

OPINION

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Spending Our Way Out of Trouble

President Obama's new 'New Deal'

BY ALGIE GATEWOOD

Seventy years ago, President Franklin Roosevelt was in the midst of working to enact the first stages of his far-reaching and revolutionary "New Deal" for the American people. Today, President Barack Obama is in the midst of working to enact the first stages of an equally sweeping set of initiatives that some have described as a new New Deal.



And it worked. Roosevelt's public works programs gave consumer demand the stimulus it needed, and the American people were well on our way to pulling ourselves out of the Great Depression even before the outbreak of World War II catapulted us into a wartime economy. President Obama, to his credit, is trying to do the same thing with the recently-passed American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

Then, as now, unemployment was alarmingly high and headed higher. Mortgage foreclosures were becoming more and more common every day. The banking system was in free-fall, with gun-shy bankers hesitant to extend credit. Then, as now, the economy suffered from a crisis of demand, with cautious consumers unwilling or unable to spend their money.

Billions of dollars are being made available to federal, state, and local government agencies to begin so-called "shovel-ready" infrastructure projects, and billions more will be invested in restoring and upgrading America's transportation, energy, and communication infrastructure. Further – and again to the president's credit – many of these forthcoming projects will incorporate the latest in "green" and sustainable technologies, materials and techniques.

Then, as now, the president proposed a controversial – and seemingly counterintuitive – solution to the cascading array of challenges: we will spend our way out of trouble.

Many skilled professionals who have been forced out of work by the economic slump will be able to find gainful employment once again. Many more people, however, who want to be a part of this grand reinvestment in America will need to first

Indeed, it seems wrongheaded at first glance to

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propose, as President Obama has, to dramatically increase government spending during a time of fiscal crisis. It seems mistaken to increase the deficit when the country's tax base is in no shape to make good on the debt anytime soon.

obtain or upgrade the skills they need in order to participate. Where will the vast majority of them turn? To community colleges.

But just as President Roosevelt did 70 years ago, President Obama is doing exactly the right thing.

Community colleges already have begun the process of reaching out to regional contractors and subcontractors in order to determine their personnel needs in light of President Obama's recovery plan. And Portland Community College, for example, will in the months to come make available to current and prospective students information about the courses they need to take to prepare themselves to work on new "green" infrastructure projects in four broad categories: renewable energy, transportation, manufacturing and sustainable building.

Roosevelt, guided by the counsel of the great economist John Maynard Keynes, realized in 1939 that the way back to fiscal health was to stimulate the demand side of the economy. A prosperous nation is one in which consumers – that's you and me – are spending their money on goods and services, circulating their wages through the network of producers, middle-men, retailers, and service providers that make up the economy.

President Roosevelt, on the occasion of his first inauguration, famously said that we have nothing to fear but fear itself. In other words, we need only to find the will to get ourselves out of trouble, and then we can find the way. By setting an example, President Obama is helping America to find its will. And with the help of our nation's community colleges, the American people can find a way as well.

In other words, in a healthy economy, there is no shortage of demand. Where demand exists, supply is sure to follow. What Roosevelt realized – and Obama realizes today – is that the secret to demand is jobs. People with jobs earn and spend money. Roosevelt used the federal government to put people to work, building schools, roads, bridges, community centers, dams, and more, many of which are still in service today.

Algie C. Gatewood, Ed.D., is president of Portland Community College's Cascade Campus.

Faith in the American Dream

A leader who never abandoned his ideals

BY MARC H. MORIAL

I learned of the passing of the great American historian John Hope Franklin on March 25, the same day that I presented the National Urban League's 2009 State of Black America report before an audience in Washington, D.C.



Americans are too often ignored by our schools and popular culture.

Dr. Franklin was one of this nation's foremost historians who helped create the field of African American history. His landmark 1947 book, "From Slavery to Freedom: A History of African-Americans" is considered the core text of the African American experience.

At his death, Franklin was the James B.

Dr. Franklin not only wrote about history, he was also a willing participant at critical moments.

He was among a handful of historians who worked with Thurgood Marshall to prepare the Brown v Board of Education case; and in 1965 he marched with Dr. Martin Luther King in the Selma to Montgomery march for voting rights. He may be best known for his leadership of President Clinton's 1997 National Advisory Board on Race which was dedicated to igniting dialogue and action for racial reconciliation.

John Hope Franklin was a once in a lifetime gift to America and indeed to our world. He helped provide a fuller picture of American history and inspired succeeding generations of Black scholars, including Michael Eric Dyson, Cornel West, Orlando Patterson and Henry Louis Gates.

Duke Professor Emeritus of History at Duke University. A graduate of Fisk University, he earned his master's and doctorate degrees from Harvard. In addition to Duke, he also taught at Howard University, the University of Chicago and Cambridge University in England.

In 1956, he became the first African American to chair the history department at Brooklyn College. Franklin has been the president of the American Historical Association, the American Studies Association, the Southern Historical Association and the Organization of American Historians. He has received dozens of honorary degrees and awards, including the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President Clinton in 1995.

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Franklin was 94. Along with Dorothy Height who turned 97 a day earlier and was in the front row during my speech.

Franklin was one of the last of a generation of scholars and activists who had witnessed and walked with uncommon dignity the difficult path from Jim Crow segregation to the inauguration of America's first black president.

What impresses me most about the life of John Hope Franklin is the fact that, like Dorothy Height, in the face of countless slights and obstacles, he rose to greatness and never abandoned his faith in the American Dream.

Sadly, many Americans may not be familiar with the life and work of Franklin. That is partly because, as he noted repeatedly in his prolific body of work, the history and contributions of African

Dump the Patriot Act The worst of Bush-Cheney

BY TOM H. HASTINGS

We had eight years of Bush and Cheney and we finally at long last purged ourselves of that toxic mess. Now those we voted in to change it out are all for keeping some of the worst of it.

Obama has been in office for fewer than 80 days. By now we should still be getting rid of the horrific influences and cleaning up the old mistakes, such as invading Iraq, torturing people,

cutting Old Growth forests, polluting, making the rich folks richer at the expense of everything else, and stealing our civil liberties.

Why, then, would one of Obama's appointees advocate a Dick Cheney approach to your rights? Why would Obama's new (recycled) FBI Director Robert S. Mueller III start advocating for a renewal of the USA Patriot Act, the most egregious violation of your civil liberties

of the entire Bush and Cheney era?

And why would Mueller do so even when all the historic groups organized solely to protect your rights disagree with him?

"If we were a dog food, they would take us off the shelf," Rep. Tom Davis, R-Va., recently said of the Republican "brand."

If we imagine looking at the shelf labeled "American Instruments to Defend Freedom,"

some would regard the Bill of Rights as top shelf, alongside the Constitution. In the mid-range, we hope, are Congress and the Justice Department. In the bargain bin are the warrantless wiretaps, waterboarding, and the snoopsters at the FBI, with their misnamed Patriot Act, which should indeed be recalled and shredded.

Mueller says some of the measures in the Patriot Act save "an awful lot of paperwork."

Right. Why not eliminate all of it and just allow the federal government to read all your emails, follow all your financial transactions, monitor which books you buy or check out of the library, and peruse your telephone records?

Oh, that's right—the Patriot Act already does that. Just one whiff of dissent from Big Brother and you are fair game. Do you doubt that? Do you remember when it was revealed that three of the most spied-on groups were Greenpeace, CodePink and the Catholic Workers?

All three of these "organizations" are nonviolent and transparent. We were fair game by the Patriot Act. Maybe if the FBI would stop spying on nonviolent peaceful people they could really save some paperwork.

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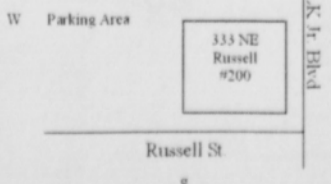
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