

An appropriate celebration of Child's Day

In President George W. Bush's May 31st National Child's Day proclamation, he pledged to provide our children "with the care, protection and education they deserve."

He also called upon "citizens to celebrate National Child's Day with the appropriate ceremonies and activities." Over the last six and a half years, I have heard the president make similar fine expressions of his commitment to children. However where I grew up my parents and community co-



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parents drew distinctions between saying and doing.

The president has talked a lot about children but his record offers little to celebrate as he leaves millions of children behind in his policies and budget choices.

Our children have lost ground during Mr. Bush's time in office. The United States lags behind most industrialized democracies in infant mortality and providing health insurance to all children. Nine million children in America are without health insurance.

As Congress considers reauthorization of the State Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), Mr. Bush has indicated that he does not intend to support increased funding levels that would extend health care coverage to the millions of children currently uninsured. In fact, his budget would result in one to two million currently insured children losing CHIP coverage. At the Children's Defense Fund we urge the President to go beyond support for CHIP and embrace the provisions of the All Healthy Children Act (S. 1564/H.R. 1688) that would guarantee health care for all children and pregnant women.

The president should take action to protect children where he has fallen short in other areas. The Bush administration must marshal the vast resources of the government to stem the flow of tens of thousands of impoverished children through America's cradle to prison pipeline leading to the voluminous incarceration of poor black and Latino children and teens. The prison pipeline is made up of an array of social and economic factors including the lack of access to health and mental health care, poor schools and broken child welfare and juvenile justice systems.

These factors can be diminished by more effective and increased national investments in children. In addition to ensuring that all children receive health care, the president needs to back up his no child left behind legislation with resources to increase the pool of teachers and reduce class sizes. He needs to make Head Start and Early Head Start available to all eligible children so they have a chance to get ready for school. And he can order the Justice Department to eliminate racial inequities in the administration of juvenile justice.

President Bush's response to the Hurricane Katrina disaster in 2005 was appalling. Thousands of children continue to experience unimaginable levels of loss, trauma and dislocation. As recently as March this year, about 100,000 children along the Gulf Coast still did not live where they did before the hurricane struck. Too many remain packed into "temporary," overcrowded FEMA trailers that can be blown away in the next big storm and are not safe and healthy long term places for children to live. Thousands of children have fallen desperately behind educationally while qualified teachers, textbooks and supplies are in drastically short supply.

The president promised bold action in the immediate aftermath of the storm and in his own words, committed "to help the citizens of the Gulf Coast to overcome this disaster, put their lives back together, and rebuild their communities." These words are a faint echo to Katrina's children who are still waiting for their country to come to their rescue.

When he took office, Mr. Bush declared himself a "compassionate conservative." The American people are still waiting for a clear demonstration of what compassion means in that context. It seems that Mr. Bush has not yet grasped that as the president of our nation and head of the government, just and competent governance is required.

We see a president who appears before backdrops of uniformed soldiers and Marines, law enforcement officers and prescreened audiences of loyalists to eliminate the risk that his policies might be questioned. These carefully orchestrated set pieces are emblematic of a president who is insulated from some of our nation's most pressing social concerns like the millions of children who must go without health and mental health care, proper nutrition, quality education and adequate housing.

He doesn't seem to be aware of the poor children who grow up on an uneven playing field with scant opportunity to develop and thrive. Surely in a \$2.9 trillion federal budget, the president can find the means to make children safe from the terrors of poverty, sickness, hunger and homelessness and secure America's future.

Every dollar invested in children is returned many times over in the development of productive, contributing adults who raise families and build stronger communities. If the President would practice what he preaches and provide some national leadership in that direction, we might have more to celebrate next National Child's Day.

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We don't live on the sunny side of economics street

Personal money affairs should start and end with individual choices

Today, it's impossible to be a well-informed citizen without at least some knowledge of how governmental economic policies can affect our ability to earn a living and provide for our own future.

The Federal Reserve chairman is arguably the most powerful figure in the global economy and the effects of the popularized "trickle-down economics" theory never reaches or benefits you or your neighborhood. His decisions directly affect our financial lives in a way no other public figure can match. He is a policy maker more powerful than the President of the United States, yet information about the man himself, his beliefs, and his actions inside the Federal Reserve can be hard to come by for the average reader.



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Don't turn full responsibility for your personal economic affairs over to a stranger. The Federal Reserve chairman is someone you only know from news media and sound bites that you only see when flipping through channels on your remote control. The buck must stop with YOU.

African-Americans live in a nation that may be considered the world's fastest-paced society. Many liken it to the "microwave" society that consumes our thoughts and redirects our focus. The populace in this society is hard-wired to be able to access every impulse and instantly satisfy every whimsical desire. It makes sense that it is this way—given that most (but not all) of us are descendants of folks who were unwillingly transported to this country and forcibly assigned to lives of complete servitude to better the lives of others at our peril. We were the "children of a lesser God" who (like so much livestock) served as "beasts of burden" to those who did not value our lives.

We live with the residual remnants of the perception of us as subordinate and inferior to this day.

Our problems are indeed large, but to the rest of the world, black people in the U.S. still live and work in better conditions than they do. No, this is not Darfur or the "Sunny Side of the Street" from an old song my grandmother used to play for me.

To quote Dr. Martin Luther King:

"He who starts behind in the great race of life must forever remain behind or run faster than the man in front. The demands of history require that we be as productive, as resourceful, and as responsible as the people who never had these (our historical) disadvantages."

Sometimes we move too fast for our own good or for the good of those around us. Caught up in a foot race through life, we race past the signals that are there to tell us what we need to do for ourselves or what our spouses, children, or friends need from us.

Psychologists know that manic (mentally erratic) behavior is often an avoidance tactic—a way of escaping our problems and the pain that accompanies them. To someone with manic tendencies, the stimulus of frenzied activity provides a protective shield from pain. We all know people who are like this to varying degrees, because we live in a manic society. To be more in touch with real life, we need to slow down. Some of us are beginning to do just that.

Moving fast comes naturally to us. It feels good—whether we are pushing the legal speed limit down the highway, racing downhill with a football, or charging up to make a three-pointer.

Eugene McDaniel's song made famous by Les McCann and Eddie Harris "Trying to make it real, compared to what?"

We need to slow down, and some of us are beginning to do just that. We must become our own boss!

When it comes to charting your course for financial success, I also believe strongly in self-reliance. Don't let the buck stop somewhere else.

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Imus controversy highlights need for media diversity

Back in April, the controversy over racially and sexually insensitive remarks made by radio shock jock Don Imus toward Rutgers University's women's basketball squad made all too clear the lack of sensitivity accorded people of color over the nation's airwaves and the lack of diversity among the broadcast media's ranks.

In a nation, where 33 percent of the population is of color that has seen the civil rights movement open doors for minorities in corporate America, government and the halls of academia, the picture reflected on the public airwaves is far from realistic.



MARC
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"Cable news remains an overwhelmingly white and male preserve. The Don Imus controversy put a momentary dent in this pattern as a result of the increase in appearances by African Americans over that week - but only a dent, and not a particularly large one at that," concludes a report by the Washington, D.C.-based media watchdog group Media Matters. "When an issue involving gender and race/ethnicity dominates the news, the cable networks do bring on a more diverse lineup of guests than they ordinarily do. The question, then, is why their guest lists are so overwhelmingly white and male the rest of the time?"

The group, which monitored cable news network shows in April, found that even during the week of the Imus controversy, whites - especially men - tended to dominate. They accounted for 54 percent (CNN) to 72 percent (Fox News Channel) of guests booked. That's down from the week before, when whites accounted for 71 percent (CNN) to 93 percent (MSNBC). After the Imus incident, white representation, which fell during the controversy, made a comeback of sorts to a range of 74 percent (CNN) to 82 percent (MSNBC).

What is telling is that minority representation on MSNBC, which simulcasted Imus, skyrocketed more than 700 percent to 30 percent of guest appearances during the week of the controversy - compared to the week before. After Imus, the percentage settled down to 14 percent.

It's not any better on the Sunday morning talk shows, either. Media Matters found in its "If It's Sunday, It's Still Conservative" report. The study follows up on research conducted by the National Urban League in our 2005 Sunday Morning Apartheid report, which found that only 8 percent of guests were black over an 18-month period in 2004 and 2005.

The Media Matters report, which covered guest appearances in 2005 and 2006, found that Whites tended to outnumber minorities by 7 to 1, and that two out of every three guests were white men. At NBC's "Meet the Press," white men accounted for more than three quarters of guests followed by CBS News' "Face the Nation" with 72 percent. "Fox News Sunday" had the "best" track record with 62 percent.

The picture at America's daily newspapers is a little bit brighter in terms of newsmen employment of minorities but less than stellar. Nearly 7,800 minority journalists - or 13.62 percent of all full-time journalists - worked in the nation's newsrooms in 2006, down slightly from 13.87 percent in 2005, according to the American Society of Newspaper Editor's annual newsroom census.

It is only the second decline to have been observed since 1978, when the organization, which helps newsmen increase their diversity to better reflect the communities they serve, began conducting the survey. Then, minority journalists made up nearly 4 percent of the total newsroom workforce.

"Diversity isn't just about numbers, it's about making our news reports better," said ASNE President Dave Zeek in a press release accompanying the survey. "Diverse staffs lead to better journalism."

The number of newspapers with no minorities on their full-time staff grew by 15 - from 377 to 392 - but a majority of them had small (10,000 or less) circulations. Of newspapers with more than 500,000 circulation, 17 percent of full-time journalists are minorities. The percentage rises to 22 percent for dailies under 500,000 but over 250,000, and 27 percent for those over 100,000 but under 250,000.

When the National Urban League released our Sunday Morning Apartheid report in 2005, we encouraged cable and network outlets to take positive and productive steps to provide their viewers a broader perspective of public policy issues. Since then, not a lot has been done - until after Imus.

It shouldn't take an unfortunate controversy such as the one surrounding Imus' insensitive remarks for news executives to understand the importance of diversity to the journalism process for the constituents it serves.

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We're running away from blackness, or at least trying to

As they say in New York, "Fa-get about it!" It's sad to see some of our brothers and sisters making every attempt to deny who and what they are.

We hear it in their statements, we see it in their actions, and we feel it in our relationships with one another. Plain and simply, some black folks are trying to run away from their blackness. They do it in all sorts of ways, but



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it's mainly to appease white people in hope they will see a "different kind of black

person." That's how O.J. Simpson used to be characterized, before they showed him the doorway back to his blackness - even though he still has not taken the hint. Now it's being said about Barack Obama: "he is not black in the usual way," said one white commentator.

We have some serious psychological problems, obvious vestiges of our conditioning and maintenance over several generations, but trying to run away from who we are is the height of madness for black people; besides, it's a rife with futility. It is also shameful considering the legacy left to us by our forebears. Are they lying cold in their graves now, having sacrificed themselves for our true

freedom, for a cause from which we are now trying to distance ourselves?

Obama's statement, "There is no black America" is indicative of a fear that we will be alienated from white people if we do not give deference to them by suggesting that we are really not black, but rather we are "neutral." It seems to me they would want us to be who we are rather than pretend and play silly games. When it's all said and done, they will make their decisions about us based on their respective social paradigms and parameters anyway. So why are we scared? Why try to run away from your blackness?

Obama tells blacks not to vote for him because he is

black, which I am sure is highly appreciated by his corporate donors and the Washington status quo. It is also a very condescending statement to make and suggest black people aren't sophisticated enough to decide based on qualifications.

On second thought, that may indeed be the case. We gave in to Clarence Thomas because he was black, didn't we. But have you ever heard white candidates tell white folks not to vote for them simply because they are white? We always have to make other people feel comfortable, don't we? Obama knows full well that millions of blacks will vote for him simply because he is black, but to tell us not to do so brings

credence to the contention that he really isn't "black in the usual way."

If being black doesn't mean anything, if there is no black America, why do black folks get excited about Bob Johnson, Tiger Woods, Serena and Venus, Oprah, Shani Davis (Olympic speed skater), Dominique Dawes, and Debbie Thomas? Why are we constantly discussing the possibility that Obama could be "the first" black president (John Hanson notwithstanding) if blackness means nothing in this country, or if it does not even exist? Why do we have an annual "State of Black America" report and forum?

Yes, Barack, there is a black America, and other

Americas too, just as there are 50 separate states rather than one country with no internal borders. Our problem is that we are merely emotional about it, which is why we still place so much value on "the first black."

Some black people are just too busy embracing diversity rather than embracing their blackness first. Who, other than black folks, do you hear promoting "diversity" and allowing themselves to be called "minorities?" Trying to run away from who we are is embarrassing, unconscionable, and cowardly. It also speaks volumes about our self-hate.

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