

OBAMA VICTORY OFFERS LESSONS FOR OUR CHILDREN

When I began to think about my reaction to Barack Obama winning the electoral and popular vote in the U.S. presidential election, but also the popular vote in North Carolina, I was surprised at all the different elements that began to surface.

The first was a joy of being prove wrong. I have known since I was a child that all White people are not racist. However, I did not believe that I would see a Black person

elected president of the United States in my lifetime. My life experience has taught me that the majority of White citizens in the United States and in North Carolina consistently vote against their own long-term, self-interest when they are manipulated through racism and race-baiting, political advertising, and it was unlikely that the majority of them, who were simply being

used by those in power, would ever figure the game out. The reality of President-Elect Obama proved that I was wrong. What he and his team accomplished has made me remarkably hopeful.

This hopefulness is the second element of my reaction. I know that there is an international, national and state-wide recession. I know that hate and fear are growing in our society. There are increasing amounts of anti-Muslim, anti-immigrant incidents; the 27 hate groups, which the Southern Poverty Law Center identified in North Carolina in 2007, are growing in membership; White teenagers display Klan hoods in High Point, N.C., and many White people are terri-

fied that their way of life is over. Why in the world am I so hopeful?

Obama's victory reinforced beliefs and values that I learned when I was young from family, teachers and coaches. More importantly, it may make those beliefs and values accessible to the young people of this generation.

First, education is important and you have to work hard to get a good education. Education gives you choices and it is something that no one can take away from you. Plan and prepare for everything that you want to accomplish. The odds in this world are against you; half-stepping will not do. Understand who you are, respect yourself, respect others, and fulfill your responsibilities.

My coaches taught me the importance of belief in self. No matter how many times you get knocked down, get back up, because if you do not get back up, you cannot win. Think about the subtheme of the Rev. Jeremiah Wright and race in the Obama campaign and how President-Elect Obama behaved. Control your emotions, do not let them control you, think, adjust and go hard until the whistle blows on every play. He was a coach's dream.

The third element of my reaction is curiosity. The Obama family in the White House will create an image that will alter the realm of what is possible for all children of color, but those children need our help. We have to make sure that they have access to a high-quality public education. President-Elect Obama wants the same thing for them. What will we actually do to help?

Dr. Edwin D. Bell is a professor of education at Winston-Salem State University.



Professor Edwin Bell,
Winston-Salem State University



Victory

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corners of our world – our stories are singular, but our destiny is shared, and a new dawn of American leadership is at hand. To those who would tear this world down – we will defeat you. To those who seek peace and security – we support you. And to all those who have wondered if America's beacon still burns as bright – tonight we proved once more that the true strength of our nation comes not from our the might of our arms or the scale of our wealth, but from the enduring power of our ideals: democracy, liberty, opportunity, and unyielding hope.

For that is the true genius of America – that America can change. Our union can be perfected. And what we have already achieved gives us

14 hope for what we can and must achieve tomorrow.



AP Photo

106-year-old Ann Nixon Cooper

This election had many firsts and many stories that will be told for generations. But one that's on my mind tonight is about a woman who cast her ballot in Atlanta. She's a lot like the

millions of others who stood in line to make their voice heard in this election except for one thing – Ann Nixon Cooper is 106 years old.

She was born just a generation past slavery; a time when there were no cars on the road or planes in the sky; when someone like her couldn't vote for two reasons – because she was a woman and because of the color of her skin.

And tonight, I think about all that she's seen throughout her century in America – the heartache and the hope; the struggle and the progress; the times we were told that we can't, and the people who pressed on with that American creed: Yes we can.

At a time when women's voices were silenced and their hopes dismissed, she lived to see them stand up and speak out and reach for the ballot. Yes we can.

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Eugene, Ore.



Santa Rosa, Calif.