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OPINION

The Emergence of a New Jim Crow System

Blocking health care coverage for millions of Americans



BY EMILY SCHWARTZ
AND WILLIAM A. COLLINS

Remember that inspiring 50th birthday party for the March on Washington at the end of the summer?

Unfortunately, those moving speeches didn't slow the emergence of a new Jim Crow system.

The Supreme Court kicked off its celebration of the occasion a month early by gutting the Voting Rights Act. Then,

several states then showed their disrespect for the eternal power of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech by passing new laws making it harder for black Americans to vote.

New York City's voters are honoring the great march's legacy in a much more appropriate way: They're rejecting the Big Apple's "stop-and-frisk" racial profiling that Mayor Michael Bloomberg cherishes. While Wall Street's casino economy has priced countless poor out of that town, stop-and-frisk has sent legions of black New Yorkers to jail.

Bill de Blasio, the Democratic hopeful to fill Bloomberg's wingtips, is the father of a teen son named Dante with a monumental afro. Bringing his fatherly fears that Dante would be unfairly targeted by the overreach of stop-and-frisk helped de Blasio clinch the highly competitive nomination.

A poll released less than four

weeks before the election makes the Democrat's lead appear unbeatable: 67 percent of likely voters prefer him and just 23 percent intend to cast their ballots for Republican nominee Joe Lhota.

De Blasio's lead is staggering among black New Yorkers. An overwhelming 89 percent support him and only 4 percent prefer Lhota, who has pledged that he would fight in court to preserve the parts of the stop-and-frisk program that a federal judge rejected in a mid-August ruling.

Racial economic disparity is probably going to be harder to vanquish than racist policing. White families typically bring home twice as much income as African-American and Latino families earned, according to the Urban Institute. And the racial wealth gap is much bigger. On average, white families have more than \$600,000 in wealth, about six times as much as their black and Latino counterparts.

Meanwhile, 13 percent of whites live in poverty according to the Kaiser Family Foundation, compared with 35 percent of black Americans and 33 percent of Latinos.

The killer, literally, in this plot line is health insurance, another Kaiser study found. There's a big disparity between which communities have coverage and which don't. Before the Affordable Care Act's key provisions began to roll out, only 13 percent of whites too young for Medicare lacked coverage, compared with 21 percent of blacks and 32 percent of Latinos.

Three and a half years ago, the Affordable Care Act became the law of the land. It has withstood Supreme Court scrutiny and misleading propaganda that tried to make the 2012 elections a referendum on health care reform. When the health insurance exchanges began to operate a few weeks back, unexpectedly high demand and low

costs accompanied troubling reports about software shortcomings.

Wouldn't it be nice to know why conservative Republicans, especially those in southern states, oppose helping millions of Americans get health care coverage?

Well, one reason is racism.

Yes, millions of the poor uninsured are white. But since a smaller percentage of whites lack coverage, compared to people of color, it's hard not to see the racism behind the nonsensical objection to improving the quality of life by making health care coverage more universal.

Emily Schwartz Greco is the managing editor of *OtherWords*, a non-profit national editorial service run by the Institute for Policy Studies. *OtherWords* columnist William A. Collins is a former state representative and a former mayor of Norwalk, Conn.

Washington NFL Team Should Change Name

Time to drop the racial slur

BY MARC H. MORIAL

Last week, as Dallas and Washington revived their annual NFL football rivalry, they also found themselves in the middle of an escalating fight over the name of the Washington football team.

In fact, as part of its "Change the Mascot" campaign; the Oneida Indian Nation is running radio ads in Dallas and the other cities where the Washington football team is playing this year calling for DC's team to drop the "R" word from its name.

This is all part of a larger movement among civil rights organiza-

tions and political leaders from both the left and right who correctly point out that the term "Redskins" is a racial slur.

Suzan Shown Harjo, a Native American woman who lives in Washington, D.C., and directs the Morning Star Institute, has been leading this fight and others like it since the 1960s.

President Obama recently weighed in, saying, "If I were the owner of the team and I knew that there was a name of my team - even if it had a storied history - that was offending a sizable group of people, I'd think about changing it." He added that he did not believe "attachment to a particular name should override the real, legitimate concerns that

people have."

Team owner, Dan Snyder disagrees. He has vowed to never change the name and in a recent letter to season ticket holders he called the team name, "a badge of honor."

Obviously not everyone agrees. The controversy has now gotten the attention of top NFL officials. NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell recently said, "If we are offending one person, we need to be listening and making sure that we're doing the right things to try to address that."

And officials of the Oneida Indian Nation and the NFL are scheduled to meet next month to discuss the issue. Consistent with our commitment to equality and the dignity of every hu-

man being, the National Urban League stands with all those demanding the Washington football team stop using the R word.

Ray Halbritter, leader of the Oneida Indian Nation, recently stated his opposition this way: "Let's be clear, the R word is defined in the dictionary as an offensive term. It was the name that was used against our people when we were forced off our lands at gunpoint. So it is has a sordid history and it's time for a change."

He added, "History is littered with people who have vowed never to change something - slavery, immigration, women's rights - so we think one thing that's really great about this country is when many people speak out, change can happen."

The Dallas vs. Washington football game this year was played on the eve of Columbus Day, another reminder of the legacy of discrimination and oppression inflicted on Native Americans. Demanding the Washington football team remove the "R" word from its name is a simple request for respect.

As the Oneida Indian Nation radio ad states, "This country may be politically divided...but we should all be able to agree that racial slurs are unacceptable and they shouldn't be used to market this country's capital city. We deserve to be treated simply as what we are: Americans."

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

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