

# FORUM

## Church burnings should ignite more protests



**Julianne Malveaux**  
Guest Columnist

It's possible that lightning may have caused one of the fires. Another may be the result of faulty electricity. Still, in the past couple of weeks, there were fires at churches in North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Ohio and Tennessee. At least two have been ruled arson by local fire departments. Several are still being investigated. Is it a coincidence that churches are burning in the days since the massacre at Emanuel A.M.E. Church in Charleston, South Carolina?

President Obama spoke to the historical importance of Black churches when he eulogized the Rev. Clementa Pinckney. The church, he said, "is and always has

These church burnings fire me up. They ought to fire us all up. The burnings ought to spark a resistance to racism unlike any we have seen in the past. These church fires ought to infuse us with the passion of Bree Newsome, the African-American woman [from Charlotte, North Carolina] who climbed up a pole and snatched the Confederate flag from the pole outside the South Carolina State House. She didn't wait for Gov. Nikki Haley to take the Confederate flag down; she was too fired up to

bolize the energy needed for change.

In the wake of these church burnings, the righteous need to be fired up and ready to go in dismantling the racism that has plagued our nation since its founding. We need to collectively debunk the myth that the Confederate flag is about history and heritage — it is simply about White supremacy. We need to go to school boards, especially in the South, to demand curriculum revisions when young people are force-fed inaccurate history about the Civil War. We need to put those employers "on blast" when they can't "find" any African-Americans to hire. We ought to encourage the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP) to ensure that those who get federal contracts comply with the law — that those who get federal contracts do affirmative action hiring.

The Mother Emanuel massacre demonstrates that

**"To set fire to a Black church, to kill people in a Black church, to bomb a church strikes at the very heart of our community."**

wait. After all, Haley's post-massacre announcement that the flag should not fly on State House grounds is symbolic until the South Carolina legisla-



Vessey Conway/The Morning News via AP

Smoke rises from Mount Zion African Methodist Episcopal church, early Wednesday, July 1, 2015, in Greeleyville, S.C. The African-American church, which was burned down by the Ku Klux Klan in 1995, caught fire late Tuesday night.

been the center of African-American life." He went on to describe Black churches as "hush harbors" for enslaved people, "praise houses where their free descendants could gather and shout hallelujah, rest stops for the weary along the Underground Railroad, bunkers for the foot soldiers of the Civil Rights Movement."

To set fire to a Black church, to kill people in a Black church, to bomb a church strikes at the very heart of our community. These acts of terrorism are meant to intimidate, to send a message. That these recent fires have happened in the wake of protests against the vile Confederate flag suggests that these fires may be pushback from the protests, a continuation of work of the man who murdered nine people in Emanuel A.M.E. Church. Whoever is burning churches, though, forgets that it is not 1815, but 2015. The intimidation tactics that worked during slavery won't work now.

ture votes to take the flag down. Meanwhile, Alabama Gov. Robert Bentley, not needing legislative approval, ordered four Confederate flags to be taken down from the Capitol grounds that served as the first headquarters of the Confederacy.

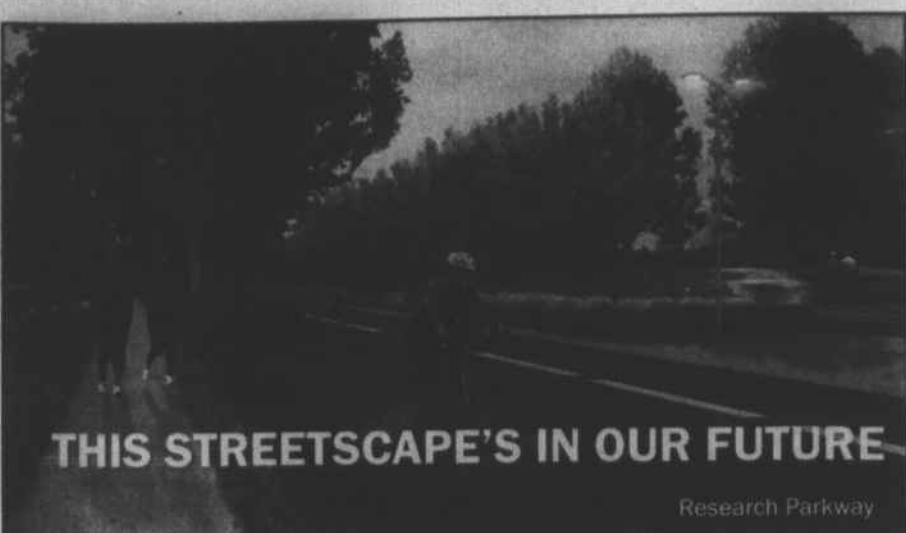
A South Carolina woman, Edith S. Childs, came up with a slogan when candidate Obama visited Greenwood (population about 23,000) for an event that drew a scant 20 people. To energize the small crowd, Childs walked through the crowd attempting to fire them up. The call and response phrase, "fired up, ready to go" not only galvanized the small gathering, but became a central chant of Obama's 2008 campaign. Used everywhere from civil rights gatherings to country clubs, "fired up" captured the energy of the first Obama campaign. Indeed, organizations used the "fired up" slogan to get people out to vote, to work on issues other than the Obama campaign, to sym-

bolize the energy needed for change. In the wake of these church burnings, the righteous need to be fired up and ready to go in dismantling the racism that has plagued our nation since its founding. We need to collectively debunk the myth that the Confederate flag is about history and heritage — it is simply about White supremacy. We need to go to school boards, especially in the South, to demand curriculum revisions when young people are force-fed inaccurate history about the Civil War. We need to put those employers "on blast" when they can't "find" any African-Americans to hire. We ought to encourage the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP) to ensure that those who get federal contracts comply with the law — that those who get federal contracts do affirmative action hiring.

The Mother Emanuel massacre demonstrates that racism is alive and well in these United States. We experience it everywhere we turn, from our national statues (fewer than 10 Black women are commemorated in public statues) to persistent housing segregation. Too many of us have accepted this racism, or feel powerless to fight it. Thus, it persists.

It was gratifying to see the multiracial crowds that mobilized in solidarity with the Mother Emanuel Nine. It would be interesting to see how many of those mobilized are willing to be involved in anti-racist work. All of us need to be "fired up, ready to go" to persistently and consistently dismantle the racism that is woven into the very fabric of our national consciousness. President Obama, are you in?

Julianne Malveaux is a Washington, D.C.-based author and economist. She is the former president of Bennett College, also. She can be reached at [www.juliannemalveaux.com](http://www.juliannemalveaux.com).



### THIS STREETSCAPE'S IN OUR FUTURE

Research Parkway

Transportation planners for the Winston-Salem Urban Area Transportation Advisory Committee, the Piedmont Authority for Regional Transportation and the Winston-Salem Transit Authority need your input on a long range plan for improving our transportation system through 2040, called the Draft 2040 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP). The plan covers all facets of transportation, including highways and streets, mass transit, bike lanes, greenways, commercial transport, rail and air.

They are also seeking input on two related documents: the Draft Air Quality Conformity Determination Report, and the Draft Fiscal Years 2016-2025 Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program (MTIP).

You can review the documents and meet with staff at these locations:

- Jul 18, 10 am to 12 pm, Shallowford Square, 6550 Shallowford Rd, Lewisville, NC
- Jul 23, 5 pm to 7 pm, The Booe House, 5135 Sullivantown Rd, Walkertown, NC
- Jul 23, 4 pm to 7 pm, Village of Clemmons Town Hall, 3715 Clemmons Rd, Clemmons, NC
- Jul 28, 11 am to 2 pm, Clark Campbell Transportation Center, 100 W. Fifth Street, Winston-Salem, NC \*
- Jul 30, 4 pm to 6 pm, Tanglewood Farmers Market, 4061 Clemmons Road, Clemmons, NC
- Aug 8, 10 am to 12 pm, Dixie Classic Farmers Market, 421 W. 27th St, Winston-Salem, NC
- Aug 15, 10 am to 3 pm, Honeybee Festival, 702 W Mountain St, Kernersville, NC
- Aug 18, 10 am to 3 pm, Forsyth County Health Department, 201 N Chestnut St, Winston-Salem, NC \*

\*Spanish language translation available at these meetings

Drafts are available online at [www.dot.cityofws.org](http://www.dot.cityofws.org), and copies will be placed July 16 through August 20 at all town halls and public libraries in the urban area, at NC Dept. of Transportation Offices, 375 Silas Creek Pkwy, and at Suite 307 in the Stuart Municipal Building.

Come out and give your thoughts directly to DOT staff or send your thoughts via mail, fax or e-mail by August 20 to: Fredrick Haith, Winston-Salem Dept. of Transportation, P.O. Box 2511, Winston-Salem, NC 27102, 336-748-3370 (fax), [fredrickh@cityofws.org](mailto:fredrickh@cityofws.org)

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