

## OPINION

## Back to School and Back to Work

## Don't sacrifice education in budget battle

BY MARC H. MORIAL

Education has always been the gateway to good jobs and a better life for the American people.

This has never been more true than today.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, people who hold bachelor's degrees earn on average \$58,000 a year compared with just \$31,000 for high school graduates and only \$21,000 for those without high school diplo-



mas.

We also know that a growing number of 21st century high-tech jobs require higher skills and more education than ever before.

That is why for more than 50 years, the National Urban League's Education & Youth Development division has worked to improve educational opportunities for African-American and underserved students by developing innovative programs to support their academic achievement, encourage their civic involvement, and contribute to their healthy physical and emotional development. We have also made education a cor-

nerstone of our 21st century empowerment agenda with a challenge to the nation that every American child will be ready for college, work and life by 2025.

The Urban League serves more than 200,000 children and youth each year through Head Start, after-school programs and charter schools.

As the nation struggles to find the right balance between fiscal austerity and necessary investments in our future, the education of our children must not be sacrificed in the process.

Doing so would not only short-change their futures, it would cripple our ability to grow the American economy and remain competitive in the global

economy.

We are encouraged by the Obama Administration's commitment to education, including signing into law the largest investment in education in history as part of the President's 2009 stimulus package – some \$115 billion over two years to save education jobs, send young people to college, modernize America's classrooms, and advance education reforms.

We are also pleased that Education Secretary Arne Duncan has set aside this week for an "Education and the Economy" bus tour to urban centers, including Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Milwaukee, Detroit, and Chicago to highlight the important connec-

tion between quality education and quality jobs. "No other issue is more critical to our economy and our way of life than education," said Duncan.

So, as our children head back to the classroom, we urge students to do their part by studying hard and making the most of what their schools and teachers have to offer.

We ask parents to do their part by getting involved.

And we urge local school districts and Congress to do their part by ensuring that all our students have the resources and support they need to succeed.

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

## Post 9/11: Cloak of Fear, Cloak of Hope

BY JIM MOOS

For most of us, the day began like any other day. I was eating breakfast, listening to a news program when the first images were shown—smoke rising from a World Trade Center tower. There were unconfirmed reports that a plane had struck it. The heart-wrenching hours that followed are deeply etched into the memories of most Americans. Thousands of innocent lives were lost, and grief remains.

Sadly, the terrible losses of that day multiplied over the past decade. A "war on terror" was quickly declared, and Afghanistan and Iraq were invaded. Over 4,000 American service personnel have died in those actions—more than were killed on 9/11 itself. In addition, tens of thousands have been injured. They will carry physical, emotional and spiritual scars for the rest of their lives.

Less a part of the American consciousness are the massive losses suffered by Afghani and

Iraqi citizens as a result of the wars and the chaotic forces they unleashed. Over 100,000 of them have been killed and over 5 million have been displaced from their homes or become refugees—mostly innocent civilians. Their names, faces and stories are largely unknown to us, but their families and communities continue to experience pain and grief.

Post 9/11 losses include vast amounts of money spent on the wars, even in the midst of an economic crisis. Sadly, some have also lost sight of the full human dignity of our Muslim brothers and sisters through stereotyping, profiling and the bearing of false witness against them.

As we remember and mourn the losses of 9/11, we must also ask why losses continue to multiply. A partial answer is that we have viewed the future through the lens of fear. The debate over building a Muslim community center near ground zero reflects the persistence of that fear.

A Vietnam era general said that "war is fear cloaked in courage." What is true of individual combatants is also true of society as a whole. The war on terror is grounded in fear—fear of the other, fear of the unknown, fear of losing control. A decade of violence has not brought us peace and security. Instead, we have suffered and inflicted grief upon grief.

Faith calls us to shun fear and embrace hope. For those of us who are Christian, our hope is in Christ who taught us to pray for the establishment of God's realm, on earth as in heaven. Ours is the hope that our labors on behalf of that realm are not in vain; transformation of hearts and minds, of institutions and structures is possible.

Fear causes us to see the other as an enemy to be mistrusted, manipulated and destroyed. Hope, on the other hand, welcomes all as neighbors with whom we seek understanding, reconciliation and fellowship.

Fear leads to revenge, while hope nurtures forgiveness. Fear perpetuates a never-ending cycle of violence, but hope seeks peace with justice.

As we remember the losses of 9/11, let us not be led by the

terror we fear. Rather, let the hope of God's future lead us to transformed relationships, at home and abroad.

Jim Moos writes for Justice Ministries in the United Church of Christ.

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