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The Skanner has received 20 NNPA awards since 1998

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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Africa and Obama ‘On the Move’

Some people are now saying what was really obvious to me before President Barack H. Obama was re-elected to continue leading the United States of America: he is a Black man. He is an African man. As the first African American to be the president, the unprecedented hostility and threats against the President have been, in too many instances, racially motivated as well as based on partisan politics.

Yet President Obama continues to be strategic about how he represents his race, genealogy and his commitment to promote and sustain African freedom and empowerment.

Yes, he is the President of all the people in the U.S. That is not the issue. We are not debating or taking exception to the fact that President Obama represents all the people of the U.S.

I believe that his historic trip to Kenya and to Ethiopia is indicative of Obama’s distinctive characteristic of taking strategic moves that go far beyond the traditional limitations of American politics and global outreach. This was the fourth trip of the president to Africa. As the first sitting American president to visit Kenya and Ethiopia, his timing could not have come at a better time.

I guess Donald Trump and other so-called Birthers will once again raise politically-divisive questions about whether President Obama is a real citizen of the United



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States. But like the other divisive issues that Trump and others are now raising about the “browning of America,” those stiff-neck far right leaders really miss the point.

Like China, the United States should see that its place in the

There are economic development opportunities for Black-owned businesses in the U.S. to develop joint ventures with African entrepreneurs

global market place will be increasingly and inextricably linked to having a productive relationship with Africa. Yes, it was good for President Obama to first reunite with his close relatives in Kenya. The pictures of President Obama hugging his Kenyan sister, Auma Obama, and other relatives in the capital city of Nairobi were very inspiring and affirming of strong family values in Africa and in America.

In truth, however, President Obama’s major objective to

achieve in Africa was about trade, economic development, investments, innovation, geopolitical politics, security and the fundamental promotion of African unity and socioeconomic progress. He rendered a keynote speech to the Global Entrepreneur Summit in Nairobi. In fact, going forward there are economic development opportunities for Black-owned businesses in the U.S. to develop joint ventures with African entrepreneurs.

President Obama strongly affirmed at the summit that, “Africa is on the move.” Referring to entrepreneurial projects that were

was in official session in the capital city of Ethiopia, Addis Ababa. Ethiopia has the second-largest population in Africa, behind only Nigeria. The economy in Ethiopia is growing and the African nation owns and operates one of the largest airline services on the continent. President Obama’s speech to the AU was well received by the African heads of state who attended the meeting. The theme of African unity and mutual economic cooperation was a priority issue at the AU.

Lastly, I detected a renewed sense of African pride that was exemplified by the statements and actions of President Obama’s latest trip to Africa. I think that African Americans, in particular, should also strive to establish more effective unity and cooperative business development in our communities throughout the U.S. Owning our own businesses in America in the past was a source of pride and self-empowerment.

When Obama was introduced at the summit in Kenya, he stated, “Obviously, this is very personal for me. There’s a reason why my name’s Barack Hussein Obama.” He is proud of his name and his Kenyan ancestry. Auma Obama also said that her father, Barack Hussein Obama Sr., would be very moved to witness his son return to Kenya as the president of the United States. She stated, “He’d be extremely proud and say, ‘Well done.’”

For Centuries, Black Lives Did Not Matter

It ought to be unnecessary for an activist movement to hinge on the principle of the equivalency of life. In the worlds of Democratic presidential candidates (don’t get me started on the Republicans), there is a compelling need to point out that Black Lives Matter and White lives matter.

The problem with stating the obvious is that White lives have always mattered, and institutional racism has structured a lesser value for Black lives.

Asserting that “Black Lives Matter” is rebutting the inherent supposition that Black lives do not matter. Black lives have been devalued since the development of our Constitution when it counted enslaved people as three-fifths of a person.

We still live with the legacy of enslavement, when Black folks were other people’s property. Black folks aren’t property now (unless they are the much-exploited convict laborers), but unequal treatment is not just historical – it still happens. That’s why the Black Lives Matter movement is so important.

The Black Lives Matter Movement was a constructive outgrowth of the Trayvon Martin murder, furthered by the protests that happened in the wake of a Missouri grand jury’s failure to bring charges against Darren Wilson, the murderer of 18-year-old Michael Brown. As multiracial crowds proclaimed, “Black Lives



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Matter,” it seemed that, across the board, people were acknowledging the existence of institutional racism.

Too bad Democratic presidential contenders can’t do the same.

Martin O’Malley and Bernie Sanders, the two candidates whose entries into the race may have pushed Hilary Clinton to the left, faced protestors at the progressive Netroots Nation conference earlier this month.

Blacks have a different reality than Whites do, and it shows up in terms of economic, educational, and social indicators

Instead of acknowledging the legitimacy of the Black Lives Matter movement, both candidates were prickly. Sanders threatened to leave the stage because the protester’s chants drowned him out.

Candidate Hilary Clinton was not present, and some objected to that, but she either missed the opportunity to engage — or was

spared embarrassment if she emulated O’Malley’s and Sanders’ stance.

To clean up their acts, all of the candidates need to listen to leaders of the Black Lives Matter Movement instead of talking at people the way politicians are most likely to do.

If they listen, they might hear the frustration that young folks feel when the police stop them for simply walking while Black. They might hear the despair some will share when, even while fully prepared, they find few opportunities for employment, and too many doors slammed in their faces.

In the wake of Michael Brown’s killing, Ferguson elected two new Black members for the city council. Now, Andre Anderson, an African-American man from Glendale, Arizona, has been appointed

chance of winning in November 2016. If the Black Lives Matter movement is not treated respectfully, it is likely that many voters will stay home.

The video showing the brutality involved in the vicious arrest of Sandra Bland, the Prairie View A&M University alumnae who died in jail earlier this month, makes it clear that the Black Lives Matter movement is much needed. Their pressure to stop police brutality has pushed police departments to use video cameras, and made it possible for us to see the repugnant behavior of State Trooper Brian T. Encinia, who roughed up Sandra Bland because she would not put out her cigarette after being pulled over or failure to signal a lane change.

Don’t tell me that White lives matter. That’s not new information. Whose faces are on our money? Whose statues grace legislative buildings? Who leads the overwhelming majority of Fortune 500 companies? Who dominates our legislative bodies? Our African-American president, supposedly the most powerful person in the world, is ill-treated by Congress, often for racial reasons. We live in a racist and patriarchal society where the value of Black life is too-often diminished. That’s why, Martin O’Malley, there is a special need to assert that Black Lives Matter.

Those who would be president ought to embrace that concept, instead of denying it.