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The Skanner Newspaper, established in October 1975, is a weekly publication, published each Wednesday by IMM Publications Inc.,

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The Skanner is a member of the National Newspaper Publishers Association and West Coast Black Publishers Association.

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World is Indifferent to Missing Nigerian Girls

One could not help but be impressed by the millions that turned out in Paris to stand against the Islamist terrorists who killed workers at the French satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* and four others at a kosher grocery store. Two law enforcement officers were also killed, bringing the total to 17.

About 40 heads of state and more than a million others crowded into Republique Square; even more rallied around France. In total, it is estimated that 3.7 rallied for freedom. They wore shirts and carried signs that said, “I am Charlie.” Some said, “I am Muslim and Charlie” or “I am Jewish and Charlie.” Those crowds transcended race, religious and political lines.

President Obama got mixed reaction to his not attending the solidarity rally. Ambassador to France Jane Hartley, someone with much less status, represented the United States. Critics said the president could at least have sent Vice President Joe Biden; Attorney General Eric H. Holder was in Paris and could have attended. The president may be doing something much more substantive by convening a summit on world terrorism at the White House in February.

I wonder if these gatherings will address terror in Nigeria, where the Islamic terrorist group Boko Haram abducted 276 girls, and still holds 219. A hashtag campaign, #BringBackOurGirls was joined by First Lady Michelle



BENNETT COLLEGE

Julianne Malveaux

Obama, former Secretary of State Hilary Clinton, British Prime Minister David Cameron and others. Few of the 40 who rallied in Paris have ever mentioned the abducted girls and those terrorists who took them. Indeed, the abducted girls have all but disappeared from the headlines and from the public con-

It is alarming that the world community has been so indifferent to the plight of the abducted young girls

sciousness.

The girls were abducted on April 14, 2014. Since then, our attention has been riveted by other news from the African continent, as the Ebola virus killed thousands (we in the U.S. were mostly focused on our handful of casualties), and as ISIS has escalated its activity around the globe. While some have forgotten about the Nigerian girls, many have not. Obiageli Ezekwesili, a former Nigerian government official who is now vice president of the World Bank’s Africa Division, has been among

those continuing to focus attention on the girls.

People fear that Boko Haram may have sold the schoolgirls into slavery, forced some into marriage, or killed others. Given the fact that Amnesty International, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and the UN Security Council have decried the Islamist militant terrorist group, it is alarming that the world community has been so indifferent to the plight of the abducted young girls. Some of the indifference does not start with the world, but in Nigeria. Will Goodluck Jonathan, the Nigerian president who is running for reelection, mention the girls at all before February, when voting

ing Chad because they fear for their lives.

I don’t know if it would be effective for world leaders to rally in Abuja to pressure Boko Haram to return the girls. I don’t know if T-shirts or signs saying, “We Are the Nigerian Girls” would do much more than direct attention back to these young students whose hopes and dreams have been stomped on by irrational terrorists. I don’t know if it would make a difference if Nigerians all over the world came together to demand return of the girls. I don’t know the efforts of feminists around the world would make a difference.

I do know that about 219 Nigerian girls are gone, and a terrorist group is responsible for taking them. I know that they are reputed to be affiliated with Al-Qaeda and with ISIS. I know that while the world has rallied to show solidarity in the fight against terrorism in France, there has been no such gathering to show solidarity in the fight against terrorism in Nigeria. I don’t know (and I might be misinformed) if offers to help contain or eliminate Boko Haram have been made by the world community.

The war against terrorism has been embraced in Paris, with millions there, and thousands in the rest of the world, taking it to the streets to express their outrage. Where is the outrage for the more than 200 Nigerian girls? Nine months after they have been snatched from their school, who remembers? Who cares?

Selma and the Folks at the ‘Back of The Line’

I wasn’t surprised that Ava DuVernay’s “Selma” was nearly completely snubbed for the Oscar nominations last week, as were several “White” films and White actors and directors. I never thought that, after last year’s breakthrough for “12 Years a Slave,” the Oscar voting academy was going to make another powerful drama that put Black Americans at the center of American history the focus of this year’s Oscar ceremonies.

Yes, some of the Oscar voters may have used the controversy over DuVernay’s portrait of President Lyndon B. Johnson as fig-leaf protection to vote against it. That’s more despicable than the snub itself in my book. Although DuVernay’s depiction of Johnson is wrong, I never expect any film about a historical moment or person to be completely accurate – precisely because every film, no matter how deeply fact-based, is a fictional interpretation of the real story.

“Selma” still stands out as superior story-telling. It poignantly recounts one of the great moments – a triumph, laced through and through with tragedy – of 20th century American history. The film especially recalled for me one of the questions I obsessed over growing up in Boston in the 1960s. That was: who were the folks at the back of the line?

I was fortunate in growing up in Boston, where the Black and the liberal White communities had



LAST CHANCE

Lee A. Daniels

very active ties to the Southern Movement. In the early 1960s, my brother and I joined an Episcopal church-based “freedom choir.” Later, we attended the Baptist church where Martin Luther King, Jr. had been a co-junior pastor while at theology school at Boston University.

Nothing dramatized my obsession with that question more than the movement’s stand at the Edmund Pettus Bridge. In the film, and in the real-life television films of that moment, we see the marchers as they stand, facing the storm troopers of the state. We know they know they were facing men who had no compunction about killing Black people and their White allies, be they men, women or children.

When I saw the television news reports of “Bloody Sunday,” that long-ago night in March, 1965, it made everything plain: Not just the movement’s commitment to nonviolence even in the face of

rough-hewn speech could be just as powerful, if not more so, than polished oratory. That the ability to inspire and lead people existed in and was exercised by all sorts of people, and that participation in communal affairs and collaboration with others was vitally important if the community and individuals within it were to advance.

I’m glad for the controversy about Ana DuVernay’s “Selma.” For it may provide another reason for some viewers of all ages to read some of the considerable number of significant nonfiction books that provide a more complete factual account of the movement in Selma and across the South and North, and of America in the 1950s and 1960s.

That will not only give them a fuller understanding of the racist fury the freedom struggle in the South faced; it will also make even clearer the values that fortified the civil rights activists in the struggle, and why those values proved more powerful than the willingness of the region’s racist power structure and its henchmen to do evil.

Embedded in that understanding is another powerful lesson that’s always worth re-affirming. It’s not only the leaders; it’s those at the back of the line, too, who make movements for social justice work.

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I was “wired” into the movement in a way few Northern teenagers were. But I didn’t kid myself. I knew I was many steps removed from the danger faced daily by the real civil rights activists and the Black Southern teens who involved themselves in the movement there. That was why, as much as I was inspired by the movement’s local and national leaders, whose names appeared in the news dispatches from the civil rights’ fronts, I always wondered about those who were there but out of the media spotlight.

imminent danger. It also made plain what those in “the line” at Selma and elsewhere on the civil rights trail had done and were doing. They were protecting me – transforming the blows meant for me into a force that would expand the boundaries of opportunity for me all my life.

Thankfully, I was also able to realize it wasn’t only all about me. I understood the movement’s other meanings, too: That intellectual keenness and “smarts” weren’t limited to the formally educated and the socially prominent. That