

# OPINION

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## Moderate Taliban is an Oxymoron

### Falling victim to new alliances

BY MARTHA BURK

My book "moderate Taliban" ranks right up there with "organic Vienna sausage" as an oxymoron.



But, President Obama mentioned reaching out to the so-called moderate militias in Afghanistan a few weeks ago in talking about how to quell the violence and fix the mess Bush left him with.

He fleshed out a blueprint for gaining a peace when he announced plans to send 4,000 more American troops and a few billion more dollars through a supplemental appropriation.

Women's groups, both in the U.S. and Afghanistan, want to make sure any shifts in policy don't further harm women and girls. Despite Bush administration claims to the contrary, fe-

males in Afghanistan have been set back -- way back -- since 2001. Most are once again in the burqa, and girls are being attacked with acid for the crime of going to school. Women are often deprived of food, and

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have been kicked out of bread lines by the Taliban.

Dr. Sima Samar, chairperson of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, has been making the rounds on Capitol Hill to sound the alarm. "I do not believe there are any moderate Taliban," she said. "The U.S. must not provide support for those who have terrorized women and girls and violated their rights."

Pointing out that women's

rights are human rights and not subject to so-called cultural norms, Feminist Majority Foundation President Eleanor Smeal called for increased attention to health and education, and expressed strong hopes that the

Obama administration will attend to the plight of women.

Afghanistan has ratified the universal women's human rights treaty known as CEDAW (the U.S. has not), and the Afghan constitution has basic protections for women. The challenge is bringing culture and practice, still under the grip of Taliban oppression, in line with the law.

Smeal announced a new campaign, chaired by Mavis Leno

and supported by women's groups and prominent leaders around the world to insure that Afghan women will not fall victim to any new alliance of strange bedfellows.

With a Secretary of State who is unapologetically pro-woman and women in the Senate and House on their side, the campaign has allies on both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue. Congressional hearings led by Sen. Barbara Boxer, D-Calif., on what is to be done for women have been promised.

To his credit, President Obama has indicated that women and girls will not be forgotten in his new push to break the hold of the extremists, and he's no longer using the term "moderate Taliban."

But beyond that, there were no specifics on how to protect women.

Martha Burk is director of the Corporate Accountability Project for the National Council of Women's Organizations.

## Impressive Debut on the World Stage

### President Obama is a worthy descendent of Dr. King's dream

BY MARC MORIAL

President Obama made an impressive debut on the world stage in his first foreign visits -- to London for the G20 economic summit and to Strasbourg, France where he met with his fellow NATO members. And while Obama's standout performance has practically made his status as this country's first African American president a non-issue, one cannot help but notice how he and the First Lady added a splash of color to the meetings with their European counter-



parts. Obama's emergence as a world leader also reminds us that not so long ago, Martin Luther King Jr. and others were roundly criticized for straying outside the accepted confines of the civil rights debate to remind us that "injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

Forty-one years ago, on April 4, 1968, when Dr. King was assassinated on the balcony of the Lorraine Hotel in Memphis, he was in the process of broadening his message from one focused exclusively on the suffering of African Americans to one that emphasized the eco-

nomical, political and spiritual interdependence of all people. He spoke out against the war in Vietnam, against apartheid in South Africa, and he made the point that while life for black Americans was hard, "millions of poor white Americans are in economic bondage that is scarcely less oppressive."

Dr. King bravely called for "a worldwide fellowship that lifts neighborly concern beyond one's tribe, race, class, and nation." Those words are just as relevant for these times, as the world faces the greatest economic crisis since the Great Depression and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan threaten global stability.

That is why President Obama's message of global cooperation and shared respon-

sibility and his singular brand of personal diplomacy on display at both summits, was such a welcome departure from the go-it-alone policies of the last eight years.

In London, the President helped negotiate an agreement by the leaders of the world's largest economies to make more than \$1 trillion available for new lending.

With the loss of another 633,000 jobs in March here at home, and unemployment now at 8.5 percent, the President emphasized that "no corner of the globe can wall itself off from the threats of the 21st century, or from the needs and concerns of fellow nations."

Before his NATO allies, Obama stressed the need for international cooperation in fighting the war in Afghanistan and combating al-Qaeda, saying that the terrorist group could attack any nation and that every country has a stake in its defeat.

On April 4, 1967, one year to the day before his assassination, Dr. King gave a speech at Riverside Church in New York in which he called for a revolution of values saying that, "In the final analysis our loyalties must become ecumenical rather than sectional. Every nation must now develop an overriding loyalty to mankind as a whole in order to preserve the best in their individual societies."

In his first foreign trip as President Barack Obama proved to be a worthy descendent of that dream.

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

## The Question of Genocide

### Racism challenges term's meaning

BY DR. MANNING MARABLE

"Genocide" is an emotionally-packed word that has recently surfaced in the press in connection with President Barack Obama's project foreign policies, and the previous international agendas for former Presidents William Jefferson Clinton and George W. Bush.



where the International Criminal Court is expected to hand down individual indictments, and in eastern Congo, where an undeclared war for four years has culminated into the deaths of possibly four to five million Africans.

Clinton's former Secretary of State, Madeline Albright, and his Secretary of Defense, William Cohen, recently defined "genocide" in general terms as "the deliberate mass murder of civilians." But technically, the "Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide," an international body, defines the crime as the "inflicting on a group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part."

This second definition implies that genocide can be committed both by governments, as well as non-state

Could Bill Clinton have stopped, or at least significantly reduced, the mass murder in Rwanda through the direct intervention of U.S. power? Today, Clinton claims that his refusal to act was based on faulty information.

He worried about the consequences of U.S. troops being sent into yet another African country that was once again divided by factional fighting. Yet Samantha Powers today insists that Clinton as President "could have known" about Rwandan genocide "if he had wanted to know."

There are many different

*We are witnessing the destruction of the futures and opportunities for young African Americans.*

actors, "and that a series of actions taken against a specific population may not individually have the intent of genocide, but when considered together, have the long-term impact of "the physical destruction of the group."

In retrospect, one of the greatest political errors, and moral lapses, was the Clinton Administration's refusal to recognize the mass genocide taking place in Rwanda in 1994. President Clinton had earlier in his administration placed U.S. troops in Somalia, which resulted in a minor military disaster. The fiasco in Somalia made Clinton reluctant to take proactive measures in Central Africa to defend human rights.

In theory, the Obama Administration has put together an anti-genocide "dream team" for identifying and reacting to global atrocities. The team includes John Prendergast, head of the "Enough Project" that identifies conflicts that can turn into genocides; Susap Rice, our U.N. ambassador; and Harvard Professor Samantha Powers, Pulitzer Prize-winning author and a member of Obama's foreign policy team.

These individuals will concentrate their energies in Darfur and western Sudan,

forms of genocide. We usually think about genocide as the end product of military conflict. However, genocide properly defined is the destruction of a group's ability to reproduce itself, to provide resources to nourish its children and young adults, and to protect itself from both the brutality of law enforcement authorities as well as the military.

One might argue that for millions of young black people in the United States, under America's new system of color-blind racism, they are experiencing a subtle form of genocide.

With black youth unemployment today exceeding 30 percent, and high school dropout rates above 50 percent, we are witnessing the destruction of the futures and opportunities for young African Americans.

The dimensions of this tragedy are not as traumatic as in the eastern Congo or Darfur. However, they nevertheless represent fundamental challenge in our pursuit of racial justice in the United States.

Dr. Manning Marable is a professor of African-American studies and director of the Center for Contemporary Black History at Columbia University.

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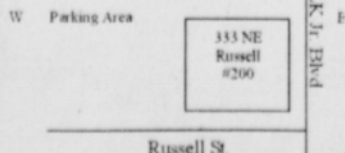
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