

OPINION

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Moved by Social Consciousness

The inauguration of President Obama

BY M. LINDA JARAMILLO

Stepping off the elevator into Union Station in Washington D.C. on the Martin Luther King national holiday, one day before the inauguration of President Barack Obama stirred my consciousness.



American Church and join members of the congregation as they watched the festivities in their fellowship hall.

I knew that this year's MLK Weekend was going to be different but I didn't realize how our nation's Capitol would actually feel on such a day.

Amidst the prayers for guidance, wisdom, security, and support of the new administration and congress were the dreams that came true for many that day throughout this nation.

Yes, the scenes at the center of our nation's Capitol were

I intend to renew my commitment and do my part to interrupt the sin of racism every day.

Thousands of people of various races, genders, and ages filled the halls of the train station spilling out into the streets with vigor and joy.

joyful and hopeful.

Driving from Union Station toward Congressional Offices was no easy undertaking. Even in traffic jams, there was an air of good manners and civility. In the midst of what could have turned into chaos due to sheer numbers, people were smiling and greeting one another warmly.

But I am saddened to read the reports of blatant and vicious racist attacks happening in communities throughout the land. The Southern Poverty Law Center reports that the numbers of race related hate crimes are on the rise since the election of President Obama. It appears that racism in America is alive and well.

Children were in awe of their surroundings. Parents and grandparents pointed at the signs posted everywhere with photographs of two men side by side - Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and Barack Hussein Obama.

I don't want my celebration of joy and appreciation for racial diversity to be marred by hatred, but it would be irresponsible to ignore the horrible threats and attacks on innocent people solely based on their skin color.

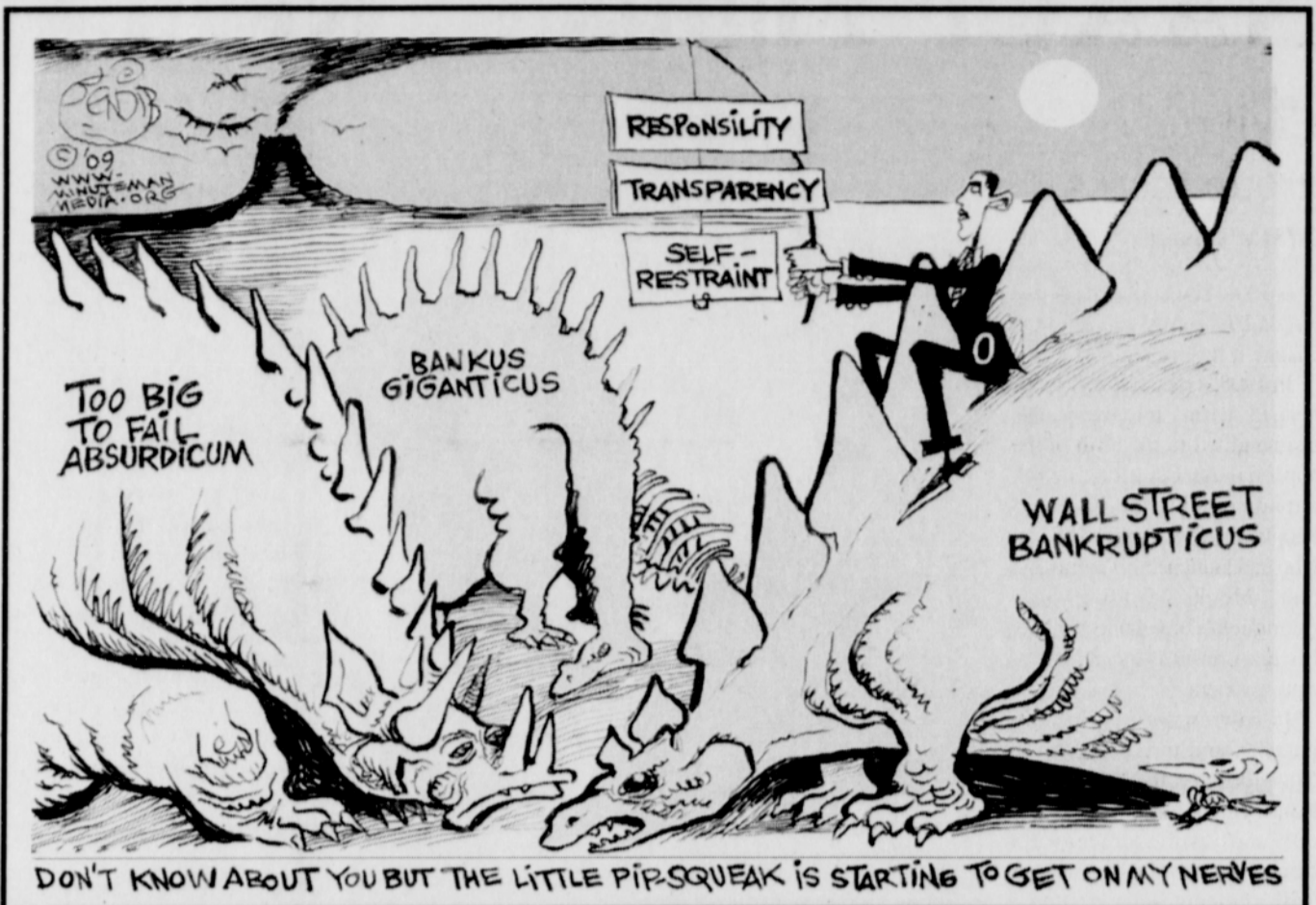
It was history in the making; a time when as a nation we seemed to transcend differences and look to the future united. I didn't know whether to laugh or cry, I did both.

Our racial background or country of origin matters, but what matters more is that we are each responsible for ending this recent storm of racial hatred.

I didn't brave the Capitol Mall for the inauguration the next day like millions of courageous souls did. I chose instead to attend a prayer service at a local African

individually, we must take the initiative to interrupt racial slurs and jokes when ever and where ever they occur.

M. Linda Jaramillo is the executive minister for Justice Ministries in the United Church of Christ.



Looking Beyond Fear and Anger

Helping banks is a necessity

BY JUDGE GREG MATHIS

The U.S. government has already spent more than half of the \$700 billion it set aside to bail out the country's financial industry. Tax payers, who are ultimately responsible for helping to rescue failing banks, are understandably upset.

Reports of bank CEO salaries and bonuses of up to \$10 million a year - an amount most Americans can't even imagine - combined with news that these corporations, even after taking bailout money, were seeking to hire foreign workers at a cheaper rate than previously laid off



American staffers, has many saying the government should let the banks fail.

After all, it is their greed and management decisions that got us into this crisis. The fact is, however, we cannot afford to let these institutions go under.

A year and a half ago, the country's economy, beginning

The average American became unable, without a near perfect credit score, to borrow money to buy a new home or pay college tuition. Small businesses weren't able to secure credit to pay their vendors and keep their businesses afloat. And government contractors had difficulty getting the funds they needed to perform their work.

nate the ailing financial market, the economy can't improve.

Does the financial industry deserve to be regulated? Yes. Should companies accepting bailout money be held to certain standards and be made accountable for their decisions? Of course.

Measures should be put into place to ensure that we don't end up here again. The industry needs to be stabilized so that banks can work with homeowners, stopping foreclosures and renegotiating mortgages into terms that both sides feel comfortable with.

Once the market has evened out, large and small companies alike will have access to capital that will enable them to rebuild their businesses and create new jobs. Over time, the economy will begin to improve and we'll all be doing better financially.

We've got a long road ahead of us and repairing the financial markets won't be easy or cheap. But it is a necessity. If we don't respond with a sense of urgency, the industry could further deteriorate, affecting us all.

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with the collapse of the mortgage industry, began to take a nosedive. The bad debt purchased by many banks, along with predatory lending practices used by others, crippled the housing market.

The financial industry, which relied heavily on revenue from home mortgages, fell to its knees. The effects were felt far and wide. Banks, small and large, began to crumble.

The financial industry, knowing it couldn't save itself on its own, turned to the government.

Americans are justifiably angry. Our livelihoods are threatened. People are scared of losing their homes and their jobs.

As hard as it may be, we need to look beyond our fears and anger and realize that, if we don't secure and help rejuvenate

"Memories of our lives, of our works and our deeds will continue in others."

—Rosa Parks

No Fair Pay for Women Yet

Shine more light on pay practices

BY MARTHA BURK

President Barack Obama just signed his first piece of legislation - the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act. You may remember Ledbetter's case. She worked for the Goodyear Tire & Rubber Company for most of her career, and found out after many years that she had been paid less than the men doing



about it to file suit, and that each new short paycheck started the countdown clock over again.

In passing the new bill, Congress and President Obama have restored the law to the way it has been interpreted for the last four decades. But if you think that's the answer to women's pay inequity prayers, you're dead wrong.

Women still make only 77 cents to the dollar a man makes for full time year round work. We need more - much more. The main reason Lilly Ledbetter got shafted was that she didn't

Richardson has declared over-coming pay inequity and job segregation a priority, and established a high-powered task force to implement the needed changes.

Employers are likely to wail and gnash their teeth. Won't this cost money? Well maybe, but probably not that much. They already know who works for them, the gender and race of their employees, and how much they're paid by job category.

So gathering the data ought to be relatively simple. Besides, all employers won't have to do it - just those that want state contracts, paid with dollars from taxpayers.

In this day of bailouts and boondoggles at taxpayer expense, citizens footing the bills have a right to expect that any company getting government business pays its workers fairly. And there will be technical assistance and reasonable exceptions for small business.

By doing internal pay equity analyses, companies that have a problem and don't know it will be able to find out and fix it before they get hauled into court for discrimination. And if they're not doing anything wrong, they ought to be proud of it and willing to tell the world. Sure would cut down on all those "frivolous lawsuits" if employees could see the statistics up front and know they weren't being shorted in the pay envelope.

Martha Burk is the author of "Cult of Power: Sex Discrimination in Corporate America and What Can Be Done About It."

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the same job all along.

To add insult to injury, she had trained a couple of those guys.

The George W. Bush/Roberts/Alito Supreme Court ruled in 2007 that though Ledbetter had indeed experienced discrimination, she was not entitled to damages because she hadn't filed her lawsuit within 180 days of that first short paycheck - never mind that she didn't discover the discrimination for more than a decade.

The ruling overturned 40+ years of precedent. Up until Ledbetter v. Goodyear, courts had always ruled that a victim of wage discrimination had 180 days from the day she found

know her situation as compared to the men.

Employers are under no obligation to report pay statistics, and in most companies you can get fired for talking pay with co-workers. Though federal legislation to fix these two problems is in the pipeline, it's been in the pipeline for over a decade.

The governor of one state - New Mexico - is not waiting. Bill Richardson has just signed an executive order in his state that is groundbreaking.

Not only will the state as an employer have to study and report its own pay practices when it comes to gender and race, so will private sector companies that want state contracts.

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