

Ordinary folks can do extraordinary things

By Marc H. Morial
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Two years later the shock of the events of that September day in 2001 continues to reverberate.

Two years later the sense of the loss of life at the World Trade Center and at the Pentagon remains profound.

These are some of the thoughts provoked by the release of transcripts of the tapes of phone calls and radio communications of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, the government agency that oversaw the World Trade Center complex in Manhattan.

The trauma of that day continues to shadow many among the headquarters staff of the National Urban League. Our offices on Wall Street in Lower Manhattan are just a mile due east of where the World Trade Center complex stood. The catastrophe that occurred there happened in our neighborhood.

Initially, I had thought to avoid even reading the news stories about the tapes' transcripts.

I thought the sadness of following the last words of people who had one day followed a routine common to all of us — going to work — and then suddenly found themselves standing at the edge of eternity would seem unbearable.

But then I realized that Fate must be at work here, for it could not be an accident of history that the tape transcripts of the World Trade Center disaster became available the same week millions of Americans were commemorating the most dramatic moment of African-Americans' struggle for civil rights: the 1963 March on Washington.

What do these two great historical events — the American civil rights movement, and the disaster of September 11, 2001 in New York and Washington — have in



To Be Equal

By Marc H. Morial
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common?

They showed the capacity of ordinary people in the midst of the most extreme crises to behave in extraordinary fashion, to adhere to their principles of honor and decency and compassion for others even at the cost of their own lives.

That kind of heroism, a characteristic of African-Americans' existence in the South during and after Slavery, was fully evident as the civil rights movement was reaching a climax. In those years, men, women and children lost their jobs, were beaten terribly, and were even

murdered because they sought to affirm that the ideals America said it stood for had a meaning beyond glib rhetorical niceties.

In fact, the nonviolent Civil Rights Movement, stalked by those willing to commit the most horrendous violence, was suffused with a profound sense of tragedy.

Martin Luther King, Jr. referred to that undertone in the "I Have A Dream Speech" when he said to the throng at the Lincoln Memorial, "I am not unmindful that some of you have come here out of the great trials and tribulations. Some of you have come fresh from narrow jail cells. Some of you have come from areas where your quest for freedom left you battered by

the storms of persecution and battered by the winds of police brutality."

But King did not dwell on the tragedy. Instead, he focused on the hope and the progress that "creative suffering" could bring about. The entire nation has been the beneficiary of it.

It might, at first glance, seem impossible to find the "good" in the disaster of September 11, 2001. But in fact the evidence of the good was apparent from the details of the first day's news coverage.

It was there in the stories of firefighters and police officers and emergency medical technicians rushing to the danger to do what they could; and of office workers trapped in the buildings who refused to leave injured colleagues; and of the passengers aboard United Airlines Flight 93, hijacked after taking off from Newark, who, knowing that they themselves were doomed, acted to save Americans on the ground.

It was there in the Americans who flocked to New York City to volunteer to help

in any way possible; and in the estimated two million Americans who gave blood for the relief effort; and in the millions across the globe who've expressed their sorrow in one way or another.

As we approach the second anniversary of the disaster, we would do well to recall these acts of human kindness and understand that they were done, by those in uniform and by civilians, out of a sense of duty to their fellow human beings and the common good.

That realization should inspire us all to commit our energies to the common good in the ways most directly available to us: to become more involved in the affairs of our communities, and, most of all, register to vote, and vote.

The issues facing this country at local, state and national levels in the wake of 9/11 require an extraordinary commitment to civic engagement from all of us.

It is the least we can do — as a tribute to the many thousands gone, and for our own sakes.

Walters

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\$1 million per year. At the same time, historically Black colleges and universities were flat-funded for this coming academic year, while Hispanic-serving institutions will receive an increase of \$1.2 million from \$92.2 million to \$93.5 million.

I don't get it. George Bush is getting a pass at the national level for cutting taxes, looking good, while his constituency, middle-class White suburban voters, are paying through the nose at the state level to support their children in college and universities. And the situation will only get worse because the last report from the Congressional Budget Office is that the size of the budget deficit is still growing and is likely to pass half-a-trillion dollars this year alone.

Black and brown young people will be especially vulnerable to the hikes in tuition and the lack of support from the Pell Grants. And although there has been much talk about Black and Hispanic drop-out rates

because they were not intellectually ready for college, there is far too little talk about those who drop out because they just can't pay, a much more important factor.

Those who are ardent Bush supporters approve of his Iraq war policy, which has sucked America into a guerilla confrontation that is costing our taxpayers upwards of \$1 billion per week.

Rather than putting that money into higher education, it is flowing abroad to cover up an ill-fated venture that was based on lies in the first place. How much can Bush's supporters take? You know that ideology is the reason why they support him, because it has a tendency to triumph good common sense. So, I guess that they figure keeping Bush in office is worth more than educating their kids.

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Curry

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REALITY: In the America that "used to be," Strom Thurmond was one of the country's strongest voices for racism, running for president in 1948 on the slogan, "Segregation Forever."

LIMBAUGH: "It has not been proven that nicotine is addictive, the same cigarettes causing emphysema [and other diseases]." (Radio show, 4/29/94)

REALITY: Nicotine's addictiveness has been reported in medical literature since the turn of the century. Surgeon General C. Everett Koop's 1988 report on nicotine addiction left no doubts on the subject.

"Today the scientific base linking smoking to a number of chronic diseases is overwhelming, with a total of 50,000 studies from dozens of countries," states "Encyclopedia Britannica's" 1987 "Medical and Health Annual."

LIMBAUGH: "Oh, how they relished blaming Reagan administration policies, including mythical reductions in HUD's budget for public housing, for creating all of the homeless! Budget cuts? There were no bud-

get cuts! The budget figures show that actual construction of public housing increased during the Reagan years." ("Ought to Be," p. 242-243)

REALITY: In 1980, 20,900 low-income public housing units were under construction; in 1988, 9,700, a decline of 54 percent (Statistical Abstracts of the U.S.). In terms of 1993 dollars, the HUD budget for the construction of new public housing was slashed from \$6.3 billion in 1980 to \$683 million in 1988. "We're getting out of the housing business. Period," a Reagan HUD official declared in 1985.

Considering Limbaugh's incurable lying, what message is ESPN and the Walt Disney Co. conveying by hiring him, especially when 67 percent of the players in the NFL are Black? What does it say about sponsors who will still advertise on that polluted program? And, more important, what does it say about us if we still watch the program or support the companies that advertise on it?

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

Sentences

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lished problems with jury sentencing deliberations calls into question the majority's facile conclusion that transfer of capital sentencing responsibility to a jury will enhance the accuracy of the process," she wrote.

Scott Crichton, executive director for Montana's chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union said the ruling "takes us a step closer to the day when the United States will join the civilized nations of the world in outlawing the cruel, inhumane and biased application of the death penalty."

"The empirically estab-

The case the appeals court used to decide the issue concerned Arizona inmate Warren Summerlin, who was found guilty of first-degree murder in the 1981 slaying of Brenna Bailey, 36.

The Tempe finance company administrator's body was found in the trunk of her car a day after she visited Summerlin to check on money he owed. Summerlin was convicted in 1982 and a judge sentenced him to death.

Justice Department officials in Washington said they would have no comment on the appeals court decision.

Chamber is sorting and compiling the data in its possession to form the basis for filing a class action compliant with the Office of Civil Rights in the U. S. Department of Education against the Clark County School District.

The complaint will be based on the following transgressions: failure to hire qualified African-American teachers; overrepresentation of students of color in special education programs; and a gross disparity in the per-pupil spending for stu-

dents in high-income neighborhoods vs. that for low-income areas.

To help the compliant become a "slam dunk," persons with documentation on the negative experiences that they or their children have suffered at the hands of the Clark County School District should contact the Urban Chamber at (702) 648-6222 or stop by the office at 1048 W. Owens Ave.

Folks, "ain't it about time?" If so, then I want to "see your face in the place, when the mess jumps off" for our progress based on a sense of community unity.

Overstreet

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