

# LAW & JUSTICE

## Best of Times, Worst of Times

### Urban League scores progress

As the entire country observed the historic election of President Barack Obama amid one of the worst economic crises this nation has ever seen, a new National Urban League report shows that these are the 'best of times and the worst of times' for black America.

The State of Black America 2009 report shows that while the entire country is hurting during these tough economic times, African-Americans are disproportionately hurting worse. It reminds the country that the election of President Obama does not mean the work of civil rights is done.

The annual State of Black America report includes the Urban League's Equality Index, a statistical measurement of the disparities between blacks and whites across five categories: economics, education, health, civic engagement and social justice.

This year's report shows an overall slight decline in the status of blacks as compared to whites, moving from 71.5 percent on the equality scale in 2008 to 71.1 percent in 2009.

The only sub index that increased over the past year was in health at about 1.1 percent-

age points. This was largely because the gap narrowed for those without health insurance.

The report this year takes a look back at the past five years of the Equality Index to view trends of progress and decline.

Between 2003 and 2007 the poverty rate and home ownership rate declined for blacks but increased for whites. Even as both groups made progress in educational attainment, the progress was slower for blacks.

During the same period while white children saw increases in "preprimary" enrollment of about 3 percent, black children saw a decline of about 1 percent, causing the education gap to grow, not shrink. The report this year shows the trend continues.

"The election of the first black president does not mean we can all now close up shop and go home," said the National Urban League President and CEO Marc H. Morial. "Instead, it's more important than ever that the National Urban League and other organizations and individuals committed to positive change work even harder to lift up our communities and move this country forward."



Marc H. Morial



Barack Obama enjoys lunch at a Latino eatery in Woodburn, Ore. during his presidential campaign last May. A new Urban League reports reminds the county that while his election as President was a milestone for equality, the work for civil rights is not done. (AP photo)

Martin Luther King III, in the foreword to the report, says President Obama's election does not mean his father's dream has been realized.

"His election is not the fulfillment of the Dream," King wrote. "This is because President Obama is not the only character in this narrative, nor is he the story's only writer. The American narrative cannot realize its greatest promise unless the narratives of all its peoples are part of that promise. In other words, realizing the American Dream must be a complete possibility for every

American."

The theme for this year's report is "Message to the President." There are essays from experts, and letters to the president from ordinary citizens about the condition of African-Americans with recommendations on how President Obama and his administration might address them focusing on key areas such as green jobs, housing and schools and education.

"For the first time we have a president whose political base is in a city so we feel that he can better understand the issues and concerns of urban

America," Morial said. "We want to make sure that we work with the administration to ensure that urban America is included in the policies coming forth to help this country recover economically. Only then can we begin to close the equality gap."

For the fifth consecutive year, Pfizer has sponsored The State of Black America report. "We applaud the National Urban League on its continued effort to spark important national dialogue around crucial issues, such as the health status gap endured by black

America," said Forest Harper, vice president of Capability Development at Pfizer. "We have a lot to do before we can achieve the goals of eliminating health disparities, and ensuring that all Americans have affordable access to quality health care regardless of health status or income."

This year's report also looks at trends from another perspective - economic expansion periods. What the numbers show is that trends between blacks and whites were more similar than different in key areas like median household income, poverty, unemployment and home ownership.

During the economic expansion period from 2001 - 2007 (known as the jobless recovery period) there was a decline in real median household income for blacks and whites and an increase in the rate of poverty. Real median household income from 2001 - 2007 declined 1.7 percent for blacks and 3.9 percent for whites and poverty rates increased 7.9 percent for blacks and 5.1 percent for whites.

By contrast, during the 1990s while trends were still similar, African-Americans saw tremendous progress. For the duration of the '90s expansion, real median household income grew by 23.6 percent for African-Americans and 13 percent for whites while poverty rates declined by 30.6 percent and 17 percent, respectively.

### Tutu to Speak on Reconciliation

#### University of Portland hosts May event

Archbishop Desmond Tutu will visit the University of Portland in May to speak on "The Transformative Power of Reconciliation in Society," at the north Portland school's 40th annual Collins Lecture.

A multicultural concert, "Voices of Reconciliation," will precede the Archbishop's speech, scheduled for 6:30 p.m. on Monday, May 4.

Archbishop Tutu has led a formidable campaign in support of justice and racial reconcilia-



Archbishop Desmond Tutu

tion in South Africa. His tireless work was recognized in 1984 with the Nobel Peace Prize.

In 1996, he was appointed by President Nelson Mandela to

chair the Truth and Reconciliation Commission—the body set up to probe gross human rights violations committed during apartheid in South Africa.

Since then, Archbishop Tutu has been a visiting professor at Emory University, Atlanta, the Episcopal Divinity School, Boston, and the University of North Florida, Jacksonville. He has published several books, the latest of which is titled "God Has a Dream."

Tutu is revered as a moral voice to end poverty and human rights abuses. While he is an Anglican Archbishop emeritus and steadfast in his religious beliefs, he places great value on religious inclusiveness and interfaith dialogue.

Tickets are \$20 and can be purchased at the University of Portland Chiles Center box office at North Willamette Boulevard and Portsmouth from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday. Tickets are also available through TicketMaster outlets with an additional service fee.

### Officer's Conduct Draws Apology

#### NFL player delayed as relative died

(AP)—A Plano, Texas police officer was placed on administrative leave Thursday over a traffic stop involving an NFL player whom he kept in a hospital parking lot and threatened to arrest while his mother-in-law died inside the building.

Officer Robert Powell also drew his gun during the March 18 incident involving Houston Texans running back Ryan Moats in the Dallas suburb of Plano, police said.

"I can screw you over," he said at one point in the videotaped incident. When another officer came with word that Moats' mother-in-law was indeed dying, Powell's response was: "All right. I'm almost done."

Dallas Police Chief David Kunkle apologized to the family and announced that Powell would be on paid leave pending an internal investigation.

Powell, 25, a three-year mem-

ber of the force, stopped Moats' SUV outside Baylor Regional Medical Center at Plano after Moats rolled through a red light.

Moats' wife, who was in the car along with other relatives, said Powell pointed his weapon at her.

"He was pointing a gun at me as soon as I got out of the car," Tamishia Moats said.

Ryan Moats said that after the officer pointed the gun at his wife, he pointed it at him. "I just tried to stay as still as possible to not scare him or do anything to make him react," he said.

Video from a dashboard camera inside the officer's vehicle, revealed an intense exchange in which the officer threatened to jail Moats.

He ordered Tamishia Moats, 27, to get back in the SUV, but after pausing for a few seconds, she and another woman rushed into the hospital. She was by the side of her mother, 45-year-old Jonetta Collinsworth, when she died a short time later from breast cancer.

"Get in there," said Powell, yelling at Tamishia Moats as she exited the vehicle. "Let me see

your hands!" "Excuse me, my mom is dying," Tamishia Moats said. "Do you understand?"

Ryan Moats explained that he waited until there was no traffic before proceeding through the red light. When Powell asked for proof of insurance, Moats grew more agitated and told the officer to go find it.

"My mother-in-law is dying! Right now! You're wasting my time!" Moats yelled. "I don't understand why you can't understand that."

As they argued, the officer got irritated.

"Shut your mouth," the officer said. "You can either settle down and cooperate or I can just take you to jail for running a red light."

By the time the 26-year-old NFL player received a ticket and a lecture from Powell, about 13 minutes had passed. When he and Collinsworth's father entered the hospital, they learned Collinsworth was dead.

The Moats family, who are black, said they can't help but think that race might have played a part in the white officer's behavior.

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