

# OPINION

## Japan's Chaos is a Wake Up Call

Call a timeout on nuclear energy construction

BY ALICE SLATER

Sometimes chaos comes along as a wake-up call to humanity.

Japan's double-whammy earthquake-tsunami is overwhelmingly tragic. Being at the mercy of the total chaotic effect of the elements--able to be wiped out by a wave of water from the sea--is an insult to the arrogance of modern humanity that thinks it can insulate and protect itself with technological know-how from the calamities visited upon our earth by Mother Nature.

It's ironic this catastrophe took place in earthquake-plagued Japan,



where scientists and engineers took strong precautions against this seventh largest earthquake in recorded history.

Japan spent billions on new infrastructure--building homes, offices, and factories on rubber shock absorbers and reinforced pillars that didn't collapse. This was despite the enormous force from the renting of the earth--a force so powerful it moved Japan 17 feet eastward and caused the axis of the earth to shift. Yet even the careful, methodical Japanese couldn't anticipate the power of the tsunami that followed.

The ocean's surge overcame their best efforts to protect Japanese nuclear power plants from disasters like this. They couldn't maintain the electricity essential to keep a constant stream of cool water flowing to cover the radioactive fuel in the reactors and spent-fuel storage pools. They couldn't prevent this foolhardy technology from "melting down" and spewing its lethal

radiation across the land--and eventually perhaps across the planet.

Tens of thousands of people near nuclear reactors in Fukushima were evacuated. Many people have been contaminated with radioactivity on their skin and clothing that escaped from the damaged reactors.

The government is distributing potassium iodide tablets to prevent these people from getting thyroid cancer. But those tablets won't stave off other forms of cancer and leukemia that may exponentially increase. We now know that U.S. sailors aboard the aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan, sent from our military base in Okinawa to the vicinity of the accident, have been contaminated by airborne radioactivity.

Meanwhile, nuclear industry spokespeople assure us that American reactors are much safer. Grimly, they comfort us that Chernobyl only had 50 immediate deaths. But Russian scientists recently reported that close to 1 million people have died from cancer since the dreadful acci-

dent in 1986 spewed lethal radiation over a broad swath of Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia. Radioactive dust later traveled to many other countries in the Northern Hemisphere.

Let this chaos be a wake-up call for a time-out on new nuclear energy construction projects. This includes the 62 reactors around the world now under construction and the additional 158 slated to go forward.

And like the massive mobilization gathering strength in Japan,

with emergency workers coming from all over the world to help rescue and recover the tens of thousands of people trapped in their villages, let us make a massive global effort to put a solar panel on every roof, a geothermal pump in every building, windmills on every windswept plain, and tidal energy pumps in our rivers and seas to harness the clean safe energy of our Mother Earth.

Alice Slater is the New York Director of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation.

## Black Entrepreneurship by Necessity

BY MARC MORIAL

There's a silver lining in the dark cloud of the Great Recession. A new Census Bureau report reveals that from 2002 to 2007, the number of black-owned businesses in the United States increased by 60.5 percent to 1.9 million--more than triple the national rate.

The reasons for this are many, beginning with the long history of African-American entrepreneurship in response to poverty, high unemployment, and discrimination.

Consider the case of Madam C.J. Walker. The daughter of slaves, in the early 1900s she turned her dream of financial independence into a hair care and cosmetics business that revolutionized the beauty products industry, created well-paying jobs, and made her a wealthy woman and philanthropist.

"I had to make my own living and my own opportunity, but I made it!" the trailblazing African-American businesswoman said. "Don't sit down and wait for the opportunities to come. Get up and make them."

Like Madam C.J. Walker, many African Americans may have turned to entrepreneurship in re-



cent years because of high unemployment in our communities. The fact is, black unemployment never got back down to where it was before the 2001 recession. So in effect, we're seeing entrepreneurship by necessity.

There's also an economic independent streak, particularly among new generations. Building a business gives great satisfaction and cushions entrepreneurs from the shock of losing jobs because of economic down cycles.

New York State leads the country with more than 204,000 black-owned businesses, followed by Georgia and Florida. From 2002 to 2007, nearly 4 in 10 of these businesses operated in the health care and social assistance industries, as well as the repair, maintenance, and personal and laundry services sectors. The retail trade and health care and social assistance sectors accounted for 27.4 percent of black-owned business revenue.

The Census also found that in addition to an increase in the number of black-owned businesses, annual sales at these businesses increased by 55 percent to \$137.5 billion.

"Black-owned businesses continued to be one of the fastest growing segments of our economy, showing rapid growth in both the number of businesses and total sales during this time

period," said Thomas Mesenbourg, the Census Bureau's deputy director.

Despite this surge in African-American entrepreneurship, black businesses still make up only 7 percent of all companies, and they tend to be smaller than other businesses. Black-owned businesses are also often hampered in their revenue growth by a lack of capital, connections, and contracts.

On behalf of the National Urban League, I recently called on federal, state, and local governments to develop a "hyper-focus" on black- and minority-owned businesses.

Every city, county, and state needs to have a plan that focuses on small and minority business. There's a spirit of entrepreneurship out there that needs to be nurtured and energized.

I hope these new findings by the Census say loudly and clearly to the investment community that it's missing an emerging market in the United States. If minority businesses are growing at a faster clip than overall businesses, imagine what the growth rate would be if those barriers were eliminated or lowered. We need investors to recognize that they're missing an incredible opportunity.

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

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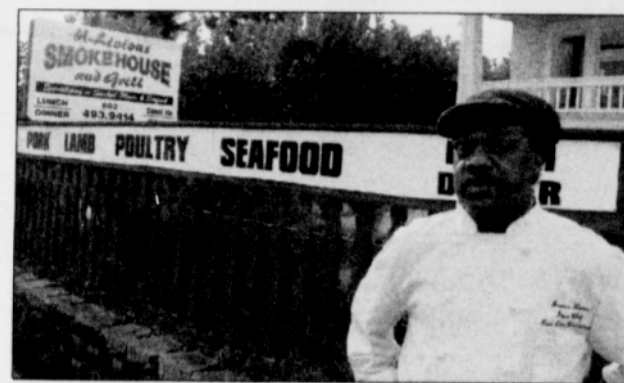
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