

OPINION

The Changing Face of America

Time to end the old divisions

BY MARC MORIAL

We've been hearing about it for years, and now the time has come. The Census Bureau just announced that for the first time, the birth rate of people of color exceeded that of whites: 50.4 percent to 49.5 percent.

America is still a majority white country, with whites comprising 63.4 percent of the total population. But, the Census Bureau report covering the 12-month period that ended last July reveals that at a time when the white birth rate is declining, there are now 114 million minorities in the United States, or 36.6 percent of the population.

Hispanics, now America's largest minority group, led the way last year with 26 percent of total births. The African



American percentage was about 15 percent, and for Asians it was about 4 percent.

The country now has five majority-minority states: Hawaii, the District of Columbia, California, New Mexico and Texas. Clearly, we are moving inexorably towards the day in 2050 when the United States is a majority-minority nation.

As noted in a recent Huffington Post column, "With fewer white babies being born than Latino, black and Asian babies that may come a lot sooner than 2042 - the target year which demographers repeatedly cite."

This increase in the minority population is due in part to the influx of Hispanic immigrants over the past few decades, a trend which is now slowing. It also reflects the fact that with a median age of 42, the white population is aging while younger minorities, especially Hispanics, are moving into their peak child-bearing years.

With African Americans and Latinos still over-represented among the unemployed and high school dropouts, this demographic shift should be a wake-up call to policy makers and employers. America cannot move forward if it continues to leave communities of color behind.

We will not be able to grow our economy or compete in the 21st century global marketplace if we continue to squander so much of our young human capital.

Even as job creation continues to pick up, the unemployment rate for African Americans has exceeded 10 percent since 2008. It now stands at 13 percent. The rate for Hispanics also outpaces the national average at 10.3 percent. The high school dropout rate is also highest in these communities.

It is ironic that the Census Bureau report was released on May 17, 58 years to the day that Thurgood Marshall won the landmark Supreme Court case

ending "separate but equal" segregation in our nation's schools.

While the hope was that Brown v the Department of Education would lead to better schools and a better education for all our children, America's public schools are more segregated today than ever. And schools serving African American and Hispanic students remain unequal in terms of resources, funding and quality teachers.

Recent political attacks on affirmative action, immigration and voting rights also make it clear that while African Americans and Hispanics are growing in numbers, our fight for civil rights and equality is far from over.

It is time to put these old divisions behind us. The future is fast approaching and its color is going to look a lot different than the shades of the past.

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

Portland's Progressive Community Falls short

Reflecting on my run for mayor

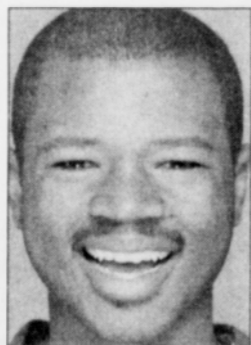
BY CAMERON WHITTEN

I remember the Willamette Week interview, where Mark Zusman told me I

sounded bitter, after lamenting how I was being snubbed by the media and forum organizers, despite my endorsements, rising familiarity, and service in the community. I replied, "Not bitter, just stating the facts."

It was the biggest lie I told during the entire campaign.

I entered the race because I felt betrayed by our mayor and police chief who had misinformed the public in order to take the easy route in dealing with America's budding social movement. My first impression



of the political scene was the lack of diversity between the front-running candidates, whether it was creed, race, class, sexuality, age, etc., there was a huge void of representation within our representative democracy. I quickly became obsessed.

My biggest dismay was the lack of empowerment I endured from Portland's progressive community. Most notably, by organizations who were founded on achieving social justice for marginalized demographics.

When I informed Pride Northwest that I was the only queer identified candidate, they responded that I would not be invited to their Evening with the Candidates, that it had nothing to do with me. The Skanner refused to return my calls and emails, despite being the only

African American running. Street Roots, which advocates for the houseless community, never published an article, despite knowing that I had experienced bouts of homelessness while living in Portland.

My biggest disappointment was the Urban League of Portland, which initially invited me to participate on their forum of equity, diversity, and inclusiveness, then ultimately decided that I shouldn't be included. These are only a few examples of injustice, but as a whole, the lengths that many of these institutions went to neutralize the voice of their community was extensive.

It was not all disappointing, and I thank organizations and community leaders like the Portland Observer, PQ Monthly, the Q Center, the Working Families' Party, Bruce Broussard, and Eileen Brady for their commitment to a more equitable society.

But when it comes to Portland's claims as the most progressive city in America, I was clearly in want of more. I scratched my head when I overheard others say that 23 was a lot of candidates, as Portland contains a population well over 500,000, and in this recession, our society is in desperate need of leaders who will respond to the call of civic duty.

In the aftermath of the primary, media outlets and nominees who survived the ax boasted that Portlanders don't respond to big money candidates, although in truth, the only options they had to choose from were big money.

In absence of Voter Owned Elections, candidates without heavy outside contributions were treated as invisible, despite their unique proposals and commitments to civic responsibility. The 99 Percent is constantly disenfranchised by this political apart-

heid, which I believe is the main reason why there is low voter turnout in local elections.

In my strong, five month run, our energetic team achieved milestones, whether it was making news, meeting influential figures like Ralph Nader and Rocky Anderson, or challenging other candidates on their priorities and standards.

My gratitude is boundless for the people who believed in me, and I am inspired to continue with my head held high, due to your rare qualities of courage and understanding. This isn't going to be my last appearance on Portland's political stage, but I hope in sharing my experiences, we might all learn a little, and become better from it.

Pragmatism is the bane of an evolved society.

Cameron Whitten is a former candidate for mayor of Portland.

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