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OPINION

Locked Up, Shut Out and Left Behind

Creating opportunities for black men

BY MARC H. MORIAL

As the Trayvon Martin trial and record high summer temperatures add their heat to the unemployment and economic woes plaguing Black America, we thought it would be a good time to take stock of the one group that more than most continues to be locked up, shut out and left behind -- African American men.



This topic is too big and too complicated to cover in one essay. But it is not too big or complicated to solve with the necessary resources, commitment and partnerships. So we will continue our discussion of the issues, along with the creation of solutions, in future columns.

Today, we simply want to provide an overview and begin to point to some answers. A good place to start is the recent Newsweek cover story, "The Fight for Black Men," by former Obama White House advisor Joshua Dubois.

Like the National Urban League, Dubois

understands that the solution to the under-employment and over-incarceration of African American men must begin with changing our perception of who they are and investing in their potential through job opportunities, quality education and economic development.

These have been the building blocks of

footing with the rest of us.

Disproportionate arrests and unequal sentencing have had a devastating impact in black communities. African American men are six times more likely to be incarcerated than whites. More African Americans are in prison or on probation today than were enslaved in 1850.

As of 2004, more black men were denied the right to vote because of a criminal record than in 1870, when the Fifteenth Amendment was ratified, giving blacks the right to vote.

-- Joshua Dubois, former director of President Obama's Office of Faith-Based Initiatives

the great American middle class and represent the surest path to responsible adulthood and stronger communities. So why haven't we done this for African American men?

The reasons are many but one stands out. As described by Michelle Alexander in her best-selling 2010 book, *The New Jim Crow*, the intentional mass incarceration of young black men has created what she calls a "permanent under-caste" that may never be able to escape the past and compete on equal

The economic consequences have been just as bad. This year's Urban League State of Black America report found that the average unemployment rate for black men in 2012 was 15 percent compared with just 7.4 percent for white men. Black men earn only 72 cents for every dollar earned by white men.

Because of the civil rights advances of the past 50 years and the election of Barack Obama as President, in the words of Michelle Alexander, we may have been "lulled to sleep by the rhetoric of color blindness and the

appearance of great racial progress" and thus have "closed our eyes to the millions who have been locked up, locked out and relegated to second-class citizen status."

But our focus must extend beyond talking about the problems.

That is why the National Urban League has been a leading voice in challenging Washington to develop a comprehensive urban agenda. It is also why we recently announced our \$100 million Jobs Rebuild America campaign designed to address the nation's employment and education crisis.

This effort includes our Urban Youth Empowerment Program, which offers job training, education and other wrap-around services to prepare out-of-school and adjudicated youth for the world of work, as well as our Training for Work-Adult Re-entry program, which targets convicted adults in Work Release Programs and provides them with supportive services, education and training opportunities, mentoring, and job readiness and placement support.

We must create more opportunities for black men who have been locked up or left out. As we celebrate the momentous anniversaries of our civil rights struggle, let's remember, there can be no celebration without continuation. We cannot afford to stop now.

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

Pentagon Finally Gets Realistic about Syria

The case for non-violent resolutions

BY TOM H. HASTINGS

Finally, the Pentagon is getting a bit realistic about Syria and possible U.S. intervention with a report of options laid out by letter from the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Martin E. Dempsey to Carl Levin of the Senate Armed Forces Committee, and the chiefs warn about expense, loss, and blowback.

The Cold War was a time of proxy wars, showcasing the relative strengths and weaknesses of the arms produced by the two superpowers, fought in other people's countries. Indeed, except for Hungary in 1956, no war was fought on the soil of white people the whole time, an indication of the deep cynicism of both sides.

The U.S. always had better big weapons and the Soviets had the daily weapon of choice, the AK-47.

Soviet tanks were only good for rolling over friendlies in the Warsaw Pact and their nukes were big and dumb, but their AKs were the gold standard for violent insurgency.

Most of the world is less excited about being crash test dummies for the U.S. and Russia nowadays, although Syria seems to be an exception. Basher al-Assad spends his entire allowance every week on new shipments of Russian war-making gear to use against his own people. The rebels get their gear mostly from the U.S. through Qatar and Saudi Arabia, often also via Turkey.

Both sides fight dirty, ignore international rules of warfare, and yet the kneejerk reaction of many hawks in the U.S. is to ship weapons to anyone fighting the Russian weapon-wielders.

Just because the U.S.-backed mujahedeen in Afghanistan used their leftover weapons given to them originally to fight the Soviets against the U.S. later -- hence the term blowback -- let's forget that ever happened and give more guns and rockets and ammunition to insur-

gents who behead, execute, blow up civilian markets, torture, and in the most ghastly extreme case, a Syrian rebel leader is shown carving the heart out a government soldier and eating it. Those are the fighters Republicans in Congress want to support and many Democrats actually join this bloodthirsty insanity.

But even though Congress -- and apparently President Obama to some

McCain that if he keeps up with that apoplectic visage, one of these days it's going to become his permanent look--oops! Too late.

The sad truth is that the nonviolent revolution was stolen from the Syrian people, who started their Arab Spring just as nonviolently as did Egyptians, and very soon after. When the U.S. intervened in Libya that made the violent ones in Syria

sador) and also set total fear in Assad's heart and made him image Qaddafi, bin Laden and Saddam Hussein. That made him totally commit to clinging to power by all means, including the ones that he uses so devastatingly on his own people.

Sun Tzu said build a golden bridge over which your enemy can retreat. That golden bridge is built by nonviolence plus negotiation, what we just saw as millions of people used social media to back up successful Norwegian efforts to get the United Arab Emirates to release Marte Deborah Dalelv, a woman from Norway who was raped and then jailed in Dubai for having extramarital sex! The Norwegian Prime Minister was diplomatic and delicate and it all worked.

In Norway, of course, conflict resolution and peace research experts consult with the highest levels of government. In the U.S., we listen only to the Joint Chiefs, so good thing they sober up on occasion.

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degree -- have mostly forgotten those lessons, some in the Pentagon seem to suddenly remember, especially as they see the sequester shine a more realistic light on the formerly illimitable funding picture.

The usual kneejerk kill-em-all-let-God-sort-em-out crowd is attacking Dempsey. Will someone tell John

assume they'd get U.S. military help too, so they picked up arms. The nonviolent revolution was overwhelmed and defeated in no small measure by this Libya Effect, and that is indeed an Obama decision that resulted in lots of gratitude from Libyans (you could tell by the way they assassinated our ambas-