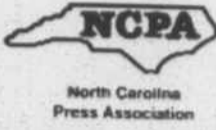


OPINION/ FORUM

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CONFEDERATE HISTORY IS SUPREMACY HISTORY



Julianne Malveaux
Guest Columnist

(NNPA) — Last week, Virginia Governor Bob McDonnell proclaimed April Confederate History Month in his state. In fact, he proclaimed the date on April 7, which is the same day in 1865 that Confederate General Robert E. Lee began to negotiate the terms of surrender with United States General Ulysses S. Grant. In some states, this day is considered Confederate Memorial Day, and Virginia is not alone in celebrating "Confederate History Month." Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana have celebrated this month for quite some time. In the last decade or so Texas (since 1999), Florida (since 2007), and Georgia (since 2009) have also instituted celebrations of Confederate History Month.

Virginia celebrated from 1994-2002 before the commemoration was revoked. Southerners say there is no racism in their celebration of the confederacy. They claim they just want to celebrate their ancestors who valiantly fought for that which they believed in. What exactly did these folks believe in, though? In his famous Cornerstone speech, delivered in Savannah Georgia on March 21, 1861, Confederate Vice-President Alexander Stephens stated "Our... foundation are laid, its cornerstone rests, upon the great truth is that the negro (this is how Negro was spelled historically) is not equal to the white man; that slavery — subordination to the superior race — is his natural and normal condition."

Anyone who believes in freedom, justice and equality and reads these words has to cringe, not only at the sentiment, but also at the notion that this sentiment has been resurrected, nearly 150 years later, by contemporary governor of a state that is at least 12 percent African American. To celebrate the so-called confederacy is to celebrate the words that Stephens despicably uttered, and that ought to be an anathema to any thinking American.

Governor McDonnell seems to think that he cleaned up his contemptible proclamation by adding language that speaks to the abomination of slavery. He is talking out of two sides of his mouth. How can you describe slavery as "evil, vicious and inhumane" without acknowledging, as Stephens said, that slavery is the "cornerstone" of the Confederacy that he wants to celebrate?

This matter has been so digested in the public space that it seems almost redundant to address it again. At the same time, it seems that not enough can be written or said about our historical myopia and its consequences. For all of our so-called post-racialism,



Barbours

race really does still matter, and this pro-Confederacy nonsense shows exactly how much. For some southerners, the civil war is still really not over, and there are those who truly believe that "subordination to the superior race" is the "natural and normal condition" of Black Americans. Imagine the chagrin these folks feel when they realize that despite their deeply held beliefs, the elected leader of our nation is a man of African descent. As Black Americans close social, economic, and political gaps, the Tea Party posse and the Confederacy celebrants seem to clamor for more and more attention.

I realize that I write this with some risk. The Tea Party folks are so extreme that they run around threatening people, like Tennessee Democratic Congressman Steve Cohen, who raised questions about their motives. Yet history is written by those who hold the pen, and we are all remiss if we do not remind those who are thinking about our nation's history that the Confederacy was a rebellion against the United States of America. Why should this rebellion be commemorated and celebrated?

History belongs to those who hold the pen, and it seems to me that many penholders have a profound ambivalence about the Civil War and its aftermath. To be sure, cousins fought cousins, friends fought friends, and West Point classmates fought each other. To clean it up, after the fact, the conflict is said to be about states' rights, an enduring conflict that continues to plague our nation, instead of slavery, which Stephens declared (and no one disagreed on record) as the cornerstone of the confederacy. If the Confederacy had ever been written out of history as an aberrant loser we might not still be struggling whether domestic terrorists should be celebrated. Instead, our nation's ambivalence about race and equal rights has empowered governors and others to celebrate supremacy.

Instead of a celebration of Confederacy, we really need a repudiation of its principles by all of those rogue states that were once Confederate. Instead, Mississippi Governor Haley Barbour calls the celebration of Confederacy "no big deal." Too bad Mississippi voters — 38 percent Black American — can't make this man accountable for his supremacist views.

Julianne Malveaux is president of Bennett College for Women.



Summer jobs for teens needed



Marc Morial
Guest Columnist

(NNPA) — After months of pressure from the National Urban League, the Congressional Black Caucus and other members of the civil rights community, the White House has endorsed a key provision of the National Urban League's six-point Plan for Putting Americans Back to Work — summer jobs for chronically unemployed urban youth. In a recent conference call between CBC Chairwoman Barbara Lee and White House officials, the Administration urged Senate passage of H.R. 4899, a bill that would allocate \$600 million to create 300,000 summer youth jobs which passed in the House on March 24.

This renewed interest in job creation that leaves no one behind comes in the wake of a March jobs report showing that while 162,000 jobs were created last month and overall unemployment appears to be leveling off at 9.7 percent, African-American unemployment has now risen to 16.5 percent and



Hispanic joblessness stands at 12.6 percent. Even more troubling is that over 40 percent of Black teenagers are unemployed — a recipe for disaster for the young people, their families and our economy. We know that summer jobs not only put needed money into the budgets of struggling families, but also provide valuable work experience that can start young people on the path to productive adulthood, and help jump-start local economies. Summer jobs also take idle kids off the hot summer streets where they are more likely to get into trouble.

In recent months, the National Urban League has

waged a relentless campaign for job creation in communities of greatest need. Last November we presented our six-point plan to the White House and Congressional leaders. In February, we met with President Obama in the Oval Office to reiterate the need for a more targeted approach to job creation. And we carried that message directly to Capitol Hill during last month's annual Legislative Policy Conference. The jobs crisis was also the cover story of this year's State of Black America Report.

A summer jobs bill is sorely needed, but as Congresswoman Barbara Lee has said, it would merely be a down-payment on job cre-

ation. A much bolder and more comprehensive plan is called for. In fact, Congresswoman Barbara Lee recently teamed up with California Congressman George Miller to structure a \$100 billion jobs bill, "The Local Jobs for America Act," which would create or save a million public and private sector jobs. The bill contains many of the elements of the National Urban League's six-point plan, including direct job creation, job training, and targeted help for communities most in need.

CBC member Bobby Rush has also introduced the "Employing Youth for the American Dream Act," which tracks many of the National Urban League's recommendations.

I am pleased that the White House and the Congress are finally responding to the recommendations of the National Urban League, the CBC and others. We must increase efforts to create jobs for the chronically unemployed, especially in communities of color. But we don't have months to debate this issue. Summer is fast approaching. Our young people need jobs now.

Marc H. Morial is the leader of the National Urban League.

America's obsession with skin color



Michael McMillan
Guest Columnist

(NNPA) — The April 4th observation of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s bloody death in Memphis produced another round of speech excerpts of him saying his dream was to see people judged on the basis of their character, not their skin color.

But the color of one's skin — 42 years after Dr. King's assassination — is still a major issue in America. The notion that a person can look at another individual and know his or her race is an extremely flawed one. I know this from personal experience. My mother is an African-American and my father is white. As a result, I am very light-skinned. So much so that people often confuse me with being white; some unsuspecting Caucasians have actually uttered the dreaded n-word in my presence. When I informed them that I am biracial, they cringed in red-face embarrassment.

I am not alone. The late Harlem Congressman Adam Clayton Powell's was of a very light complexion. U.S. Rep. G.H. Butterfield (D-NC), secretary of the Congressional Black Caucus, is so light-skinned that he is often mistaken for being White. Motivational speaker George Fraser often begins his lectures by declaring, "I am Black."

If this were not such a



U.S. Rep. Butterfield



George Fraser

serious matter, it would be laughable. But bigotry and ignorance is no laughing matter. Moreover, some people, especially in the political arena, try to exploit this widespread ignorance about race. Still, we need not be willing victims.

The concept of race is a concocted construct.

"Today, scholars in many fields argue that 'race' as it is understood in the United States of America was a social mechanism invented during the 18th century to refer to those populations brought together in colonial America: the English and other European settlers, the conquered Indian peoples, and those peoples of Africa brought in to provide slave labor," the American Anthropological Association (AAA) said in a statement on race. "...It subsumed a growing ideology of inequality devised to rationalize European attitudes and treatment of the conquered and enslaved peoples."

The AAA said race evolved into "a body of prejudgments that distorts our ideas about human differ-

ences and group behavior."

Interestingly, there are far more variations within designated racial groups than between different races.

"In the United States both scholars and the general public have been conditioned to viewing human races as natural and separate divisions within the human species based on visible physical differences," the anthropology group said in its statement. "With the vast expansion of scientific knowledge in this country, however, it has become clear that human populations are not unambiguously, clearly demarcated, biologically distinct groups. Evidence from the analysis of genetics (e.g., DNA) indicates that most physical variation, about 94%, lies within so-called racial groups."

It concluded, "Conventional geographic 'racial' groupings differ from one another only in about 6% of their genes. This means there is greater variation within 'racial' groups than between them."

The U.S. Department of Energy Human Genome Project issued a statement that

was even more unequivocal: "DNA studies do not indicate that separate classifiable sub-species (races) exist within modern humans. While different genes for physical traits such as skin and hair color can be identified between individuals, no consistent patterns of genes across the human genome exist to distinguish one race from another. There is also no genetic basis for divisions of human ethnicity."

Placing so much emphasis on the questionable construct of race is what Rev. Jesse Jackson calls majoring in the minor. By no means am I suggesting that disparate treatment of African-Americans over the years does not warrant corrective remedies, such as affirmative action. In fact, I argue the opposite.

All of us must face up to the reality that the United States is quickly becoming what political scientists like to call a majority minority.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, minorities comprise one-third of the U.S. population. However, by 2042, they are projected to make up the majority and rise to 54 percent of the population by 2050. Meanwhile, non-Hispanic whites will see their share of the population dip from 66 percent in 2008 to 46 percent in 2050. No single group will comprise a majority of the U.S. population.

Clearly, we need to come together if we are to survive as a nation. Divisive and misleading talk about race in the abstract doesn't help us get there.

Michael McMillan is the City of St. Louis License Collector.