

Time to revive our nation's spirit of optimism

By Marc H. Morial
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Last week I became the beneficiary of a great privilege and responsibility: I was appointed president and chief executive of the National Urban League.

Actually, I can say without hesitation that long before last week I was a beneficiary of the Urban League, too.

For its commitment since its founding ninety years ago to expanding opportunity for African-Americans is part of the bedrock of progress which made it possible for me to aspire to, to compete for, and to serve for two years as a senator in the Louisiana state legislature, and then serve

two four-year terms as the mayor of the great southern metropolis, New Orleans.

Of course, I wasn't the first African-American to hold that position. My late father, Ernest N. "Dutch" Morial, was Mayor of New Orleans for two terms from 1977 to 1986.

Yes, thankfully, there were many factors during the decades of the twentieth century which helped make it possible for my father and I to hold such positions, and for my mother, Sybil Morial, and educator, to have been so involved in the broad civic life of our home city and state.

But there's no question that I owe a great deal to the long, diligent work of the

To Be Equal

By Marc H. Morial
President and CEO
National Urban League



National Urban League in readying African-Americans for full citizenship — and in readying White Majority America for the full participation of African-Americans in our nation's stewardship.

And there's no question, either, that now the full participation of all Americans in our country's civic life is

more critical than ever.

The United States faces a crisis on several fronts that was unimaginable just a few short years ago.

This week we've had fresh, tragic evidence that the murderous intent of some to plunge the world into a whirlwind of violence has not abated, and thus, the global

war against terrorism, and the anxiety and uncertainties that attend it, will continue.

We've also had fresh evidence that the economic downturn in this century is threatening to grow sharper and widen the gaps that exist in access to capital for business development, and in access to quality education, decent housing, and affordable health care, to name just a few pressing needs.

Even though the alarming statistics on the number of jobs the economy has lost, the number of Americans who are out of work and the number of Americans who are so frustrated they've stopped looking for work have been submerged by war

news, those realities remain, sapping the economic and spiritual strength of the nation.

And we've also had fresh evidence recently that the struggle for equal opportunity for all Americans continues.

The University of Michigan affirmative action case now before the U.S. Supreme Court is a fundamental barometer of whether the nation will continue without interruption its just expansion of the boundaries of opportunity. As Americans from all walks of life — from university students to Fortune 500 chief executives to retired top military brass —
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World still waiting for proof of Iraq weapons proliferation

By Bill Fletcher Jr.
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Is it me or does it bother you that the Bush administration hit us over the head virtually every day prior to the invasion of Iraq with the notion that Iraq represented a threat to the United States. Yet, after the invasion, the Bush administration has found neither weapons of mass destruction, nor any other evidence that Iraq was an imminent threat to this or any other country. Neverthe-

less, there is almost no discussion of this salient fact in print or on the airwaves.

I am perplexed. We were told by the Bush administration that the United States had to go to war with Iraq because of an imminent threat. We were treated to Secretary of State Colin Powell's dramatic performance before the United Nations' Security Council, complete with photos, charts and alleged reports from informers and defectors. We were

led to believe not only that there was a threat from various weapons of mass destruction but that the United States knew precisely where these weapons were.

Now, they cannot find a thing, but no one wants to discuss this.

I am trying to figure out whether this is a case of no one wanting to say that the king has no clothes, or worse, that people and institutions in this society are prepared to leave aside issues of interna-

tional law because, simply put, the United States won the war, and did so quickly.

Are we prepared to overlook the gross violations of international law because the U.S. military won? That is what I keep wondering. The entire pretext for breaking international law has been called into question by the facts, yet few institutions and notables in the United States seem to have the courage to stand up and say so.

Let's start with the king's

new clothes. Even if the Bush administration finds weapons — and one wonders whether they will find weapons regardless of whether they exist or not — the quick demise of the Iraqi conventional military; the failure of the Iraqis to use weapons of mass destruction against the U.S. and British invaders, even when the Iraqi military was on the verge of destruction; and the failure of the Bush administration to yet find any such weapons should say to us one very simple thing: We, the people of the United States, were chumped. To put it in less street terms, we were victims of a mischaracterization that was aimed at creating fear and

panic, and thus encouraging popular support for a war that had no legal justification.

I am concerned, though, that there is this other problem. There are too many people who are acting as if because of the few U.S. casualties and the revelations of human rights abuses by the Saddam Hussein regime, a U.S. invasion was somehow justified. There are two problems here. One, there is neither a time clock on justice, nor can justice be determined based on the number of U.S. casualties. In other words, the Iraq invasion would not have become less just if the war were to have gone on longer, or if there had been more
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involvement and provides a 12-point plan to implement his goals.

As for Jesse Jackson, the FAIR study says, the media often chooses to focus on his personal life rather than his public utterings.

"The Boston Herald (9/29/01) brought up Jackson's out-of-wedlock child in an editorial dealing with his proposal to negotiate with the Taliban; columnists Don Feder (Boston Herald, 1/9/02) and Mary McGrory (Washington Post, 1/6/02) inserted the fact into commentaries about his support of Cornel West."

"While commentary on Jackson's personal life might be relevant in some contexts, these gratuitous references in articles about unrelated topics demonstrate that some commentators are more interested in discrediting him than in offering the public any meaningful discussion of the issues he raises."

Cornel West is treated no differently.

"When Cornel West described New York Democratic gubernatorial candidate H. Carl McCall as a 'hesitant brother' and a 'timid brother,' the New York Post (8/27/02) attacked West for 'race-baiting' and declared that he was 'racializ[ing] a campaign' that previously was 'relatively benign in that respect.'"

The media does the public a disservice by, in Jesse Jackson words, majoring in the minor.

"It is appropriate for reporters and pundits to challenge, criticize and disagree with public figures of all races; indeed, it is a central part of their jobs," the report states. "At the same time, media commentators should avoid name-calling, stereotypes and other distractions from substantive discussion about ideas or proposals; represent people's ideas and statements fairly; and portray their actions and beliefs accurately."

That would be a big change.

George E. Curry is editor-in-chief of the NNPA News Service and BlackPressUSA.com.

Overstreet

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centage of our population than any nation in the world. Many of the more than two million people incarcerated in jails, state and federal prisons have been convicted of victimless crimes. From the viewpoint of public cost and the need to maintain a competitive workforce in a global economy, we cannot afford to lock up such a large percentage of people primarily between 18 and 30 years of age.

If you, like many members of the generation now exiting the corridors of power in our society, exhibit no concern about the plight of the homeless, people with addictions and the warehousing of our elderly citizens, many of whom won WWII for our nation, then history will judge you harshly. And rightly so!

I will leave you with three thoughts that may serve you well as you journey through life:

Reject the notion stated in the poem, "I yield to my learned brother." "Professional men have no cares. Whatever happens, they get theirs." Remember Edmund Burke's observation, "It is necessary only for the good man to do nothing for evil to triumph."

Set high expectations for yourself. As noted public television journalist Tony Brown observes, "How you turn out in life is pretty much a reflection of what you expected of yourself."

Class of 2003, accept the challenge of changing our nation back to a better future.

Triche

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ought know that many of their old school predecessors assisted the movement, if with nothing but their rage, because everyone's help was needed. The Hip-Hop subculture might cultivate whatever about it that is unselfish, and like Malcolm, contribute it to our people before it's too late. Loiterers on the sidelines should get up, become active; while those still living in darkness need wake up and appreciate the urgency of the moment.

Whatever successes or failures of parents and grandparents, make no mistake; it's now their turn to infuse our struggle with youthful enthusiasm, and, perhaps, embarrass more old folks back into action.

It's time to choose sides, knowing ours is right; time to expose, then ostracize our enemies. And, it's time to fight them, on whatever terms...and "by any means necessary."

I received the best birthday present I could've imagined earlier this month, so last week brought no need for another. Instead, I offer rediscovery of Malcolm's post-conversion life as a gift to you. Examine it, and ignore the negativity of those who can't or don't want to understand, much less appreciate him.

If, during next Black History Month, we detect increased interest in the significance today of this magnificent black leader, we'll know that the gift had value...and will sigh with relief at such evidence that our movement is back on track.