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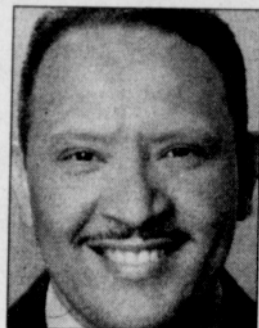
# OPINION

## New Weapon in the Fight against AIDS

### Health reform law makes sure there's help

BY MARC H. MORIAL

The 25th observance of World AIDS Day was held this month. It was a reminder of how far we have come since 1981 when several previously healthy gay men in Los Angeles were found to be infected with a mysterious and fatal immune deficiency.



In the three decades since, the disease has claimed more than 35 million lives and has become a global pandemic. The World Health Organization reports that 35.3 million people worldwide are living with HIV today.

But, according to the United Nations, "New HIV infections among adults and children were estimated at 2.3 million in 2012, a 33 percent reduction since 2001... AIDS-related deaths have also dropped by 30 percent since the peak in 2005 as

access to antiretroviral treatment expands."

Here in the United States, a little more than a million Americans are living with HIV infection today. Partly because of longer life expectancies for people with HIV, over the past decade, the number of people living with the infection in the U.S. has increased, while the annual number of new HIV infections has remained stable.

But we should not mistake better manageability of the disease as an indication that it has become a minor problem. The pace of new infections continues at far too high a level — particularly among gay men, African Americans and Latinos. And African Americans continue to experience the most severe burden of HIV, compared with other races and ethnicities.

Blacks represent approximately 14 percent of the U.S. population, but according to the latest statistics from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, they ac-

count for an estimated 44 percent of new HIV infections and nearly half (44 percent) of people living with HIV infection.

Since the epidemic began, more than 260,800 blacks have died of AIDS. Unless the course of the epidemic changes, at some point in their lifetime, an estimated 1 in 16 black men and 1 in 32 black women will be diagnosed with HIV infection.

But more help than ever before is available, including new benefits in the Affordable Care Act that remove barriers to insurance coverage, and provide better coverage options for many people living with HIV.

Starting Jan. 1, no one can be denied health insurance or charged more because of a pre-existing health condition, such as HIV. Insurers will also no longer be allowed to limit how much they will spend on a person's medical care — over a year or a lifetime, including people living with HIV. And plans sold through the health insurance marketplaces must pro-

vide a minimum set of benefits that should prove helpful for HIV care, including prescription drugs, doctor visits, hospital care, mental health care and certain preventive services, including HIV tests.

The National Urban League also remains a major source of help. We are a partner organization in the Act Against AIDS Leadership Initiative, a network of national-level organizations that focus on African Americans, black men who have sex with men, and the Latino community.

Launched in 2009 by CDC and the White House, leadership initiative is a five-year national campaign to combat complacency about HIV and AIDS in the United States. Urban League affiliates around the country also offer HIV awareness services and campaigns in their local communities.

While much progress has been made, the fight against AIDS is not over.

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

## Highly Offensive, Dishonorable, and Shameful

### Sarah Palin's red meat for conservatives

BY BENTLEY DE BARDELABEN

"It's [going to] be like slavery when that note is due. Right?" shouts former Alaskan Gov. Sarah Palin at a conservative fundraiser in Iowa.

The note to which the 2008 VP candidate was referring is the debt the United States annually accumulates when borrowing money from other countries, China in particular. She goes on to say, "We are going to be beholden to a foreign master because there is no plan to stop the incurrence of debt" out of Washington, D.C. policy makers.

As an American of African descent, I took offense to a few of the phrases in Palin's speech, such as "not racist", "like slavery" and "foreign master."

She selected these incendiary words knowing they were "red meat" to the conservative audience attending last month's "Faith and Freedom Rally."

Being a megalomaniac, Palin knew what words would electrify her audience. When interviewed days later by CNN correspondent Jake Tapper, Palin insisted her understanding of the definition for slavery was correct. She further insisted some African Americans would be offended only if they "choose to misinterpret what it is that [she] is saying."

Pitifully, she is wrong. I am offended because she arrogantly chose to invoke terms which embody the horrific, dehumanizing, and race-based North American institution of chattel slavery to make her point when she could have easily selected another.

When offered the opportunity to select a different word, she said, "no!" She then proceeded to blame the descendants of those who were enslaved

for misinterpreting her.

What could she be thinking? Only a person with "white privilege" would dare make such an ignorant statement.

Scholar and author Peggy McIntosh, *White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack*, wrote in her groundbreaking work, "Whites are carefully taught not to recognize white privilege, as males are taught not to recognize male privilege. So I have begun in an untutored way to ask what it is like to have white privilege. I have come to see white privilege as an invisible package of unearned assets that I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was 'meant' to remain oblivious."

This is Palin's offense, an unacknowledged, unexamined sense of entitlement.

Because her 15 minutes are long gone, she desired to make a way back into the spotlight. Most egomaniacs and carnival barkers look for attention grabbing tactics. She found one.

Unfortunately, like others before her, Palin chose to reenter the public square while riding the backs of the victims' of institutional slavery and their descendants as if she were a queen to be revered and worshipped.

Such an act is highly offensive, dishonorable, and shameful.

Governor Palin, instead of merely penning my displeasure, I offer a suggestion. Google McIntosh's piece, read it, and then attempt to work through some of the steps provided so that you may begin to remove your knapsack.

The United Church of Christ has worked for decades to help people with white privilege begin a journey toward liberation. They have additional tools online to assist you further if needed. Visit [ucc.org/justice/racism](http://ucc.org/justice/racism).

For future reference, if you begin a sentence with a disclaimer, "This isn't racist, but..." Trust me, it is.

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