

# OPINION

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## Anything is Truly Possible

W.E.B. Dubois would be proud

I recently visited Accra, the capital city of Ghana, in West Africa, where activist, historian and writer W.E.B. Du Bois is buried.

While reflecting on Du Bois' accomplishments, I couldn't help but think of how proud he would be of the gains we have made since he co-founded the NAACP more than 100 years ago.

Du Bois was perhaps one of the most notable black leaders at the start of the 20th Century. A strong believer in the power of education as a way to uplift our people, he believed in fighting for equality in mainstream society.

One hundred years later, part of Du Bois' dream has come true.

A black American man, who has an African father, is now president of the most powerful empire in the history of civilization.

African Americans aren't the only ones inspired by Obama's victory; black people across the globe are still celebrating this historical moment. They were cheering in Kenya, the home of President Obama's father, on election night. They were also cheering in Jamaica and Haiti and in Ghana.

The Diaspora came to life as everyone realized that someone who looked like them had ascended, fi-



*Because of Obama's accomplishments, black people across the globe are walking taller, smiling brighter and dreaming bigger.*

His viewpoints stood in stark contrast to those of his contemporary, Booker T. Washington. Washington believed that African Americans would have to deal with racism for the time being while simultaneously lifting themselves up through hard work.

This "up by your bootstraps" mentality didn't mesh well with Du Bois, who supported political action as a strategy for advancing the civil rights agenda.

Later in his life, he became so frustrated with the lack of progress in the civil rights movement that he moved to Ghana. It was a fitting choice: Ghana was the first African nation to win independence from the colonialists.

Kwame Nkrumah, the country's first black president, was committed to the philosophy of Pan Africanism, a movement committed to uniting all people of African descent. Du Bois also took up the cause, working to bring together every member of the African Diaspora, whether they were born on the continent or here in America.

nally, to such heights. Obama's win united us all, giving new hope to those who were on the verge of losing theirs.

Make no mistake: We all realize that President Obama is not the magical elixir that will solve America's race issues, let alone single handedly bring justice to the world. But collectively we know that now that Obama has shattered the highest glass ceiling there is, anything is truly possible.

Because of Obama's accomplishments, black people across the globe are walking taller, smiling brighter and dreaming bigger.

Du Bois would certainly be swollen with pride, knowing that a member of the Diaspora, a fellow Harvard grad, had breathed new life into the social justice movement he helped define.

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



## Closer to Realizing Dr. King's Dream

Obama breathes new life into our values

BY MARC H. MORIAL

For millions of Americans and freedom-loving people all over the world, the inauguration of President Barack Obama



breathed new life into our nation's oldest and highest values.

Watching the ceremony at the U.S. Capitol with the Lincoln Memorial in the background, I was reminded of the 1963 March on Washington.

Then as now, the nation was on the brink of dissolution and despair. And then, as now a visionary leader stepped forth with a message of hope onto the stage of history.

In one of those rare acts of divine timing, President Obama

was sworn-in one day after the nation celebrated what would have been the 80th birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. It is amazing to think that the moral arc of the universe has given us a prophet and a president in the span of 40 years.

With the inauguration of President Obama, we have moved closer to realizing Dr. King's dream. The forces of inequality, injustice, and division are clearly on the run, but as long as those forces hold sway in any corner, our work is not yet done.

In the time of legal segregation and denial of the right to vote, Dr. King's extraordinary moral authority helped lead us to a better day. In these times of unprecedented domestic and foreign upheaval, we now have a President who possesses both the moral and political authority to get this coun-

try back on track.

But democracy has never been a solo act or spectator sport. If we are to regain our economic and moral standing in the world, all of us are going to have to get in the game.

The National Urban League is already working with the new President and Congress to pass a

With so many challenges facing this nation, within the next four years we could very well reach a tipping point that will determine what kind of America we leave to our children. Will it be an America that works only for the wealthy and connected or will it be an America where everyone who is willing to work and con-

*The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice.*

--Martin Luther King Jr.

major stimulus package designed to create new jobs and put our people back to work.

We will continue to be a strong advocate for the urban communities we serve. We will give the new President our support when we think he's right and we will not hesitate to tell him when we think he's wrong.

tribute has an equal chance to live out their dreams?

In the words of President Obama, "Starting today, we must pick ourselves up, dust ourselves off, and begin again the work of remaking America."

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

## No More Excuses We can achieve anything

BY EARL G. GRAVES SR.

Who among us—especially those of my generation—ever dared believe that an American of African heritage would ascend to the highest office in the land



in our lifetime?

Barack Obama's triumph belongs to every American, and it must be clearly understood by all of us that Obama was elected to be the president of all the people of our

nation, not just black Americans.

The challenges awaiting our president-elect—ranging from our critically damaged economy to the security of our nation against the global threat of terrorism—are serious issues that must be resolved for the greater good of all. Obama faces expectations above and beyond anything ever demanded of the heroic black leaders of our history—from Frederick Douglass to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Obama's inauguration was an indelible moment made possible by every African American who ever refused to accept the diminished roles once ascribed to us. It belongs to every African American who put asunder the restrictive bonds of racism, injustice, and inequality to defy the odds and achieve something lasting and great.

But let us be clear. The presidential inauguration of Obama is not just about one, world-changing moment. For African Americans, it marks the birth of a new movement, one with a simple defining creed: No more excuses.

To our young black men, too many of whom have been allowed to embrace the sin of low expectation: No more excuses. To black professionals lamenting racism on the job while worshipping daily at the altar of personal medioc-

ity: No more excuses.

To those obsessed with the trappings of wealth yet who refuse to invest in their own financial education or to exercise fiscal discipline: No more excuses. To those who complain about the ills of our community but are unwilling to invest their time, money, or energy to bring about solutions: No more excuses.

The election of Obama to the Oval Office proves once and for all that we can achieve anything as African Americans. The question is no longer whether anything is possible, the question is whether we are committed to doing what needs to be done.

No one is saying it will be easy—after all, racism is still alive, even if it's been dealt a serious setback by the majority of American voters—but we can no longer accept that it cannot be done. Yes, the ceilings on our potential still exist, but we now know beyond a shadow of a doubt that they are not impermeable.

The rallying cry of the Obama campaign was not "Yes He Can" but "Yes We Can." Now that we have, now that the impossible has proven possible after all, there is no turning back. There are no more excuses.

Earl G. Graves Sr. is the founder, chairman and publisher of BLACK ENTERPRISE magazine.

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