FORUM

Black Women and Breast Cancer



Dr. Julianne Malveaux Guest

Columnist

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Millions of women are sporting pink ribbon pins in support of a month when organizations like the Susan G. Komen Foundation fundraise and galvanize people around the quest for a cure for breast cancer. They are fight to raise awareness - more than 184,000 women will be diagnosed with breast cancer in the United States in 2008, and more than 40,000 will die from breast cancer. O

While African American women are less likely than White women to get breast cancer, we are more likely to die from it. The morbidity rate for White women is 9.4 per 100,000, compared to 15.4 per 100,000 for African-American women

Additionally, African-American women often are diagnosed with breast cancer when they are younger, and when African-American women under 55 are diagnosed with breast cancer; it is more likely to have deadlier effects. Researchers are studying the reasons why African-American women are so much more vulnerable than other women are to breast cancer. But the findings make it important for African-American women to get regular mammograms and to deal



with other aspects of our health.

Whenever there are health awareness weeks or months, whether they are for breast cancer, muscular dystrophy, diabetes, or another cause, I crave attention to the broader issue of health care and health. access. We can take a slice out of the health care challenge by focusing, in October, on breast cancer, but the fact is that part of African-American women's increased vulnerability to breast cancer is a result of differential access to health care and health services.

Too many African-Americans lack health insur-O has spent on health care since ance. Too many wear the stress of racism in poor eating and living habits, and it shows up with obesity, high blood pressure, and the higher incidence of other diseases in our community

African-American women are more likely than any other population, in 2008, to be diagnosed with HIV/AIDS. When another population was

George Deukmejian. Many

say it was because White vot-

ers lied to pollsters about their

willingness to vote for an

McCain would say, "that

overstated the margin of vic-

tory for Harold Washington in

Chicago; David Dinkins in

New York City; and Doug

and before Black music did

more to erase racial barriers

than any presidential speech.

In fact, there are an increasing

number of people questioning

the premise of the Bradley

Polls Lie About Race?" New

York Times reporter Kate

Zernike wrote: "But pollsters

and political scientists say

concern about a Bradley effect

or a Dinkins effect, and plenty

call it a theory in search of

data - is misplaced. It

obscures what they argue is

the more important point:

there are plenty of ways that

combination, these factors

could produce an unforeseen

Obama landslide with surprise

victories in the South, a stun-

ningly large Obama loss, or a

recount-thin margin. In a year

that has already turned expec-

tations upside down, it is hard

to completely reassure the

Looking back, some

fretters.'

"Considered alone or in

race complicates polling.

some call it a Wilder effect

In a story headlined, "Do

But Bradley's race predat-

the Internet and cell phones

But it wasn't just, as John

Pre-election polls also

African-American.

Wilder in Virginia.

bama Ahead

George

Curry

Guest

Columnist

According to the polls,

Barack Obama is steadily

widening his lead over

Republican rival John

McCain to become the next

president of the United States.

A Washington Post-ABC

News poll released Monday

shows Obama with a 53 per-

cent to 43 percent lead among

- don't believe the polls.

There is only one problem

As the Washington Post

noted in a story on its poll, at

this stage in 1992, Bill Clinton

held a 14-point lead over

President George H.W. Bush,

yet he won by only 6 percent.

In mid-October 1976, Jimmy

Carter held a 13-point lead

over incumbent Gerald Ford,

added to the mix, convention-

al wisdom - which is often

neither conventional nor wise

African-Americans is the

Bradley effect, named after

former Los Angeles Mayor. Tom Bradley, who sought to

California in 1982. Even last-

minute polls showed him

leading by a wide margin of

victory. Yet, Bradley narrowly

lost the election to Republican

become

- goes out of the window.

When the issue of race is

Uppermost in the minds of

governor

but won by only two points.

likely voters.

most likely to be diagnosed, HIV/AIDS awareness garnered headlines. Now, too many are silent about this dis-

ease, unless they are talking

about the international inci-

dence of HIV/AIDS. It is not clear why our nation has not galvanized around the health care issue. To be sure, both presidential candidates have ideas about health insurance and health care; their plans are divergent.

In my humble opinion, Hillary Rodham Clinton had one of the best health care plans we've seen in a long time, reflective of the work she she worked on it as First Lady in the Clinton Administration.

Senators Obama and McCain would be advised to review her plan and incorporate aspects of it into their own work. Somehow, every American must have access to preventive health care, and protection from bankruptcy when they are diagnosed with expensive diseases. And some-

observers say pollsters got it

wrong with Bradley not

because White voters lied to

pollsters, but because they failed to factor in the absentee

ballots. Whatever the reason,

some researchers think that's

According to the New York Times: "In a new study,

Daniel J. Hopkins, a postdoc-

toral fellow at Harvard, con-

sidered 133 elections between

1989 and 2006 and found that

blacks running for office

before 1996 suffered a median

Bradley effect of three per-

centage points. Blacks run-

ning after 1996, however, per-

formed about three percentage

points better than their polls

about whether the Bradley

effect is valid, the McCain

camp continues to exploit the

been mentioned at McCain-

Palin rallies, there have been

cries of "Kill him!" and "Off

McCain has urged his follow-

ers to tone down the rhetoric.

Away from rallies, however,

his attack ads use code words

to argue, as Palin put it, that

able to see past the code

always been two separate but

equal questions about race in

this election," Frank Rich

wrote in the New York Times.

"Is there still enough racism

in America to prevent a black

But observers have been

"From the start, there have

Obama is "not one of us."

As the debate continues

When Obama's name has

It has gotten so bad that

predicted."

issue of race.

with his head!"

less likely to happen today.

how, as we raise awareness about breast cancer, we must also raise awareness about the ways breast cancer incidence is intertwined with the status of our health care system.

Breast cancer awareness has an international dimension. Hala Moddelmog, President of the Susan G. Komen for the Cure, indicates that 10 million people will die in the next 25 years absent intervention around breast cancer. Last year, the Komen organization held a global advocacy summit in Hungary, and announced pilot programs in Eastern Europe, Latin America, Africa, and the Middle East. This month, they sent delegations to Ghana and Tanzania.

It is important to note that for all the challenges women face with breast cancer in the United States, health care access is even more limited in developing countries. The Komen organization is to be commended for their work in taking breast cancer global.

Back at home, though, the health care disparities that riddle our system are as present in the realm of breast cancer and in other areas. Sisters must be among those sporting pink ribbons, but beyond the pink ribbons, we must all be passionate advocates for increased health care access, especially in the African-American community.

Julianne Malveaux is President of Bennett College for Women. She can be reached presoffice@bennett.edu.

man from being elected presi-

dent no matter what? And,

will Republicans play the race

card? The jury is still out on

the first question until Nov. 4.

But we now have the unam-

biguous answer to the second:

who is no racist, turned to this

desperate strategy only as

Obama started to pull ahead."

who feels McCain is playing

as a post-racial candidate

from the start, and he has been

doing it very well," David

Brinkley, a noted presidential

historian told the New York

Times. "But the fact of the

matter is that some voters -

we can't know yet how many

will not get past his race.

And I very much believe that

the McCain-Palin ticket is

into. In that same New York

Times article, John Schuster, a

Republican from Wheeling,

W.Va., said, "What you hear

around here is, 'Would you

And there is plenty to tap

tapping into that."

because of race."

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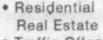
to racial fears.

Rich explained, "McCain,

He isn't the only person

"Obama has been running

Eric S. Ellison



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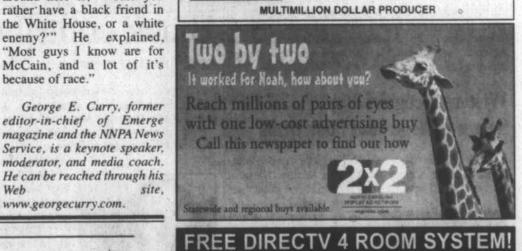


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