teacher, I heartily believe that positive parenting is a primary deterrent to interpersonal violence among youth. Having survived the traumatic mall shooting, I be-

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Democracy from the Bottom Socialism seems to be working in Venezuela

BY PETER PHILLIPS

Democracy from the bottom is evolving as a 10-year social revolution in Venezuela.

Led by President Hugo Chavez, the United Socialist Party of Venezuela gained over 1.5 million voters in the Nov. 23 elections.

"It was a wonderful victory," said Professor Carmen Carrero with the Communications Studies Department of the Bolivarian University in Caracas. "We won 81 percent of the city mayor positions and 17 of 23 of the state governors."

The university is housed in the former oil ministry building and now serves 8,000 students throughout Venezuela. The college is symbolic of the democratic socialist changes occurring throughout the country.

Before the election of Chavez in 1998, college attendance in Venezuela was primarily for the rich. Today 1.8 million students attend college in the country, three times the rate 10 years ago.

Bottom up democracy in Venezuela starts with the 25,000 community councils elected in every neighborhood in the country. There are 34 locally controlled community television stations and 400 radio stations in the bar-

rios throughout Venezuela.

Community radio, TV and newspapers are the voice of the people, where they describe the viewers/listeners as the "users" of media instead of the passive audiences.

Democratic socialism means health care, jobs, food, and security, in neighborhoods where in many cases nothing but absolute poverty existed 10 years ago. With unemployment down to a U.S.

level, sharing the wealth has taken real meaning in Venezuela. Despite a 50 percent increase in the prices of food last year, local store offer government subsidized cooking oil, corn meal, meat, powdered milk at 30-50 percent off market.

Additionally, there are now 3,500 local communal banks with a \$1.6 billion budget offering neighborhood-based micro-financing loans for home improvements, small businesses, and personal emergencies.

continue to support him and the United Socialist Party. The democracies of South America are realizing that the neo-liberal formulas for capitalism are not working for the people and that new forms of resource allocation are necessary for human betterment. It is a learning process for all involved and certainly a democratic effort from the bottom up. Peter Phillips is a professor of sociology at Sonoma State University in California.

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