

OPINION

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The Real Work of Governing

Are you up to the task?

BY EVERETTE L. RICE

Like most of you, I spent Jan. 20 glued to the TV watching non-stop coverage of the Inauguration of Barack Obama to the Presidency of the United States of America. Like the entire world, my wife and I watched history unfold before our eyes, the pageantry, beauty, tradition, and class of the new First Family. As we watched the events unfold, tears welled up in us both, like most did.

I felt the presence of my grandfather Theodore Rice Sr., the son of a runaway slave from North Carolina. When I was 15, back in the late 1960s after getting in trouble, he sat me down and told me something I will

never forget. He told me "Everette, the world is yours; you will have doors open for you that I and your parents never did. It won't be easy, Get your education, follow your heart, make us and your community proud, and remember, one day you will see a man who looks like you become President."

Sadly at the time I thought these were the illusions of an old man trying to snap a young boy back to reality, but now I see the wisdom of what grandfather was doing. He was giving me hope and inspiration. As a result of those words, the work, prayers and support of family members, friends, and community members, that boy was able to achieve things his parents and grandparents never even dreamed of. My grandfather, while being a wise man, always spoke about the responsibility of "blessed" people.

Whether we know it or not, we were all blessed to be alive and see the events of Jan. 20. But we also have responsibilities now that Barack Obama is our president. We have to support and back him up in the positive changes he will and is making.

The forces of opposition and

port racism, bigotry and what led us to economic collapse.

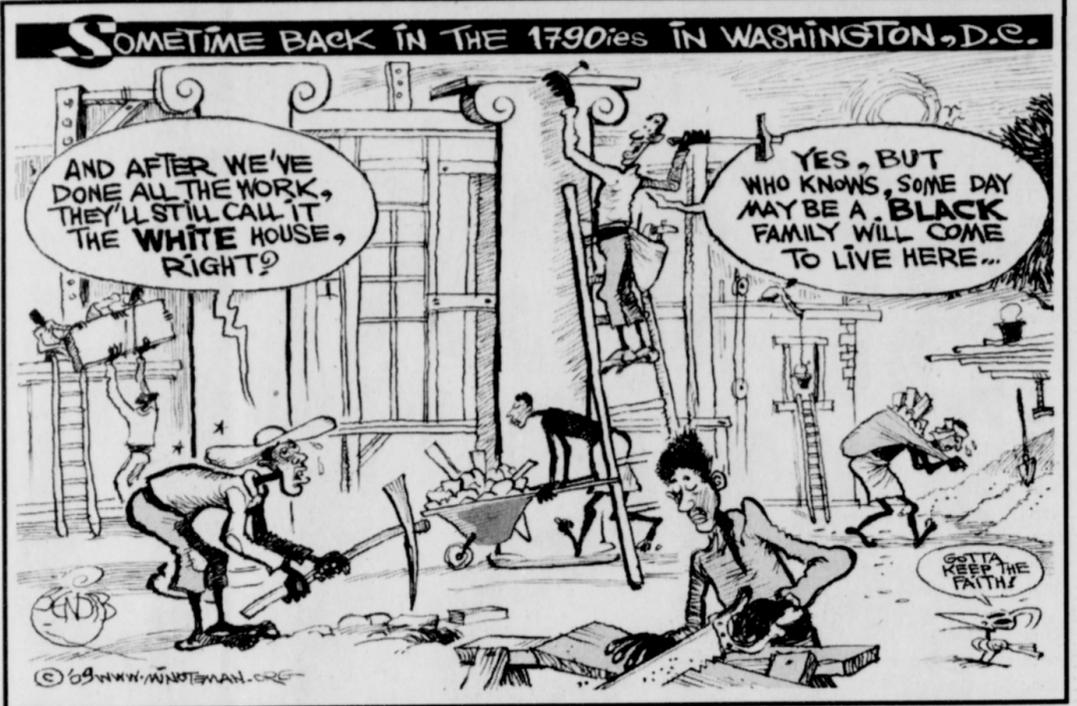
Here are some website resources: For your representative, visit writerep.house.gov; U.S. Speaker of the House Rep. Nancy Pelosi, speaker.house.gov; House Minority (GOP) Leader John Boehner, republicanleader.house.gov; Oregon U.S. Rep. Earl Blumenauer, blumenauer.house.gov; Oregon U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden, wyden.senate.gov; Oregon U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley, merkley.senate.gov.

While you are giving your thoughts, have you contacted your local, state representatives and senators? They are making difficult choices that affect you and your family also. They need to hear from you also concerning local, regional, and state issues.

Contact them at the website leg.state.or.us.

The time for sitting back, relaxing, and letting others do it is over. The time for action is now. Please feel free to e-mail me if you want other ideas on getting involved and making a difference at everetterice@email.com

Everette L. Rice is a member of the Oregon Commission on Black Affairs and the Human Rights Commission of Portland.



Returning to Our Civil Rights Ideals

Obama charts a new course

BY KATHRYN KOLBERT

With George Bush and Dick Cheney finally out of power, our country is returning to its ideals so quickly and in so many ways that it's dizzying.

Recognizing the rule of law? Check. Following the Constitution? Check. Keeping politics out of law enforcement? Check. Recognizing our right to know what our own government is doing? Check.

What about equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people?

President George W. Bush worked to enshrine discrimination against gay and lesbian Americans into the U.S. Constitution, supported laws that put gay and lesbian couples in prison for the crime of having sex in their own home, and fought to continue to allow workplace discrimination against LGBT Americans.

Already, President Barack Obama has charted a very different course. The new White House website spells out President Obama's agenda for LGBT equality, and it's pretty terrific.

Our new president not only opposes a constitutional amendment to prevent gays and lesbians from marrying, but he supports expanded legisla-

tion to protect people from anti-gay violence, supports workplace anti-discrimination legislation, and is in favor of repealing two equally insidious provisions, the so-called "Don't Ask Don't Tell" rule and the Defense of Marriage Act.

The former discriminates against LGBT Americans in the

And what's most noteworthy is not just the substance of the agenda, but also where it's placed on the website.

Rather than cravenly avoiding LGBT rights altogether or putting them in a category like "social issues" or "cultural issues," as a number of others do, the White House places them exactly where they belong: as part of our nation's broad civil

rights agenda.

No more. Using the bully pulpit of the White House, President Obama can make it clear that LGBT equality is an essential part of his commitment to justice under law for all Americans.

Throughout the campaign, he's constantly mentioned gays and lesbians as part of our national community, not only in liberal enclaves, but in high-profile speeches like his speech at the Democratic convention.

President Obama's stance on gay rights isn't perfect -- just look at his opposition to the right of same-sex couples to be legally married, and the choice of anti-gay Rev. Rick Warren to deliver the invocation at his swearing in -- but it's a momentous step in the right direction. And we will continue to push him toward a better position on these issues.

In the coming years, our nation is going to face unprecedented challenges in the economy and the environment. After the last eight years of division and partisanship, it's a welcome relief to see Obama talk about progress for LGBT Americans as a basic question of fairness that everyone can (or should) be able to agree upon.

Kathryn Kolbert is president of People for the American Way.

The Obama administration is framing LGBT issues in a way that sets the terms of the conversation around basic fairness and equality for all.



Education Stimulus: It's About Time

An investment in our future

BY JUDGE GREG MATHIS

The U.S. House of Representatives recently passed an \$800 plus billion recovery package designed to stimulate our country's flat lining economy.

The bill, which still needs to be approved by the Senate before it lands on the President's desk, provides tax cuts and earmarks funds for healthcare, energy and infrastructure repair.

Over \$100 million of the money will go directly to the nation's schools, resulting in the biggest ever increase in federal funding for education. It's about time.

Over the years, our nation's schools have fallen further and further behind those in other countries.

Our children aren't learning

the basics, let alone developing skills that will help them succeed in college or the workforce. We're now seeing the results of that decline.

Our children's read-

children's, and our nation's, future.

The education dollars earmarked in the stimulus package will support the grossly underfunded No Child Left Behind education plan passed by former

the economy fast enough', this dramatic increase in education spending finally shows that America has leaders who understand the value of a good education.

Indeed, tens of billions of dollars will - and should - be spent on the creation of green and infrastructure jobs for low-skill and non-skilled workers. While these positions are desperately needed, they are only temporary. There won't necessarily be a need for these types of workers after the nation's infrastructure is repaired and the greening of America is complete.

An education lasts a lifetime. If our young people get the tools they need to succeed in the global marketplace, they will be able to successfully transition as societal and business needs change.

The current recession has presented difficult times for us all. But it has also opened America's eyes to its weak spots. From this, the new education package was born. And that is truly something to be thankful for.

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

The only way to ensure our young people receive a quality education is to invest in it.

ing and math scores are often far from impressive, especially in innercities. America is no longer the innovator it once was and many of our major companies must out source highly skilled technical positions to other countries because they can't find qualified workers here.

After decades of polite requests - and outright demands - for increased education funding, we finally get an opportunity to invest more in our

President Bush.

Funds are also allocated for school repair and modernization and for state aide to school districts to prevent cut backs in key services and to prevent teacher and administrator layoffs. Additionally, money will be provided to public colleges and universities, typically more affordable than private colleges, to shore up their programs.

Though critics say the plan is 'too big' and 'won't stimulate

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