

OPINION

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A Big Star with a Big Heart Michael Jackson's service to humanity

BY MARC H. MORIAL

One of the most interesting things about Michael Jackson is that even though he died at the young age of 50, so many of us seemed to have grown up listening to his music and trying to copy his dance moves.

I guess that is what happens when you've been performing and making records since 1968 at the age of 10 – first as the lead singer of the Jackson Five

and later as the world's most popular solo artist. But, while his iconic artistry and eccentric lifestyle are well known, I want to spend a few moments reflecting on Michael's equally impressive record of service to humanity.

Born in 1958 in the steel-mill city of Gary, Ind., Michael's life and career paralleled generations of social and economic change. In 1967, just one year

before the Jackson Five burst on the scene as Motown's newest sensation, Richard Hatcher was elected Mayor of Gary, becoming one of the first African American mayors in the country.

Michael and his brothers first captured the nation's attention in 1968, the year of Martin Luther King's assassination. Their jubilant music brought people of different races together, some for the first time, at a moment when the forces of discord seemed intent on tearing us apart.

In songs like "We are the World," and "Man in the Mirror," Michael spoke to the hearts of people and made powerful statements about the need for greater unity, compassion and peace in the world.

Many of the proceeds of his records and tours were donated to charities devoted to African relief, college scholarships and HIV/AIDS. In 1992, he founded the Heal the World Foundation to relieve the suffering of children around the world. His

"Dangerous World Tour" that year gave him the opportunity, in his own words, to "visit children around the world, as well as spread the message of global love, in the hope that others will be moved to do their share to help heal the world." In 2000, the Guinness Book of World Records cited Michael Jackson for holding the world record for the "Most Charities Supported by a Pop Star."

As we mourn his passing in these uncertain times, we might do well to remember the words

to one of Michael Jackson's most poignant songs: "I'm starting with the man in the mirror. I'm asking him to change his ways. And no message could have been any clearer – if you wanna make the world a better place take a look at yourself then make a change."

Our prayers go out to the Jackson family and Michael's children. We will all miss the King of Pop.

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

Letters to the Editor

Chavez Support Counted

The Portland City Council last week approved the renaming of 39th Avenue for Cesar E. Chavez unanimously. I would like to thank the great support of African-American leaders and the African-American community. Your support and empathy for this cause made the difference in this decision that honors all Portlanders, especially Latino descent ones.

I hope our communities continue to forge ropes of understanding and mutual support in the many years and decades to come for a better and more inclusive Portland. Thanks for your support and Yes We Did it/ Si Se Pudo!

Erick Flores
Southeast Portland

Leader Helped People

If Honduras' overthrown president Zelaya was so bad, why were all those people out in the streets demanding his return?

Zelaya abolished fees for primary education resulting in 400,000 more children attending school. One million children received a meal during the school day. A program of childhood immunizations was expanded. The Zelaya government brought electricity to more homes in both urban and rural areas. In January, Zelaya decreed a raise in the nation's minimum wage.

More than his association with Venezuela's Hugo Chavez, and more than his pursuit of a constitutional convention that might have allowed for him to run for president again at some future time, the real reason for Zelaya's overthrow was his change from the centuries-old policies favoring the rich elites to policies that improved the lot of the poor.

Jamie Partridge
Northeast Portland



Forget Guns – I'll take a Cell Phone

Energized by information

BY DONALD KAUL

Once introduced into a venue, the Internet doesn't merely grow, it explodes.

We see it working its magic in Iran right now. Ten years ago the government would have stolen the election and immediately put a lockdown on information coming out of country. Some people would have protested and gotten beaten up, but hardly anyone would have noticed and the world would have yawned. A three-day story, tops.

Instead we now have great numbers of people spilling into the streets to protest the fraudulent election of Mahmoud

Ahmadinejad, energized by the information fed to them through the Internet. And the world has noticed.

The police and the government's paramilitary thugs beat the protesters, shot them, arrested them, but still they came. The government has banned foreign journalists from the streets. People with cameras are arrested and abused. Still the photos and stories of the government's brutality keep streaming out to the rest of the world.

It's enough to make a ruling despot long for the days when the Soviet Union could silence critics by confiscating all the mimeograph machines in Moscow.

The government has tried to stem the Internet tide but to little

avail. Hundreds of photos of the protests have appeared on YouTube and thousands of messages from protesters have made their way to the outside world through text messaging, Twitter and all the other technologies I know nothing about.

Will it be enough to topple the government or at least to win new elections? Probably not. A police state still has formidable weapons at its command and the Iranian govern-

ment seems quite willing to use them. But its aura of invincibility has been breached, its moral authority fractured. It's become obvious that it's just another corrupt gang of thugs willing to do whatever it takes to hang on to power and damn the consequences.

The situation gives lie to the claim of the National Rifle Association and its fellow-travelers that the first thing "the Communists" do when they take over a country is to confiscate the guns.

Not true. The first thing insurgents do when they gain control is take over the radio and television stations. Then they close the newspapers. Guns are dangerous yes, but not nearly as dangerous as ideas.

Republicans are upset with President Obama for not making a more forceful protest against what's going on in Iran, but I'm not sure what they want him to do. Make faces at Iran's leaders? Call them names? (We've already used up our quota for wars this decade.)

Maybe the president could show them a picture of Dick Cheney smiling. That's pretty terrifying. Beyond that, interposing the United States in what is, after all, an internal matter would do nothing but make the

protesters look like pawns of the U. S. and weaken their position. Obama's playing it just about right, turning up the heat gradually. The Republicans have gotten a lot of mileage out of talking tough to our adversaries, when they talk at all. Where has it gotten us? Pariah status in the very part of the world that we now seek to influence.

What's happening in Iran now is important largely because Iran is a hostile country that is attempting to arm itself with nuclear weapons. Ideally, we'd like to get the rest of the world--countries like China, India, Japan--on our side in trying to prevent it from doing so.

For that you need not bluster but persuasion. And the Internet.

Don Kaul is a national columnist.

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Greater St. Stephen Missionary Baptist Church

3605 NE Mallory

Pastor Kimberly K. Black and the GSS church family cordially invite the City of Roses to come and worship with us as we celebrate our

25th Church Anniversary • August 14-16, 2009

Special Guest, Friday at 7:00 pm

Dr. Robert E. Houston Sr. – Frankfort, KY

Banquet Celebration, Saturday at 6:00 pm

At the Embassy Suites Portland Airport –
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Bishop Alexis Thomas – Phoenix, AZ

(See banquet ticket information below)

Late Night Musical 10:00 pm at the Embassy

Suites featuring Portland's Finest Gospel Artist Wilder Ward Jrs., God in Charge, Grace & Mercy, New Testament COGIC, St. Paul MBC and from Seattle WA, Silent Praise Ministries

Sunday at 3:30 pm; Dr. A. Bernard Devers, I

– San Antonio, TX



Musical Guest: Lady Tramaine Hawkins

Banquet tickets \$60.00

Ticket Locations: Christopher's Gourment Grill, Earl's Barber Shop, Elements of Artistry, Geneva's Shear Perfection, MeRae's, One Stop Records and Tondalayera Designer Salon.

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