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OPINION

Change we have to believe in



— *Editor's note: Tanya Amador-Daigle has reporting for Florida Weekly on the presidential election. She has a unique perspective on the primaries and the process for choosing a candidate, having traveled the country reporting on primaries and caucuses for the Purple States project. To learn more about Purple States go, to www.purplestates.tv.*

Last week, America made history by electing Barack Obama, our first African American president. Oprah Winfrey was "vibrating" and Michael Moore poured out "tears of joy and relief." Across the United States, supporters of Mr. Obama threw celebration parties and felt a renewed sense of hope.

The impact of this election has been global. In Mr. Obama, Japan, revelers chanted, "Yes We Can." In Kenya, officials declared the next day a public holiday. Foreign leaders lined up to congratulate our new leader, including French President Nicolas Sarkozy and Afghan President Hamid Karzai.

Even Sen. John McCain acknowledged the magnitude of the win, saying, "This is an historic election, and I recognize the special significance it has for African Americans and for the special pride that must be theirs tonight."

The impact of the outcome of this election is truly extraordinary, even if you don't agree with the winner's policies. Never before has a candidate stimulated not just a nation, but the entire globe, friends and enemies alike.

At the risk of sounding like a party-pooper, I think the honeymoon is already over. As the dust begins to settle I wonder about the man himself. I think Barack Obama must be crazy. Why? Because he has just accepted the position of the most difficult job in the world at a time when it seems like the sky is falling. When I think of all the hurdles he will have to overcome and the difficult decisions he will have to make, I don't envy him.

It seems that demands from foreign leaders have been pouring in. The Bush administration has plans to create a missile shield in Eastern Europe, something that sounds to me like it came right out of a sci-fi movie. Russian President Dmitry Medvedev has threatened that if President-Elect Obama goes through with this plan, Russia will place warheads on the Polish border.

Israel has warned Mr. Obama's willingness to talk to Iran will be seen as a weakness in the Middle East and Afghanistan is demanding that Mr. Obama change air strike strategies against the Taliban in order to avoid civilian casualties.

Then there's Iraq. What will President Obama do first? Put more troops in Afghanistan or bring the troops home from Iraq? Either way, we still have troops at war, no? North Korea and Iran are still a big question mark. Mr. Obama's idea of sitting down and talking to rogue nations is admirable. But will his strategy work? Or will his hand be forced to make tougher decisions?

These are the questions that keep me up at night.

The list is daunting. Yet, with all the foreign policy negotiating that will have to be done, as an American, at the top of my register is the economy. As the stock market continues to suffer, homeowners continue to foreclose, and the auto industry stands

outside the Oval office with their hand out, I wonder what Mr. Obama will do about taxes. All throughout his campaign he said he would give tax breaks to all but the rich, but how will he pay for all of the things he has said he will do? How will he pay for the economic stimulus package that he wants to implement immediately? Will China buy-out some of the debt that the package will add to the already mounting debt caused by the bailout and the housing market?

Besides the footage of the Rev. Jesse Jackson quietly weeping during Mr. Obama's acceptance speech, there was some other interesting footage. Some of which made me question what some of Mr. Obama's supporters really believe he can do for them. For instance there was a woman who said, "I won't have to worry about putting gas in my car. I won't have to worry about paying my mortgage. If I help him, he's gonna help me." Hmmm, what are Americans really expecting him to do?

Now that we have a new President selected. We now have a whole new batch of unknowns. In the beginning, President Elect Obama ran his campaign as an extreme leftist. Gradually, he moved more to the middle. So much that many people thought there wasn't much difference between himself and McCain. Many said he did it to win the election. That may be true, but now that he has been elected, I think he will remain in the middle out of necessity. The outcome of the popular vote proved that there are still a lot of Americans who reside on the right. President Obama will have to heed them as well, even with a Democratic majority in Congress.

The bottom line is that our country needs President Obama to succeed. The fate of our country depends on it. So, congratulations Mr. Obama, my thoughts and prayers are with you, sir. ■

GUEST OPINION

A new president will not solve our problems

BY DENNY GRIMES

Special to Florida Weekly

Today is Tuesday, Nov. 4, Election Day, and I am writing this from Wasilla, Alaska, just a few miles from Sarah Palin's home.

I'm here because a good friend of mine, who happens to be a very good friend of Sarah Palin, invited my wife and I and several other couples from around the country to an election party. Traveling 4,000 miles for a party may be hard to rationalize, but so is flying to the opposite coast to root for your team during an important away game. The trip seems worth it after a victory, but it feels twice as long when you return home, minus the "w." I will soon know how long my return trip will feel.

For a small town, there is plenty of excitement, hope and anticipation in air cold enough to make a Green Bay Packer fan think twice about going outside. In spite of that, residents line the streets to support the hometown gal who is making it big. I'm sure the same was going on in three other towns across the country.

Important decisions will be made today, but the most important decision for our country and its citizens will be made after the polls close. Who we elect to run our country is not as important as who we choose to run our lives. Each of us, regardless of political affiliation, should acknowledge and embrace something that is quickly disappearing from our society, and that is the art of taking personal responsibility for

our lives.

Government doesn't have enough teats to suckle everyone. If you think I'm siding with a particular party, you're wrong. I don't care if the party is painted blue or red or if the leader is black or white. If they advocate that government's purpose is a combination of surrogate parent, financial advisor, ATM and safety net for everyone from cradle to grave, that's where they lose my vote.

If we believe government can solve all our problems, then we have a problem, one that cannot be solved. Our national defense will protect us from an enemy outside our borders, but it won't protect us from the national dependence that is the enemy within.

Pre-election promises aren't new, and this year was no exception. What's surprising is the growing number of people who believe that there is such a thing as getting something for nothing. Pick a crisis, any crisis, and you will be able to trace the root cause of it to someone's selfish interests, greed, dishonesty or other character flaw.

For centuries, governments have tried unsuccessfully to legislate away the vices that we were born with. As we painfully know, leaders struggle with the same temptations, so, our form of government, the best the world has known, still boils down to imperfect people governing imperfect people.

Therefore, should we really be surprised when we read about scandals in Washington, corruption on Wall Street or improprieties at Fanny Mae? Who's to blame for these problems? Politicians like to point

fingers at greedy CEOs, dishonest investment brokers or even the opposing political party. All of the above may carry some blame, but they always fail to place some of the blame where it belongs — at the voters' feet. In other words, all of us are to blame.

A billion words were uttered throughout the campaign, and I'd bet less than 100 of them addressed our biggest problem, which is the need to take responsibility for our lives. Government can hand out \$2,000 debit cards until the attorneys are finished challenging the election, but that will not solve our problems if we continue living beyond our limits. Likewise, the \$700 billion bailout may be a shot in the arm, but it won't cure what ails us. The only cure for our market and economy is a good old-fashioned dose of individual honesty — a medicine government is fresh out of.

History has proven that people are sometimes given the leader they deserve, rather than the leader they need. By the time you read this, the election results will be known. Some will celebrate, others will not. However, who won is not as important as which leader we selected. Let's pray we selected the leader we need, one that is willing to be honest with us by telling us what we need to hear, not what we want to hear.

Keep the faith. ■

Denny Grimes is President of Denny Grimes and Company, Realtors. He can be reached with comments and questions at 239-689-7600 or denny@dennygrimes.com