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OPINION

Vast wealth isn't the only key to changing countless lives

You don't need to be a Warren Buffett to make an impact

Recently, the nation's wealthiest man, Warren Buffett, gave the philanthropic world a shot in the arm by pledging \$37.4 billion worth of stock from Berkshire Hathaway, the company he runs, to five charitable foundations.

He earmarked \$31 billion of that for foundations run by the second wealthiest man — Microsoft founder Bill Gates.

Buffett told reporters that he hoped his actions would encourage others to follow suit. "I would hope that a few of them would pick up on this model; I think it's a sensible model," he told reporters after making the announcement in June.

Although African Americans tend to associate the concept of philanthropy with the very rich, our community has historically been a generous and

giving one — whether it be time or money. The civil rights movement of the 1960s didn't start with the March on Washington or in some corporate boardroom. It began in church basements and living rooms across the nation. Civil rights crusaders didn't rely upon the wealthy to help them out: They built their own network of philanthropy.

In 1999, the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research found that 54.4 percent of blacks gave money to charity from 1988 to 1996, compared to 75.2 percent of whites. Given that the net worth of Whites exceeds that of blacks by more than 10 times, it stands to reason that our community is less able to give as much financially.

But what is most telling about the generosity of our community is that African-Americans took the top spot on the 1997 National Survey of Philanthropy and Civic Renewal's civic engagement index, followed by whites and then Hispanics. When blacks don't have the money to give, they give their time and energy.

Since the early 1970s, ethnic philanthropy has taken great steps — at least financially, thanks in part to improved economic situations for blacks. From 1973 to 2004, the per-capita income of blacks increased 70 percent from \$2,521 (\$9,284 in 2004 dollars) to \$15,758, while that of whites rose 57 percent, from \$4,361 (\$16,060 in 2004 dollars) to \$25,203.

In the African-American community, charitable giving begins early. Blacks tend to begin volunteer work during high school or college and go from there. They often take on leadership roles in organizing events, joining boards. Their ability to make contributions is often combined with a willingness to leverage money through fund-raising events, matching gifts and donations from firms etc.

The purpose of our community's philanthropy tends to be to "create pathways" for people excluded from access and opportunity, according to a 2004 survey of minority philanthropists by the City University of New York's Center on Philanthropy and Civil Society. Blacks also tend to prefer giving to institutions they have personal ties to than organized philanthropies, the center found.

The 21st century is going to be one of great demographic change for the United States. By the end of the century and maybe even earlier, our nation is expected to be the first without a majority ethnic group, demographers predict. Things are going to be very different. Whether the change will be good remains to be seen and depends on us as a nation.

If the current divide between whites and ethnic minorities isn't narrowed, our democracy will be in peril. That's why we need to invest in our future generations by financially supporting organizations and programs that seek to shrink economic and political and education gaps between the races.

As the nation becomes more multicultural where no ethnic or racial group dominates, our community will need to continue and strengthen our commitment to "civic tithing" and take it into new directions.

The first phase of the civil rights movement back in the 1960s set us on the road of political empowerment. Now, it's time for the second phase — economic empowerment. And we must adjust our gaze to the younger generation of donors. According to the Center on Philanthropy study, these donors believe that access to financial power will close the remaining social, political and economic gaps that exist between whites and ethnic minorities in this country.

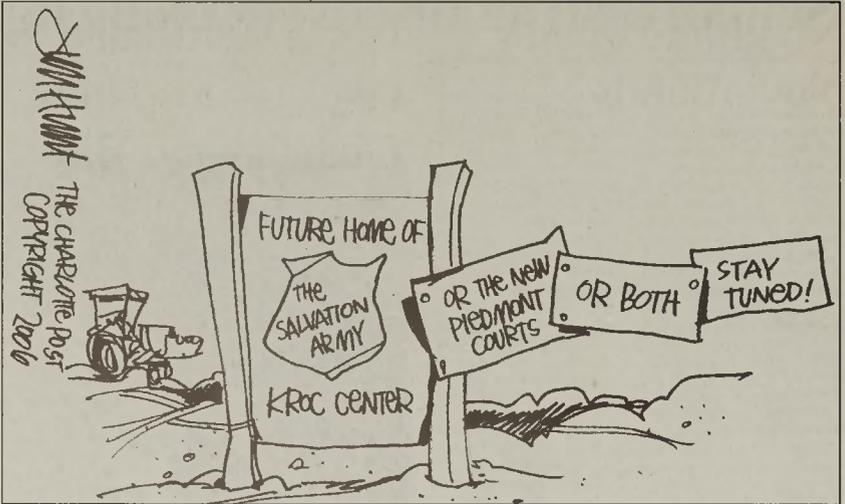
They have different priorities for their money than their older counterparts who helped finance the first phase of the civil rights movement in the 1960s. They're more interested in gaining access on Wall Street than marching on Washington. They tend to send their money to programs that emphasize individual attainment and employ a business model of operation.

So let Warren Buffett serve as a role model. You don't have to be rolling in money for your contribution to make an impact. Let history be an example of that.

As author Isaac Asimov once wrote, "No sensible decision can be made any longer without taking into account not only the world as it is, but the world as it will be."

Our community must embrace change if we want to stand upon the shoulders of our predecessors and achieve our dreams.

MARC MORIAL is president and CEO of the National Urban League.



Bush's bigotry of high expectations

George W. Bush — or his speechwriters — understands the indignity of slavery and its impact on the United States. I was at the NAACP's national convention last week when Bush said:

"For nearly 200 years, our nation failed the test of extending the blessings of liberty to African-Americans. Slavery was legal for nearly a hundred years, and discrimination legal in many places for nearly a hundred years more. Taken together, the record placed a stain on America's founding, a stain that we have not yet wiped clean."



GEORGE E. CURRY

"When people talk about America's founders they mention the likes of Washington and Jefferson and Franklin and Adams. Too often they ignore another group of founders — men and women and children who did not come to America of their free will, but in chains. These founders literally helped build our country. They chopped the wood, they built the homes, they tilled the fields, and they reaped the harvest. They raised children of others, even though their own children had been ripped away and sold to strangers. These founders were denied the most basic birthright, and that's freedom."

"... They toppled Jim Crow through simple deeds: boarding a bus, walking along the road, showing up peacefully

at courthouses or joining in prayer and song. Despite the sheriff's dogs, and the jailer's scorn, and the hangman's noose, and the assassin's bullets, they prevailed."

Sitting there in the Washington, D.C. Convention Center, I remembered hearing Bush utter similar remarks at the National Urban League's 2003 convention in Pittsburgh.

"Recently, on my trip to Africa, I visited Goree Island in Senegal, where for centuries, men and women were delivered and sorted and branded and shipped. It's a haunting place, a reminder of mankind's capacity for cruelty and injustice," he said at the time. "Yet, Goree Island is also a reminder of the strength of the human spirit, and the capacity for good to overcome evil. The men and women who boarded slave ships on that island and wound up in America endured the separation of their families, the brutality of their oppressors, and the indifference of laws that regarded them only as articles of commerce. Still, the spirit of Africans in America did not break. All the generations of oppression under the laws of man could not crush the hope of freedom. And by a plan known only to Providence, the stolen sons and daughters of Africa helped to awake the conscience of America. The very people traded into slavery helped to set America free."

The problem with Bush is that he uses all the right

words while, more often than not, doing the wrong thing. Let's take the landmark University of Michigan affirmative action cases. On Jan. 15, 2003 — Dr. Martin Luther King's birthday — Bush announced his opposition to two Michigan programs, one for undergraduates and one for the law school.

Again, there was the studied compassion: "I strongly support diversity of all kinds, including racial diversity in higher education..."

Then the real George W. came out: "At their core, the Michigan policies amount to a quota system that unfairly rewards or penalizes perspective students based solely on their race."

A Supreme Court dominated by Republican appointees, disagreed. The court upheld the University of Michigan's law school program while striking down a more numbers-oriented undergraduate admission program.

Even more disturbing than Bush's duplicity is his willingness to manipulate or misstate the facts.

In announcing his opposition to the Michigan programs, Bush said: "At the undergraduate level, African American students and some Hispanic students and Native American students receive 20 points out of a maximum of 150, not because of any academic achievement or life experience, but solely because they are African American, Hispanic or Native American."

"To put this in perspective, a perfect SAT score is worth

only 12 points in the Michigan system. Students who accumulate 100 points are generally admitted, so those 20 points awarded solely based on race are often the decisive factor."

To be blunt, Bush lied about the Michigan undergraduate point system. It was not restricted to people of color. Bush neglected to note that 20 points was awarded to any disadvantaged student, regardless of his or her color. He did not mention that 20 points were automatically awarded to all scholarship athletes. He ignored the provision that allows the university's provost the discretion to give 20 points to any student.

He also was disingenuous in discussing the SAT points. Yes, a perfect SAT score was worth only 12 points. And that's because the University of Michigan gave greater weight to grades than standardized tests. A straight-A student, for example, was awarded 80 points, more than seven times the weight given for a perfect SAT or ACT score. Even C-students were awarded 40 points under this system.

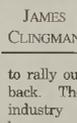
In discussing African-Americans, Bush likes to talk about the bigotry of low expectations. I am more concerned about the bigotry of people for whom we have high expectations.

GEORGE E. CURRY is editor-in-chief of the NAPA News Service and BlackPressUSA.com. To contact Curry or to book him for a speaking engagement, go to his Web site, www.georgecurry.com.

Tragedy/comedy of hair-raising losses

The saddest part about this issue is the fact that we could see this one coming.

Now that it has hit its mark, right between our eyes, maybe the pain will be severe enough not only to get our attention but also to hold our attention long enough for us to rally our forces and fight back. The black hair care industry has, once again, become a hot topic among folks other than Koreans.



JAMES CLINGMAN

Now that an investigative documentary has been produced about the industry, obviously shocking black people once again, maybe some of us will resolve to do something to reclaim at least a portion of that vertical market. After all, the last time I checked, no one is using black hair care products except black folks.

The documentary discloses information, none of which was news to BHCI insiders, about the ownership of stores and distribution of hair products sought and bought by black people. The main point of the report centered on the fact that Koreans own and control, and I do not mean con-

trol, the overwhelming majority of the distribution and sale of black hair care products, which includes shampoos, conditioners, oils and creams, and those fashionable hairpieces our sisters love to wear.

Some black folks have seen this coming since the 1980s, especially if in light of the infamous but prophetic comments by then Revlon executive Irving Botner and the subsequent "funeral" and boycott of Revlon Products headed by Jesse Jackson. Man, where is Jesse now? We sure could use another funeral.

Nevertheless, as we looked on, and in some cases collaborated in the demise of black control of an industry that brags about Madame Walker, Annie Turbo-Malone, Anthony Overton, S.B. Fuller, and many other black hair care pioneers, the Koreans have used the past 20 years or so to build their businesses and create wealth for their families. Oh yeah, we still get to look good, and we are quite willing to pay for it, but is looking good better than "doing good" — for yourself?

The three questions again come to mind: What? So what? Now what? At this stage, since we have ignored

the "so what?" stage, we must deal with the "now what?" What are black people going to do, if anything, about this situation? On the video, there are calls for boycotts, which could be done simply by buying your products at black owned stores that get their products through black owned channels of distribution. Oops, I almost forgot; we don't have very many of those, do we?

But, we do have some, so let's start there. We also have a relatively new organization, called BOBSA, the Black Owned Beauty Supply Association (see bobsa.org or call 650 357-0073). Every venture begins with a first step, so our "now what?" step must be taken from where we are, with what we have, and with whoever will go. If black people are serious about slowing down the Korean Black Hair Care Express and revving up an economic engine of our own in this industry, we had better get busy buying from one another, expanding the black channels of distribution we already have, creating investment pools to build warehouses and wholesale facilities, and all the other things it take to become "players" once again.

BOBSA is advocating for

those changes and more, but it needs help from you, the consumer, on two fronts. BOBSA needs you to become a working member and supporter, and it needs you to commit to redirecting your spending. In addition, if you are serious, you should locate every black hair care products store in your area and ask the owners to support BOBSA by becoming members. From that effort a nationwide database can be developed and posted on BOBSA's Web site, and no matter where you are in the country, you can find a black owned store from which to purchase your products.

Now these suggestions are not coming from an expert in the industry; there are folks who know much more about this than I. Call upon them and get their ideas; use them as consultants to help recapture a portion of YOUR market. Do everything it takes to hold on to what is probably the last vestige of an industry developed and maintained by black people.

Let's write a happy ending to this tragicomedie. One more thought: Don't envy the hair that Brandy wears; buy your own, from your own.

JAMES CLINGMAN is a professor at the University of Cincinnati.