

**THIS WAY FOR BLACK EMPOWERMENT**

**A small, but real salute to Dr. King**

By Dr. Lenora Fulani

The empty celebration of the presidential inauguration and the equally empty celebration of political hypocrisy seen in the resolution to the Newt Gingrich ethics controversy makes me reflect ever more deeply on the profound legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The country marked his birthday in the midst of a political circus that is becoming all too common in America today.



DR. LENORA FULANI

And while the disingenuous hoopla marred the observance of Dr. King's birthday, there was a small but mighty acknowledgment of his legacy in New York City.

On January 20, the day of Dr. Martin Luther King's birthday celebration, Pam Lewis, a young African-American woman and colleague of mine who is the National Producer of the All Stars Talent Show Network, together with a group of some 20 black youth, released information on the steps of New York's City Hall crediting young people in the South Bronx, Central Harlem and Bedford-Stuyvesant with the unprecedented drop in crime and violence in our city.

The All Stars, a 13-year-old anti-violence program, last year involved 30,000 black and Latino youth in some of the poorest communities who produce, perform in, and attend development workshops, auditions and talent shows. In the last three years approximately 12,500 young people participated in anti-violence events in Bedford-Stuyvesant—and during that time there has been a 22% decrease in the seven major crime categories.

Five thousand young people participated in anti-violence events in Brownsville, and there has been a 37% decrease in crime. Five thousand young people participated in anti-violence events in Central Harlem and there has been a reported 36% decrease in crime. Ten thousand young people participated in anti-violence events in the South Bronx and there has been a 40% decrease

in crime. "Many people are eager to claim these wonderful developments for their own gain, or even say they have a quick-fix solution to the social crisis in New York City," said Pam Lewis, who has been the National Producer of the All Stars for the last seven years. "The real credit goes to those who have worked to carry on Dr. King's dream—people like the youth leaders of the All Stars and many other unsung heroes in our poorest communities. They are making Dr. King's dream a reality, and he would be proud. They are the leaders of tomorrow. We must recognize their achievements, and support them to grow!"

"Youth in my neighborhood, and all over the city, are working together to build some positive alternatives to violence and drugs—we are creating a life for ourselves and our communities," said Antoine Joyce, the 19-year-old Assistant Producer of the All Stars, who hails from Bedford-Stuyvesant.

As Pam Lewis told a reporter from Fox Television, "When the crime and violence rate is up who gets blamed? Our young people. Today the crime rate is down and I'm proud to be standing here today with some of the young people who I think deserve the credit."

As an Executive Producer of the All Stars show, I am so proud of these young people and all they have given to their peers and their communities. If you're interested in the All Stars, give me a call.

*Lenora B. Fulani twice ran for President of the U.S. as an independent, making history in 1988 when she became the first woman and African-American to get on the ballot in all fifty states. Dr. Fulani is currently a leading activist in the Reform Party and chairs the Committee for a Unified Independent Party. She can be reached at 800-288-3201 or through her home page at www.fulani.org.*

**Racial**

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Many conservatives say that the United States was built on "Western" culture and ideals. Indeed it was, but it was also built on the notion of freedom and democracy. A notion that it has represented symbolically around the world. Should it be surprising, that as the freest nation in the world draws to it an increasing number of diverse people, that they would celebrate the uniqueness of their own individual culture and its contribution to the greatest human experiment in history?

One is compelled to ponder the question, "is America bound by just the ideals of western culture or has its strength come from receiving the best the world has to offer?"

The outcries for a so called "colorblind" society are reaching near deafening decibels as it becomes increasingly clear that America will no longer be just the province of one dominant culture, but instead, a conglomeration of peoples forming a truly exciting "melting pot".

Racism is not grounded in

acknowledging differences between ethnic groups in the context of strengths. Its roots lie in the failure to do so and then to subordinate one race to another by requiring that socio-economic participation in society be tied to identification with one controlling culture. This behavior, of course, occurring at the expense of all others.

To ask African-Americans to separate themselves from their African identity is to detach them from the legacy of struggle they have experienced during slavery and the civil rights movement. It would also short-circuit the transition that must now occur from civil rights to self-empowerment.

For blacks to refuse to acknowledge the existence of their own "African-Americanism" is to say its "okay" for nearly a third of that population to remain at or below the poverty level; it is to give up the struggle to ensure that urban schools have the resources to deliver a good education just like suburban schools; it is to remove the motivation for significant numbers of African-Americans

who have reached the middle-class to return to their communities to make a difference and finally, it is to accept that African-Americans do not deserve a distinguished place in the chronicles of American history for having helped to build this great country. A recognition frequently denied. America maximizes her strength when she is inclusive. That strength cannot reach its full potential when difference goes unrecognized. This country is at a crossroads and it must answer some very fundamental questions of itself. African-Americans are not going to stop being "black," Asian-Americans and Latinos are not going to stop being "what they are" and white Americans are not going to stop being "white". Nor should either group be required to do so. So the real question is, as we rapidly approach a new year, "Where do we go from here as a nation and are we going to get there together?"

*Sidney Morse, is a Los Angeles activist, a strategic development consultant and the author.*

**CIVIL RIGHTS JOURNAL**

**A memorial for Ennis**

By Bernice Powell Jackson

Every child is a precious jewel to his or her parents. Every child is on loan from God. Every parent wants to protect his or her child from the harsh realities of life. But parents of African-American sons carry a special kind of burden.

It's the burden of knowing that the leading cause of death for their sons is homicide. It's the burden of knowing that no matter how hard you try, no matter how much money you earn, no matter how good a parent you are, there are no guarantees that your child will die of natural causes.

Bill and Camille Cosby knew all of that before that fateful day when their son was murdered. As activists, as educators and as African-American parents, they knew all of that. Now they are living that reality, along with thousands of other black parents across the nation.

I never met Ennis Cosby, but from what I have learned about him since his murder, I know his death is a tragedy not only for the Cosby family and his friends, but for all young black children, for the African-American community and for this nation. For here was a young man of privilege whose parents had taught him that what was important in life wasn't fame or money, but service and people.

Here was a young man who, having experienced what it was like to have a learning disability himself, committed himself to helping those with learning disorders but without his family's resources. Here was a young man who



Bernice Powell Jackson

already had been a role model for young black children and had a plan in mind for how he could help children in the future.

We as a community, we as a nation are poorer because of Ennis Cosby's needless death. We as a community and a nation are poorer because of the deaths of the thousands of other young black men, many of whom also had a plan for themselves and for their futures. Young black men who were struggling against the odds, but who were in the wrong place at the wrong time. Or young black men who were positive members of their communities, their churches and schools, but walked the dangerous streets. Or young black men who had been lost to the streets, but who could have been entrepreneurs or community leaders, if only they had the right opportunities or the right guidance. Thousands of young black men dead before their time.

We all join the Cosby family in mourning the death of this extraordinary young man. We join those unnamed other fathers and mothers, sisters and brothers who have suffered this tragedy.

But when the tears end, when the prayers subside, when the outcry is over, what will this nation do to end the availability of guns to the public? How many have to be murdered before we realize that we all lose with each one of these murders? And will young African-American men stop being our human endangered species in my lifetime? In yours?

**Price**

(Continued from Page 10) Watson, of the 29th Quartermaster Regiment—died during the wartime battles for which they were awarded the Medal of Honor.

A fifth, Staff Sergeant Edward Allen Carter, Jr., of the 12th Armored Division, died in 1963. The sixth, Major Charles L. Thomas, of the 103rd Infantry Division, died in 1980.

This is a saga whose bittersweet lessons we must not overlook.

On the one hand, the long-overdue recognition of these men marks how entrenched racism was in the United States—even as the nation hurled itself into a cataclysmic fight for the very existence of freedom—and how it made people who were otherwise largely decent behave disgracefully.

It was that disgrace which caused Charles MacGillivray, a Medal of Honor recipient and past president of the Medal of Honor Society to journey to ceremonies in Massachusetts honoring First Lieutenant Fox and say: "I apologize for my nation for taking so long to present Lieutenant Fox a Medal of Honor. It is not the freedom I fought for and it is not the freedom I am leaving. This nation has got to get together, and maybe this is one of the ways we'll get together."

But we should also never forget the positive meaning of

these particular examples of extraordinary bravery: In historical terms, they represent black America's unshakable commitment to the American ideals—even as the majority of white America was denying them the hand of friendship.

One can say that it was worth this remarkable sense of community, and the faith that the larger community was worth

dying for which enabled these seven African-American servicemen to choose, at a moment of crisis, to put themselves in extreme danger.

And one can say that last week's ceremony to hold up these men as exemplars of patriotism indicates that now, finally, the United States government has also earned the right to claim honor for itself.

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