

Honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

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ety in a way we've never fit in. Just knowing that opportunity is not everybody else's, it's OURS, too. ... The sky is the limit. And it was never that feeling before."

Perhaps nowhere are those sentiments stronger than at Altgeld Gardens, where a 20-something Obama honed his political skills as a community organizer.

It was there, in the shadow of rusted steel mills, where Obama had his first up-close exposure to a Black community mired in poverty. In his memoir, "Dreams from My Father," Obama describes the sprawling housing project in "a perpetual state of disrepair" with crumbling ceilings, backed-up toilets and burst pipes. He helped residents agitate, rally and fight City Hall to improve their lives.

Three decades later, Altgeld is in the middle of a massive renovation. Crime and poverty persist, but there's also a sense of hope, especially

for kids who, for the first time, see a president who looks like them when they walk by Obama's photo on their school-room walls.

Cheryl Johnson is among the few remaining residents who remember Obama's organizing days. He plotted strategies with her mother, Hazel, a well-known environmental activist. Johnson, who followed in her footsteps, sees Obama as an inspiration.

His presidency, she explains, allowed people to say: "If he can do it, I can do it, too."

"It's the influence, the motivation that he has given to people who may have been hopeless in their life, like, 'I can't get this far,'" Johnson says. "Now you hear young people, young as 5 and 6, saying, 'I'm going to be the next president of the United States.'"

Obama changed perceptions of Black people, says Ellen Singletary, a youth specialist at Altgeld. "The media depicts



In this Friday, June 26, 2009 file photo, President Barack Obama speaks about the passage of the Clean Energy Act by the House of Representatives in the Diplomatic Room of the White House in Washington. As Obama took office, race became a focal point in a way that was unprecedented in American history.

us ... in such an unfair and defaming way," she says, "and to see the pride of who we really

are demonstrated on the world stage means the world to me."

That attitude is part of

what Michael Eric Dyson, a Georgetown professor and prominent African American commentator, described in a New York Times op-ed as Black America's "unrepentant love affair" with the president. That pride, he wrote, overlooks Obama's failings, including skimping on black cabinet appointees until his second term, forgoing the nomination of a Black woman to the U.S. Supreme Court and a "reluctance to highlight black suffering."

Still, Obama maintained an 80-90 percent approval rating in the Gallup Poll among African Americans for virtu-

ally his entire presidency.

"One of the sayings we have down in Alabama is when you wrestle with a pig, the pig enjoys it and you're the one that gets muddy," says Glennon Threatt, an assistant federal public defender in Birmingham, Alabama. "The president has not gotten in the mud."

"What he has done is shown that a Black man can be a successful president and a successful husband and a successful father," he adds. "I think that's an extraordinary thing."

"The fact that he got anything done is impressive in hindsight."

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staff diversity has been raised several times before in the press and in reports issued by the Congressional Hispanic Staff Association in 2010. Their 2010 report "Unrepresented: A Blueprint for Solving the Diversity Crisis on Capitol Hill," received media attention, but no measurable hiring changes. The Joint Center's recent study, "Racial Diversity Among Top Senate Staff," was released in December.

Ten years ago, in 2007, Politico reported that, when it came to senior staff positions, "the number approached zero" regarding African Americans. Blacks account for roughly 13 percent of the U.S. population, but only 0.7 percent of the senior staff members in the U.S. Senate — three people of 300 senior staff jobs. Currently Latinos are 17

percent of the U.S. population, but only 2.3 percent of top staff.

One reason that there has been no change in the numbers over decades is that members of Congress are exempt from labor laws that would prompt a lawsuit in any other sector. Congress is not required to adhere to the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the Equal Employment Act of 1972. There's no legal requirement for Senators to answer to anyone on hiring issues and no requirement to post job vacancies in Congress. Since Congress is also exempt from freedom of information requests, there's also no requirement to report data on hiring.

Ironically, federal officials that must be confirmed by the U.S. Senate must adhere to such guidelines.

Vancouver Avenue First Baptist Church
Pastor J. W. Matt Hennessee, Senior Servant


Annual Drum Major Awards & Ecumenical Service
"Salute to Greatness Luncheon"
Honoring Students and Community members who live their lives with a
"Drum Major" Spirit
Saturday, January 14, 2017 12 Noon - 2:00 PM
Dr & Mrs. O.B. Williams Fellowship Hall

"Where Do We Go From Here" Conversations to Solutions
Bill Deiz - Moderator

Sunday, January 15, 2017 2:00 PM - 4:00 PM - Main Sanctuary

Guest Panel Discussion Members

Rabbi Michael Cahana, Temple Beth Israel; Atty. Nkenge Harmon Johnson
U.S. Attorney, Bill Williams; Portland Police Chief Mike Marshman
District Attorney Rod Underhill; Jan Elfers, Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO)
Wajdi Said, the Muslim Educational Trust; Kim Dixon, Enough is Enough
Greg McElvey, Portland's Resistance; Minister Nathaniel Williams, of Unify Portland
Presiding Judge Nan Waller; Judge Adrienne Nelson



2017 Drum Major Awardees

Martin Luther King: Wajdi Said & the Muslim Educational Trust
Coretta Scott King: JoAnn Hardesty & the NAACP
Rosa L. Parks: Kay Toran & Volunteers of America
Yolanda D. King Arts Award: Julianne Johnson-Weiss & Stumptown Stages Theatre Company
Legacy Bridge-Building Award: Jan Elfers & Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon
Nelson Mandela Medal: Lou Radja & EduCongo

Student Humanitarians honored from:
Jefferson, De Lasalle North Catholic, Rose Mary Aderson (POIC), Open School, Helensview, and Roosevelt High Schools

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