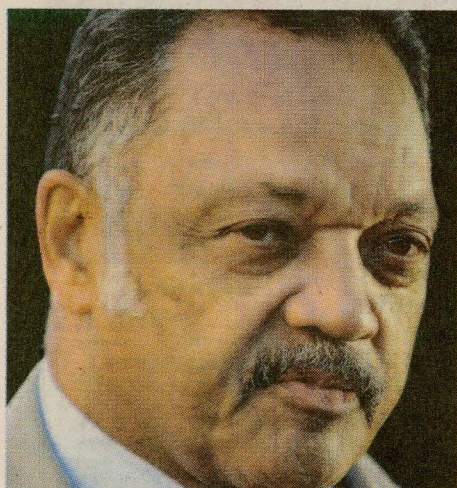


EDITORIALS • COMMENTS • OPINIONS

President Obama Is On A Winning Streak



By Jesse L. Jackson, Sr.
NNPA Columnist

The presidency is a bit like a baseball season. Players go through streaks and slumps, good days and bad days. Teams rack up wins and losses. It is only over the course of the long season that champions emerge, their record of accomplishment finally coming clear.

As President Obama's eight years heads into its final stretch, his accomplishments are becoming clear, rising above the daily skirmishes, wins and losses. As the first African American president, Obama was always going to be an historic figure. But increasingly, it is becoming clear that he will be remembered as a significant president not simply for winning office, but

for what he accomplished while holding it. The first inklings of the results are reflected in recent polls showing that 50 percent of Americans now think the Obama presidency has been a success — an impressive number given the bitter partisan divides of our politics.

Economically, the president inherited an economy that was in free fall, losing hundreds of thousands of jobs a month. Now he presides over an economy that has created 12 million jobs, witnessed the fastest economic growth in a decade, and sets a record each month for the longest consecutive months of jobs growth. And the U.S. recovery has far outstripped that of Europe. And this was accomplished despite the unrelenting obstruction of the Republican opposition that committed itself from day one to opposing everything Obama attempted.

Health care reform — with the Affordable Care Act reaffirmed once more in the Supreme Court — has provided a big step forward. Some 15 million Americans have gained insurance, even as health care costs have risen at the lowest levels this century. And that despite the fact that partisan opposition led about half of the states to oppose expansion of Medicaid, denying millions from protection.

On the environment, the president is the most important leader since...well, since Nixon. His stimulus plan provided a

major boost to renewable energy. He used regulation and executive order — particularly the gas mileage standards and the soon to come carbon emission standards — to boost energy conservation and limit carbon emissions. He will carry a strong hand into the round of climate negotiations in Paris.

On immigration, the Congress has stymied comprehensive reform. But by executive order, the president has provided some hope for the millions left in the margins.

On social issues, the president has been more observer than actor. Yet on his watch, the Supreme Court has ratified gay marriage. After the publicity about police shootings garnered attention, a bipartisan turn against mass incarceration has gained momentum with the Justice Department weighing in.

On economic inequality, President Obama used his bully pulpit to put the issue in the front of the American people. In the budgetary wars, he has succeeded in raising taxes on the rich. He sought, with little success, to increase investment in the most vulnerable. Inequality has grown more extreme on his watch, but any hopes of redressing it were blocked by Republican opposition to any and all efforts to take on the rigged rules that feed the inequality.

On foreign policy, the president's effort to extricate us from the sectarian wars

in the Persian Gulf have been largely frustrated. Troops are going back into Iraq, now to take on the threat posed by ISIS. He has emerged as a defender of presidential prerogatives in national security. His administration has continued to police the world, while deploying drones across the Middle East. By opening relations with Cuba, the president has created the basis for a new start with our neighbors in this hemisphere.

Much, of course, remains to be done. The president remains wedded to the failed trade policies of the past decades. There has been no clear policy for urban development or for targeting the most vulnerable communities. Government has grown more corrupted, not less. Big money dominates our politics more than ever before. The president's education policy with its emphasis on high stakes testing has been a disappointment.

But this president has faced unprecedented obstruction, insult and venomous hatreds. He has more than survived; he has a record of accomplishment to be proud of. And has forged a potential majority political coalition that could insure — if its members show up at the voting booth — that reform accelerates rather than retreats.

Church Burnings Should Ignite More Protests



By Julianne Malveaux
NNPA Columnist

It's possible that lightening 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 AME Church in Charleston, S.C.?

President Obama spoke to the historical importance of Black churches when he eulogized Rev. Clementa

Pinkney. The church, he said, "is and always has 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 AME 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.

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 who climbed up a pole and snatched the Confederate flag from a pole outside the South Carolina statehouse. She

didn't wait for Gov. Nikki Haley to take the Confederate flag down; she was too fired up to wait. After all, Haley's post-massacre announcement that the flag should not fly on statehouse grounds is symbolic until the South Carolina legislature 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 symbolize 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?

Confederate Traitors Don't Deserve To Be Honored



By George E. Curry
NNPA Columnist

Can you image waving a flag that honors Benedict Arnold, a name synonymous with treason?

How about traveling to work and back on Aldrich Ames Boulevard, a tribute to the CIA mole who secretly worked for the Russians?

Should we erect a statue of Robert Hanssen, the FBI computer and wiretapping expert who spent most of his career spying for the Soviet Union and Russia, in the hallway of the Capitol in Washington, D.C.?

Do you favor naming public schools attended mostly by Jews after Fritz Kuhn to honor the German who lived in the U.S. and was in charge of the famous U.S. Nazi group, the German-American Bund?

If you are repulsed by the thought of honoring those traitors, you should be

equally indignant at the thought of erecting statues and naming streets and schools after Confederate traitors.

Make no mistake about it: Those who declared war on the Union were traitors, defined as "a person who is not loyal to his or her own country, friends, etc."

Eleven Southern states broke from the Union for the same reason.

Writing in his book, *The Creation of Confederate Nationalism: Ideology and Identity in the Civil War South*, Drew Gilpin Faust observed, "leaders of the secession movement across the South cited slavery as the most compelling reason for southern independence."

Alexander Stephens, in what became known as the Cornerstone Speech, said on March 21, 1861 in Savannah, Ga., "The new constitution has put at rest, forever, all the agitating questions relating to our peculiar institution — African slavery as it exists amongst us — the proper status of the negro in our form of civilization. This was the immediate cause of the late rupture and present revolution."

He explained, "[The Confederate] 'its corner-stone rests upon the great truth, that the negro is not equal to the white man; that slavery — subordination to the superior race — is his natural and normal condition. This, our new government, is the first, in the history of the world, based upon this great physical, philosophical, and moral truth.'"

Theses historical facts notwithstanding

ing, a majority of Americans — 57 percent — view the Confederate flag as a symbol of Southern pride rather than racism, according to a recent CNN poll.

It gets more interesting when the numbers are broken down by race. Of Whites polled, only 25 percent view the Confederate flag as a symbol of racism. However, 72 percent of Blacks associate the flag with racism.

It is time to bring down the Confederate flag of hate, but we shouldn't stop there. We should remove the monuments and tributes to the Civil War traitors from public buildings and streets. If Robert J. Bentley, the Republican governor of Alabama, can voluntarily remove four Confederate flags from the Capitol grounds in Montgomery and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) can recommend that a statue of Kentucky-born Jefferson Davis be removed from the state Capitol, it is time to remove the tributes to Confederate leaders from the U.S. Capitol.

Visitors to the Capitol are greeted by towering statues of 11 former Confederate leaders, including Confederate President Jefferson Davis, Vice President Alexander H. Stephens and Gen. Robert E. Lee.

Rep. John Lewis (D-Ga.), a civil rights icon, said it's time for the statues to be removed.

He told the Associated Press, "Young children, school children, walk by these statues, and those of us who serve in the

Congress, we have to get our own house in order ... We have to have a cleansing in this place."

There is still cleansing to be done at the state level.

Despite the removal the Confederate flags from the Capitol grounds in Alabama, for example, the state annually celebrates Confederate Memorial Day, Jefferson Davis' birthday, and honors Robert E. Lee on the same day it observes Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday.

A large statue of Jefferson Davis on the Capitol grounds overlooks Dexter Avenue, where Dr. King pastored his first church. The Confederate Monument is still on the grounds and a star still marks the spot where Jefferson Davis took the oath as president of the Confederate states.

Mississippi also combines the birthdays of Dr. King and Robert E. Lee, observes Confederate Memorial Day on the last Monday of April and combines national observance of Memorial Day with Jefferson Davis' birthday as a state holiday.

In addition to Alabama and Mississippi, Confederate Memorial Day is also observed as a state holiday in Texas, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina and South Carolina.

Let the cleansing begin. Like Maj. General William T. Sherman, let's march though Dixie and the rest of the nation until we rid the United States of tributes to traitors.

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