

OPINION

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Make it the Best School Year

Encouraging kids with love, prayers and support

BY ERVIN MILTON
MINISTER AND TEAM LEADER

Let me begin by saying that this column is generally read by adults. It is my hope that after you read this, you will share its contents with young people whose lives are touched by you.

I am a 62-year old, southern, African American man. Schools were segregated when I was in what is now called elementary and middle school.

I did not have equipment, supplies or anything else like some of the other schools around me. I could go on about the inequities, but I do not think I need to. In spite of that, I was able to



excel.

After 10 years in the all black school, I transferred to the previously all white high school. I graduated from high school and college. Later, I graduated from a well known predominately white university with a master's degree.

There are serious injustices in the educational systems that continue to exist today. It is sad that in almost 50 years, this has not changed very much. There are many persons who are fighting to right the wrongs and make a more just educational system

for all. I call upon you to join in that fight either on a local or national level.

In addition, our youth must be reminded that they cannot use the inequities in the educational

is." My life's story is not unique. Many, many minority, oppressed or poor people have similar stories. We have learned to take lemons and make lemonade.

dents have misplaced values and spend their money on items that they want rather than on what they need. I know that some teachers are racist. I know that the immigration laws work against some students and the list goes on.

However, as our children go back to school, I challenge each of us to work to make this the best school year possible. We can do that by anointing our children with our love, prayers and support. We can also do that by working to make the educational system better and by supporting local schools and teachers.

Further, we can tell them how we made it over, in spite of the obstacles in life; and if we made it, they can too.

Ervin Milton is a minister and team leader for the United Church of Christ.

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systems as an excuse not to do their best and to succeed in life in spite of what they may face.

Life is rough, tough and sometimes it is unfair. "It is what it

I know that some schools will not have proper equipment. Some parents cannot afford basic tools, like pencils and paper. I also know that some parents and stu-

Marching in Two Different Directions

Fox host hijacks MLK's message

BY MARC H. MORIAL

Two groups of Americans gathered Aug. 28 on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. to express their vision of freedom 47 years after Martin Luther King, Jr.'s historic "I Have a Dream" speech. Unfortunately, the two groups seemed to be marching in different directions.

One rally, co-convened by Rev. Al Sharpton's National Action Network, the National Urban League and a coalition of civil rights organizations, marched from Washington's Dunbar High School to the site



of the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Memorial under construction on the National Mall. That group marched to "Reclaim the Dream" that Dr. King so courageously and eloquently articulated at the Lincoln Memorial on Aug. 28, 1963: "And as we walk, we must make the pledge that we shall always march

ahead. We cannot turn back... We will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream."

In the 21st century that means a national commitment to quality education for all. It means jobs and a living wage for all. It means affordable housing on fair terms for all. And it means quality and affordable health care that is accessible to all.

Speaker after speaker, including myself, Rev. Sharpton, NAACP President, Ben Jealous; DC Delegate, Eleanor Holmes Norton and Martin Luther King, III, echoed these themes, which are also the major empowerment goals of the National Urban League during this, our 100th year anniversary.

It was fitting that the Reclaim the Dream rally began at a public high school. Education has always been the gateway to opportunity for African Americans and Education Secretary, Arne Duncan was on hand to once again call education the "civil rights issue of this generation."

Underscoring that commitment was the presentation by Larry Handfield, chairman of the Board of Trustees of

Bethune-Cookman College, of a \$100,000 four-year scholarship to high school student, Leah Carr, of Northwest Washington.

Fox News talk show host, Glenn Beck, led the other rally, which took place at the Lincoln Memorial, the very spot where Dr. King rallied the nation to overcome its divisive past.

Beck has made a living denouncing the concept of social justice, belittling the legitimate grievances of African Americans, using faith as a wedge issue, and claiming that President Obama is racist and his policies are reminiscent of Nazism.

In short, Beck is a world-class divider, and his march was designed to take America in another direction - back to its roots of states' rights separatism. Unfortunately, Beck has

amassed a large following. Many of them joined him and former vice presidential candidate Sarah Palin at their so-called "Restoring Honor" rally.

Their rally was not only about an outdated "us vs. them" vision of America, it was a cynical attempt to hijack the message and meaning of Dr. King and the civil rights movement. As I told the crowd at the Reclaim the Dream rally, "We will not stand silent as some seek to bamboozle Dr. King's dream. We reclaim the dream because we are here to say we must be one nation."

At a time when Dr. King's message of unity is more important than ever, the question must be asked: Is America marching in two different directions?

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

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