

# Invisible no more—Black men powerful

By Marc H. Morial  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Prominent African-American scholar and author Ralph Ellison once depicted the Black man as socially invisible in his watershed novel, "Invisible Man." His hard-hitting portrayal of life in 1940s Black America suggested that it'll take more than a major Civil Rights Movement to bring the nation out of its racist past. That was in 1953.

Since then, much progress has been made in terms of Black men gaining greater visibility in the United States. At the anecdotal level, African-American men have broken down color barriers in a wide array of arenas—from sports to medicine to the arts to law to higher education to finance—and have risen to great prominence, giving their White brethren a run for their money.

From Barack Obama to Tony Dungy to Thurgood Marshall to Colin Powell to Tiger Woods to Russell Simons to Spike Lee, there are a multitude of male African-American role models who have proven that they can compete and excel on the same level as Whites to choose from.

But for all the outstanding examples of

Black men defying a culture of low expectations dating back to the slavery era that was created and placed upon them by mainstream America via the media and other outlets, there are many more who are light years away from fulfilling their true potential. They represent the greatest source of untapped potential in the United States.

There is definitely a crisis afoot among Black African-American men that we must stop complaining about and taking action to resolve—if not for them, their families and our society as a whole. But instead of dwelling on the statistics, let me propose some recommendations to help not only Black males, but all Americans:

—Universal Early Childhood Education: All children in this nation should have a right to comprehensive early childhood education, which, as Head Start proves, is very effective in giving them a leg-up when they start school.

—Greater Experimentation with All-Male



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Schools, Longer School Days and Mentoring: All-male schools such as the Eagle Academy and Enterprise School in the New York City area combined with mentoring and longer days help keep young boys focused on education and away from the distractions that could lead them down the wrong paths.

—More Second Chance Programs for High School Drop-Outs and Ex-Offenders: These programs aim to bring ex-offenders and disadvantaged individuals who are out of school and out of work back into the mainstream. Such programs help steer more Americans, especially those at-risk, back on track by providing assistance in getting GEDs, skills training and new jobs.

—Restore the Federal Summer Jobs Program to Its Previous State: At the end of the 21st century, federal lawmakers agreed to "reinvent" the federal Summer Jobs Program that had been in place for decades by changing its status from a stand-alone mandatory program to one of 10 optional youth services

programs. Under this reform, cities and municipalities have the option of offering the program or not. It resulted in a major scaling back of this successful federal program.

—Drive Home the Message That Education Pays Big Dividends in the Long Run: Parents need to instill into their children the value of education in achieving their dreams and improving their financial security. They must continually talk to their children about how much better off they will be by graduating from high school and college. They must tell them that their opportunities for professional and economic advancement are much greater with a college degree or higher than without.

So what we've presented here is blueprint from which we are urging our nation's leaders to work from. Empowering Black men to reach their full potential is the most serious economic and civil rights challenge we face today. Imagine if our nation tapped the full potential of all the Black boys languishing in the shadows? It would mean greater prosperity for all.

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## Environmental justice not clear, clean-cut issue

By Harry C. Alford  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

When it comes to environmental management discussions become confusing, accusatory and usually end up with no conclusion.

It is good that the subject of global climate change is entering the national debate for the upcoming presidential election. This time, both parties will elevate the importance of the matter and, perhaps, we can start to make a noticeable change in how we treat Mother Earth and the air we breathe.

It is imperative the costs are shared equitably and that no group, nation or race pays the big price while others slide by.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is busy at work drafting a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking that would consider adopting a new, more stringent National Ambient Air Quality Standard or NAAQS for ozone.

But first, let's not get confused. We are not talking about global warming that is often the first fanatical thing one thinks of lately when you mention the word ozone. Here we are talking about smog that is created in part

from combustion sources such as factories and vehicles and other daily human activities. EPA is under a court order to issue the Proposed Rule by June 20, 2007.

So, what happens if EPA sets a more stringent standard for ozone? And moreover, who should care? Well, a lot of things happen that can and probably will impede growth and economic development. All small and minority, especially Black-owned businesses, should care most of all. We are on the upstart. We have the fastest rate of growth in the number of businesses and dollar sales. Finally, we are getting it together, and it appears that outside sources, such as environmental hysteria, is going to challenge our new growth.

The last time EPA lowered the ozone standard, many areas of the country were classified as non-attainment, thereby triggering a process requiring states to develop emission control strategies to bring areas into attainment by a certain date.



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The emission control strategies required to make such a demonstration of compliance will impact the economies of local communities by limiting growth and economic expansion, redevelopment and rebuilding, and by raising the cost of goods and services used in our everyday lives.

For example, the rebuilding of New Orleans could come to a halt or be drastically reduced. This would be tragic. The economic empowerment driven by small and minority and Black-owned businesses is at risk, as is the health and welfare of those low- and fixed-income families that can least afford it.

Air is not the only thing that impacts the health of those that live in areas that are designated as non-attainment for ozone. Without good jobs driven by economic growth, how does one pay for healthcare and a decent standard of living?

The air is clean and is getting cleaner all the time. EPA has been instrumental over the

years in ensuring cleaner air for all Americans. Oh, how I remember those awful smoggy days in the Los Angeles basin. Our lungs burning and eyes watering nonstop.

For example, between 1970 and 2005, total emissions of the six principal air pollutants dropped by 53 percent. Moreover, the ozone levels have dropped 20 percent since 1980. But one can argue that we are approaching the crossroads of diminishing returns.

How clean is clean and at what price? We can no longer tolerate a "regulate and punish" mentality driven by a "lower is better" theory of environmental activism that goes well beyond protecting public health with an adequate margin of safety. Science based on what is "potentially harmful" is dangerous.

EPA is obligated to discharge its duties under the Clean Air Act to ensure that the Nation's air quality standards are protective of public health. In that spirit, we should support EPA's decision to include policy options in the proposed rule that consider a more stringent ozone standard.

But we should also insist that EPA include among the range of policy options to be considered in the proposed rule an option to retain the current ozone standard. To do otherwise would pre-judge the issue of whether revision of that NAAQS for ozone is appropriate at this time.

When EPA issues the proposed rule, it will formally frame the debate for the public comment process. If it doesn't include consideration of the current standard as a policy option, the opportunity to do so will be forever lost and the burden of compliance with a more stringent standard will fall to the local communities and the small and minority and Black-owned businesses that operate and provide livelihoods within them. If EPA foregoes this opportunity, it will not be environmental justice, it will be left to just us.

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cant economic headway in Africa, especially during the past 25 years.

Consider the trade deficit with China, the rise of the euro and the fall of the dollar, the manipulation of the yuan by the Chinese, the escalating oil consumption by China, and the sheer power ensconced in China's 1.3 billion consumers. They tell me even the stone for the MLK Memorial will be imported from China!

Since China loves Black folks, according to Yang Zhou, a hotel manager in Sierra Leone, who said, "Africa is a good environment for Chinese investment, because it's not too competitive," and when you consider the economic impact of doing deals with China,

especially among the heavy-hitters who have already donated millions to the MLK Memorial, the dots get connected.

But let's get back to Black folks. If we want to make a Chinese Connection, then let's do it, but let's do it with some leverage. To simply channel profits to them at the expense of Black artists, designers, all in the name of inclusion and the flimsy rationale of Dr. King being "international" in his reach and in his message, will not give us the leverage we need to build our own Chinese connection, one that will benefit our children prior to benefiting everyone else's.

When I saw Andrew Young and Jesse Jackson crying alligator tears at the groundbreaking of the MLK Memorial, I

thought it was in remembrance of MLK and what he did for us.

Maybe I was wrong; could their tears have been in response to the most of the funds being collected for the memorial going to China rather than to Black folks?

As usual, Black folks get to participate in the emotional side of things, putting shovels in the ground, making speeches, and crying, while other folks stay in the background waiting for the money to start rolling out. We get excited about the sizzle, and they dine sumptuously on the steak. Please, stop the madness and Bring Back Black!

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