

Blacks accomplishment can't be devalued

By Marc H. Morial
Special to Sentinel-Voice

As president and CEO of the National Urban League, I am encouraged that so many people of both sexes and all colors, especially the young, have decided to obliterate the two most persistent barriers to equal opportunity in America — gender and race discrimination.

For the first time in our nation's history, a woman, Sen. Hillary Clinton, was a leading candidate for her party's nomination. And, for the first time in our history, an African-American, Sen. Barack Obama, has clinched that Democratic Party presidential nomination. Our country's support of their candidacies is one of the most encouraging things about today's race for president of the United States.

Unfortunately, I have heard a number of young people say that this historical moment isn't such a big deal. But for those of you, who like me, grew up during the height of the women's rights and the civil rights struggles of the 60s and 70s, this is a seminal moment. This is modern-day history.

As I reflect upon this historical occasion, I also reflect upon the sacrifices of pioneering women like Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, whose 70-year fight for a

woman's right to vote did not bear fruit until 1919, with the passage of the 19th amendment.

As I hear the media refer to Sen. Obama as a presumptive presidential nominee, I also hear the voice of New Jersey Congresswoman Mary Norton, who in 1925 became the first Democratic woman elected to the Congress and the first woman to chair a major committee. Norton served 13 consecutive terms and once replied to a condescending male colleague, "I'm no lady, I'm a member of Congress."

As I recall the life of a tiny Brooklyn-born firebrand by the name of Shirley Chisholm, who in 1968 became the first African-American woman to be elected to Congress, I also recall that in 1972, she became the first African-American candidate for president of the United States. I vividly remember 1989, when Doug Wilder became the first African-American Governor of the State of Virginia. And I pay homage to 1967, when Carl Stokes and Richard Hatcher became the first Black mayors of major cities in America.

Today, I wonder what life must have been



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like for Oscar DePriest of Chicago, who in 1928 became the first modern-era, African-American member of Congress.

Today, I wonder what life must be like for the Obama family, who a few days ago became the first African-American family to presumably represent the Democratic Party in the race for President

of the United States of America.

As I watch this chapter of modern-day history unfold, I can't help but remind our youth that today's achievements are the direct results of yesterday's sacrifices.

Sacrifices that Fannie Lou Hamer and the Mississippi Freedom Party made in 1964 during a protest at the Democratic National Convention where they challenged the party to enforce voting rights for African-Americans in the South.

Hamer's and the party's efforts, coupled with the bloody sacrifice of peaceful marchers across Selma's Edmund Pettus Bridge in 1965, helped secure the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which removed the most onerous barriers to Black civic participation in this country. That was history.

Barack Obama is modern-day history; the history that our children and all young people must understand is the result of years of commitment to equal rights and civil rights for Americans, regardless of gender or race.

The first African-American presumptive presidential nominee in the United States stands on the shoulders of thousands of known and unknown giants of the struggle. To honor our history and his contributions to the continual creation of modern-day history, we must respect our past, savor the present and realize that there is always more work to be done. To that end, the National Urban League has invited Senators McCain and Obama to join us on Friday, August 1, in Orlando, Fla., to discuss their views on a presidential urban agenda.

We need to ensure that our next commander in chief fully understands the need to incorporate a strategy that improves the economic plight of African-Americans into his presidential plans. As we prepare for this year's election, I implore you to bear in mind, that even amidst this historical happening of the first-ever, African-American presidential nominee, it is the fate of our nation and the fate of our people that are truly at stake.

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Senator John McCain gets free ride from media

By George E. Curry
Special to Sentinel-Voice

John McCain gets so much fawning media coverage that it could fill a book. In fact, "Free Ride: John McCain and the Media," analyzes the largely uncritical coverage.

Consider the following:

— "A man of unshakable character, willing to stand up for his convictions." (R.W. Apple, *New York Times*)

— Mr. McCain is running as the blunt anti-politician who won't lie, who won't spin." (Alison Mitchell, *New York Times*)

— "While most candidates talk up their chances, McCain engages in anti-spin." (Howard Kutz, *Washington Post*)

— "He rises above the pack in admitting it's not all the other party's fault. He's eloquent, as only a prisoner of war can be." (David Nyhan, *Boston Globe*)

— "There's something authentic about this man." (Mike Wallace, "60 Minutes")

— "Basically just a cool dude." (Jake Tapper, *Salon*)

Hillary Clinton's protestations to the con-

trary, Obama's coverage does not begin to compare to the free ride the media gives John McCain.

David Brock and Paul Waldman, authors of the McCain book, peel the skin off of McCain's carefully cultivated media image, exposing a tempestuous, often mean-spirited man who benefits from his status of a former prisoner of war and unearned reputation as a maverick.

"Over his career, McCain has compiled a record that is far more complex than his media image," the authors write. "The fact of the matter is that John McCain is neither a moderate nor a maverick. McCain's voting record, his ideas, his values, and his rhetoric mark him as a stout conservative — a description that he himself adheres to."

Though not part of the book, the NAACP's Federal Legislative Report Card supports that conclusion. Of the 13 grading periods that



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McCain has been in the House or Senate, he received what amounts to grade of F for 11 annual sessions, discounting the two in which he ran for president. Of the 11 years, he received a score of 50 one time, 40 another and in the other nine instances, he scored 30 percent or less. In the two years he was campaigning for president —

2000 and 2008 — McCain received an incomplete, but was well on his way to earning an F.

That's hardly the record of a moderate.

Nor does the record support his reputation as a maverick. According to *Congressional Quarterly*, McCain voted with Republicans 84.3 percent in the last session of Congress.

McCain's trump card is his image of a war hero. According to the book, he told one interviewer, "One of the things I've never tried to do is exploit my Vietnam service to my country because it would be totally inappropriate to do so."

Yet, McCain's website features a moving video about his POW years. And when carpetbagging charges were raised against McCain in Phoenix, he responded: "Listen, pal. I spent 22 years in the Navy. My father was in the Navy. My grandfather was in the Navy. We in the military service tend to move a lot. We have to live in all parts of the country, all parts of the world. I wish I could have the luxury, like you, of growing up and living and spending my entire life in a nice place like the First District of Arizona, but I was doing other things."

Then he added this zinger: "As a matter of fact, when I think about it now, the place I lived the longest in my life was Hanoi."

He used similar lines with journalists, saying to the late Tim Russert of "Meet the Press," "I hadn't had so much fun since my last interrogation in Hanoi."

Because many reporters are mesmerized by McCain, they are reluctant to point out that he was tied to one of the largest financial scandals in history. McCain was among the senators known as the Keating 5. Charles Keating Jr. was a wealthy Phoenix developer who ran the Lincoln Savings and Loan. After the S&L collapsed, it cost \$2.6 billion in taxpayer's funds. McCain and the four others had talked with federal regulators in an effort to get them to go easy on Keatings' S&L.

The book chronicles McCain's famous temper outbursts.

Kathy Dubs, a Republican member of the Phoenix City Council, recalled one 1993 incident with McCain.

After questioning McCain's motives for supporting a proposed airport between Phoenix and Tucson, she recalled: "He slammed his fist to the table and stood up and said this meeting is over. Then he pointed his finger at me and started calling me names. His staff was pulling him back, trying to get him to sit down."

Even though he has been dubbed, "Senator Hot Head," reporters still try to put his conduct in a favorable light.

"In other words, McCain isn't angry; he's passionate," the authors said, summarizing the media's attitude toward McCain. "When he blows his lid, it's only because he's standing up for his principles."

Even John McCain can't get mad at that kind of coverage.

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Alford

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ogy in clean coal-powered generation. Also, we can convert coal into crude oil for about \$50 a barrel, and this method should also be implemented to further increase our supply of oil and further lower the price.

The situation we are in is caused by our own ignorance, reticence and lack of courage to develop a comprehensive energy policy. I have been on Capitol Hill for the last ten years advocating such a policy.

I pray that sooner than later we will find some champions within our Congress to step forward and lead this nation out of its pitiful dependence on energy sources. Right now,

America is on its knees being slapped around by some of the meanest people and characters on Earth. We have ourselves in a helpless state, and the only way we can react is in a knee-jerk fashion.

That's how we have gotten ourselves into unnecessary military conflicts. That's why the price at the pump is totally cruel and ridiculous, and right now there is nothing, NOTHING that we can do about it but pay and hurt.

Again, God blesses the child who has his own. Let's go out and get our own.

Harry Alford is the co-founder, President/CEO of the National Black Chamber of Commerce.