

Having witnessed the inauguration of Barack Hussein Obama as our 44th President, we are all inspired to seek a better tomorrow not only for ourselves, but also for people throughout the world. While many Archons and Archousai braved the cold winds of our nation's Capitol with almost 2 million other people to witness personally this historic occasion, millions more observed it via television and around the world. Regardless of where it was viewed from, it was a breathtaking moment beyond our wildest dreams. Stated bluntly, it was as though centuries of oppression had melted into a river of freedom. Yet we did not lose perspective on the moment.

Of special note, two days prior to the inauguration, we sponsored a joint Boulé-100 Black Men of America reception where more than 250 Archons and Archousai celebrated along with members of the 100 Black Men of America and their guests in an unprecedented manner at the City Club of Washington, D.C. I personally thank Archon Al Dotson (Alpha Rho), chairman of the 100 Black Men of America, for this opportunity. As we celebrated, we also applauded Archon Eric Holder (Epsilon) as the U.S. Attorney General; Archon Ron Kirk (Alpha Epsilon) as the U.S. Trade Representative; and Archon Jeh Johnson (Zeta) as the General Counsel, Department of Defense. And, of course, today we are delighted that Archon Roland W. Burris (Beta) is sitting in the U.S. Senate occupying the seat vacated by President Obama. Beyond question, we are, indeed, "Boulé men doing great things!"

While inspired by our new president and his team, that joy is constrained by the knowledge of how much work we need to do back home. The plight of many of our young black males is a nightmare we cannot escape. We realize the change so eloquently advocated by President Obama is attainable only if we become more engaged. The cornerstone for meaningful change is our active engagement in the vehicle that generates sustainable change: public policy. Yes we can, and must, influence public policy if our young men and women are to achieve the greatness we see in President Obama.

We cannot allow the following to stand:

- Since 2000-2001, the murder rate of black teens has risen by a shocking 39 percent. These are mostly black boys between the ages of 14 and 17 killed by other black youth of similar ages.
- While most communities are seeing a decline in homicides, our African American neighborhoods are experiencing an increase in homicides, especially among juveniles.
- Today almost 70 percent of black children are born out of wedlock, and the poverty rate among black children exceeds 25 percent.

I, like you, believe we must act individually and collectively to prevent the further deterioration of the social fabric in far too many of our communities. Affecting public policy, the infrastructure upon which political, social and economic justice rely, is the best way forward. There are legislative measures pending, or soon to be, in Congress that are directed at issues of social and economic justice as well as with the plight of our young males. It is in this arena that the voice of the Boulé and others can, and should, be resounding loudly, clearly and in concert. One of the objectives of our Public Policy Committee, under the leadership of Archon Dennis Archer (Iota), is to enhance our voice in the marketplace of ideas. We must advocate for public poli-



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cies that actually have an impact on the lives of our youths so that they can extricate themselves from the ocean of violence and hopelessness and into that sea of voices reverberating the belief that "Yes, we can." With seven Archons in the Congress, the chairman of the Public Policy Committee will be meeting with them to see how we can best assist endeavors to impact crucial legislation.

Regardless of our individual accomplishments, it is insufficient for us to engage in self-congratulation while alluding to our collective influence and power if we are not, in fact, using our collective prominence to make a difference in the lives of the voiceless. We must constantly examine our relevance. To be sure our relevance is judged not by what we think of ourselves, but by what we actually do to enhance the lives of others.

We are delighted that President Obama is asserting bold leadership, but we will not sit idly by thinking he is the solution for our urban areas where hope is often a distant dream. As Archons of Sigma Pi Phi, we are uniquely equipped to join with our President in the public-policy arena, advocating for strategic and appropriate public policies that will fundamentally change our educational system and those other systems that deprive our young of the ability to compete in this global economy. Such advocacy is what distinguishes us as "Boulé men doing great things." Ω