

## OUR VOICE

# Manning Up

So maybe not all hope is lost. Maybe we've been drinking the Kool-Aid too long and need to take the blinders off. Maybe, just maybe, Black men do have a place in the country—and not just in its jails and prisons, in its ghettos and alleys and any other places we generally associate with destitution and depravity. We in Black America have long known that the Black man's plight, though perilous, is also pregnant with possibility. We've known that the same families that produce thugs and criminals have also produced doctors and lawyers; that athletes and academics often come from the same familial stock; that some of the worst of us—the dope dealers, the gun runners—are every bit as business savvy as the Wall Street barons earning untold millions for guiding their firms into ruin.

Yep, we knew that one day America would elect a Black president. We didn't know when. We figured it'd be later than soon. America still had a lot of growing up to do. Some places still bear remnants of the nation's colonial past. Blacks aren't welcome in city limits after dark. Restaurants will refuse to serve them. Black men are guilty of any and every infraction until proven innocent—if they're even given that chance.

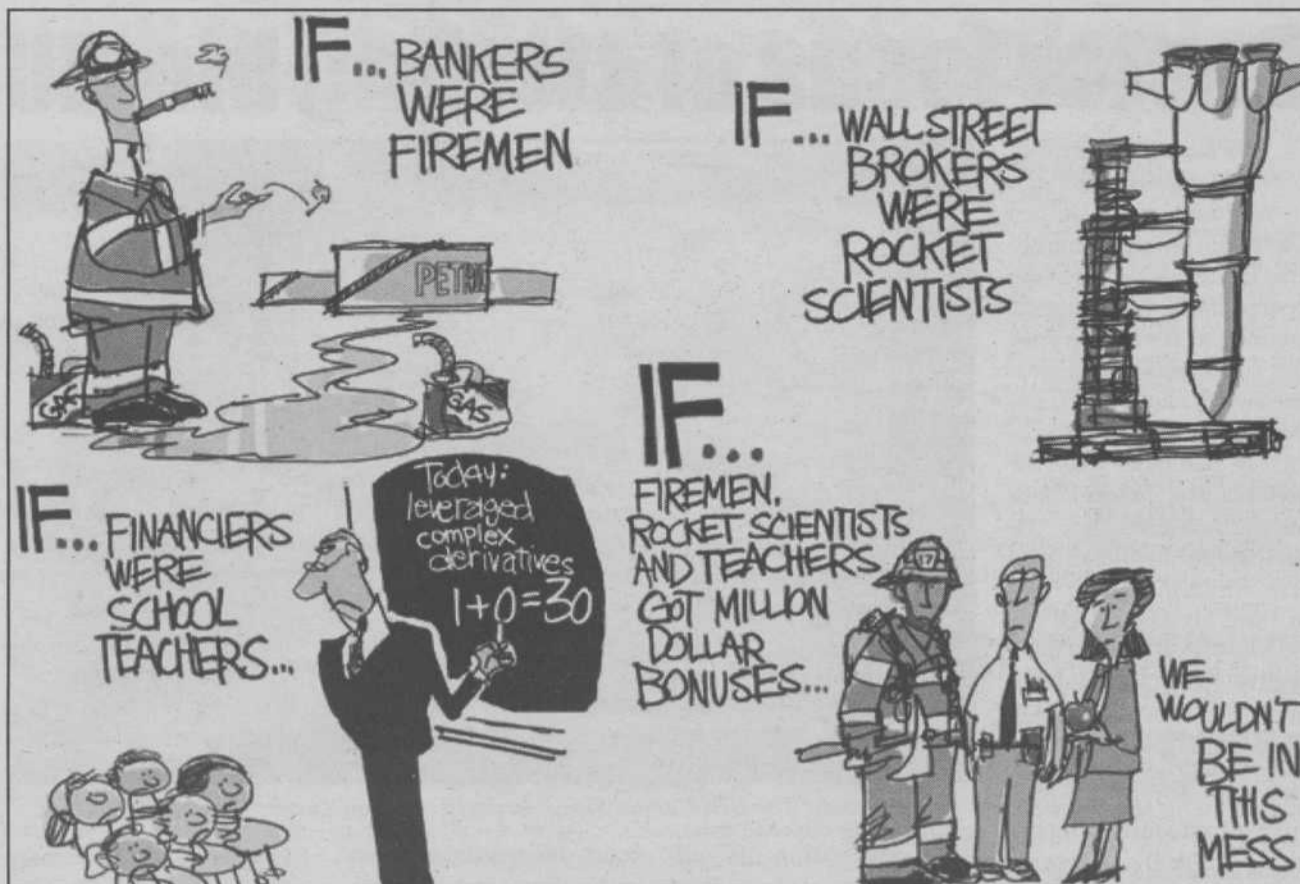
Barack Obama came along at the right time. He was the right man for this time. Not too Black, but just Black enough to be acceptable to both Whites and Blacks. In fact, if we rewind time and could only judge the presidential and vice presidential candidates by their resumes, you would've thought that the Republican contenders were White and the Democrat contenders were Black. Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin had five kids and went to a handful of colleges before getting a bachelor's degree. Ariz. Sen. John McCain left his first wife for a younger woman. On the flip side, both Barack and Michelle Obama got Ivy League educations, became lawyers and have only been married to each other. Obama's story is testament to the fact that the least of us can become the most of us.

The recent election of Michael Steele, the former lieutenant governor of Maryland, also bears witness to this bubbling notion of the Black man's renaissance. Steele, too, came along at the right time, a time when the GOP, reeling from consecutive losses in the 2006 and 2008 elections, needed a new face and new blood. While many people in the Republican Party aren't happy with his democratic election, Steele nonetheless has a wonderful opportunity to begin changing entrenched mindsets about the capabilities of African-American men. As the face of the Republican Party, he's now the standard bearer for conservatism. That in itself is remarkable considering that conservatism is antithetical to nearly everything African-Americans have fought for over the centuries—equality opportunity, fairness.

Obama and Steele are but two examples of Black men ascending to the top rungs of society. Mass. Gov. Deval Patrick is another. Our very own State Sen. Steven Horsford is another—he's the first African-American and the youngest person ever to become Nevada Senate Majority Leader. Countless other leaders whose names do not appear in newspaper headlines or lead off newscasts are also setting examples, making history and providing a counter-narrative to the ongoing story of Black-on-Black violence and Black men as endangered species—with other Black men often doing the endangering.

This isn't to sugarcoat the real issues that Black men and young Black males face. Inequities that have been in place for centuries won't be usurped overnight. There are still too many guns in the 'hood, too many illicit drugs coursing through the ghetto, too many single mothers, too many absentee fathers, not enough recreational outlets, too few exemplary schools, scant opportunities for work inside the community, paltry commerce—the list goes on. There's also hope. Hope, like that inspired at last Saturday's Young Men's Conference at the West Las Vegas Library Theater and Andre Agassi Preparatory Academy.

Hope in the well-dressed young men who learned life lessons. Hope in their potential. Hope in their self affirmation. Hope in their willingness to see in themselves Obama and Steele, and to strive to do even better.



## Beware federal gentrification

By Harry C. Alford  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Whenever there is big money that comes down the "pike," there will be lobbyists and hustlers swarming around like lions during a wildebeest migration on the plains of Africa. The opportunity becomes immense and the "wildebeest" are the downtrodden and economically challenged who have no strong voice politically no matter how many Black legislators we send to the state house or capitol buildings. They will pounce and we become the prey over and over again. They have made big, long-term money off Black folks since the days of reconstruction.

As a matter of fact, they have made big money off Black folks during slavery. Sometimes it seems that we were put on this continent to make money for Eurocentric interests. The tradition continues but in a high tech fashion.

Remember when they put in the national interstate system? They came right through our neighborhoods and business districts via imminent domain. They "bought" our land and businesses at dirt cheap rates and made billions from the jobs and contracts derived from the implementation of freeways. It's funny how now they are looking at the upcoming I-69 project.

It will run from Indiana through Tennessee, Mississippi, Arkansas, Louisiana and Texas. The biggest stall is how to figure out how they can get a lot of this property



HARRY C. ALFORD

from Black folks at dirt cheap rates and manipulate it into treasure for the developers, hustlers and lobbyists. There is just no way a major project like this is going to benefit Black folks in mass. It is like it's un-American.

Gentrification is the economic social engineering of pushing out a group of people in favor of other people based on race and class. CBS 60 Minutes exposed this process as it was happening in Cincinnati during the late 1980's.

You see it in near Southside Chicago, Hunter's Point San Francisco, and practically every city in the United States. The best example is the former "Chocolate City," Washington, D.C., the capital of this nation. When I moved to D.C. in 1994, the city was 80 percent-plus Black.

Today, it is 55 percent Black and dropping. The City Council is now ruled by Whites and some of the most traditional neighborhoods are heavily populated with new condominiums, town homes and retrofitted classic abodes housing yuppies from Virginia, Maryland and various Whites from all over the nation.

They have used big fed-

eral programs like the Empowerment Zones, Enterprise Zones, Community Reinvestment Act and, of late, New Markets Tax Credits to provide investment into depressed urban neighborhoods and, at the same time, pushing out the traditional residents and replacing them with upper middle class residents. They will level poor establishments and replace them with upscale housing. They, in fact, will build and retrofit existing homes with inflated priced homes in order to jack up the comparable rates on home prices. Why? They, the developers, can sell them at inflated prices.

Also, they are running up the property values that will cause the existing inhabitants to not afford new property tax bills. In essence, people who lived in neighborhoods for multiple generations are now faced with foreclosure, eviction and ruin. The Yuppies and others move in with their high salaries and bankable credit.

The Shaw District of

Washington, D.C. has gone from "Ebony to Ivory" within fifteen years. What has happened to the former inhabitants?

They have been pushed out of town. Public Housing Authorities lure them out with Section 8 rental vouchers to be used only in Maryland or Virginia.

"We will provide you assistance, but get the hell out of D.C."

Those other independent residents cannot resist either as their property taxes sky rocket or they are suckered into home equity loans that are sub-prime. Even though their equity increases through the manipulated marketing, they can't enjoy it or realize the gains. They are marked!

Banks like Bank of America offer slick financing through the Community Reinvestment Act such as 2 percent mortgages for people moving into the Shaw District.

Those people are basically upper middle class and White

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