

Don't Lose Hope!

A very disturbing CNN poll compared the expectations of those peering into the future at the dawn of 2000 with those of people looking forward into 2010.

The survey reported that in 1999, 85 percent of Americans were hopeful for their own future and 68 percent were hopeful for the world. Today, however, people surveyed said that only 69 percent were hopeful for their personal future, while only 51 percent had hope for the world.

There was something almost mystical about the nation's entry into the second millennium after the birth of Christ. I remember all the TV shows that speculated about massive **technology changes** along with the fear that everyone's computer could mysteriously crash—resulting in a national crisis.

Some religious leaders advocated storing food and creating bomb shelters. Other **spiritual leaders** believed that the earth would experience the “rapture,” as described in **Tim LaHaye** and Jerry Jenkins' blockbuster Left Behind series.

Surprisingly, the dramatic calendar milestone caused everyday people to think in big picture, visionary terms. From the boardroom to the janitor's storage closet and everywhere in between, we all expressed confidence in our technology, our business acumen and our American spirit.

We began the new millennium as though we were opening the Wild West or exploring outer space. We all had a sense of invincibility and a feeling that we could rise to any challenge. Since 2000, a lot has changed. We have experienced a few setbacks. Things like the Sept. 11, 2001 **terrorist attacks**, Hurricane Katrina, endless political scandals, the bank bailouts, the American auto industry bailouts and double-digit unemployment have all challenged our national self

concept.

It's obvious that the delicate balance of government, business interests and our educational system must be recalibrated. Further, rigid ideological approaches to our problems are just fueling vitriol and blame shifting. Our focus today is much more mundane and personal than the global or generational perspective 10 years ago. We are concerned about how to keep our jobs, pay the mortgage and survive the economic downswing. The pressures of the times have caused a reopening of two age-old American divisions of class and race.

Recent studies show that we currently do not have the hopeful feeling we had just a year ago in terms of solving the race problem in the nation. In addition, a lot of folks are developing a growing resentment against both Wall Street and the major business engines of the nation.

Our focus today should return to the very core values that have made America great: personal vision and achievement; a commitment to both freedom and justice and the belief that the best man or woman will be received and celebrated in business, politics and the professions.

Let me take a minute to address the issue of how you and I personally change our world.

Sandra Bullock is quoted as saying that she had finally met a Christian who "walks the walk", when she met Leigh Anne Tuohy, the subject of the blockbuster movie *The Blind Side*. Tuohy's desire for the movie is not fame and fortune but that the story might inspire more people to begin to make a difference. She acknowledges that many people cannot bring a child into their home as she did, but people can find something they can do well and change the world around them.

Another person who made a difference is Fannie Lou Hamer. In 1962, this African-American woman went to the courthouse in Montgomery County, Miss., to demand her constitutional right

to vote. She, and the others with her, were jailed and beaten by the police. This defiant act of civil disobedience resulted in Hamer being thrown off of her sharecropper job on a local farm. She received numerous death threats culminating in someone actually shooting at her. Hamer, however, refused to be intimidated.

Fannie Lou worked at voter registration all across her county and eventually the nation. In 1964, she challenged the Democratic Party by demanding that an all-white Mississippi delegation should not be allowed. She urged the party to include African-Americans. As a result, two African-American delegates were given speaking rights at the national convention. This spotlighted more than ever before the problem of illegal tests, taxes and intimidation of black citizens.

How did this lady get started at such an impacting mission? She is reputed to be originator of the phrase, "I got tired of being sick and tired." How did she arrive at such an epiphany? Her personal history sounds almost mythic. The granddaughter of slaves and sharecropper parents, Hamer was the youngest of 19 brothers and sisters.

To say that she was born poor would have been an understatement. At 44-years old, she attended a voter registration meeting. When she learned that African-Americans had a constitutional right to vote, she decided to take action. She decided to protest and action nonviolently to change her world. Years later she reflected, "The only thing they could do to me was to kill me, and it seemed like they'd been trying to do that a little bit at a time ever since I could remember."

Is there something that you feel has been killing you for a long time? It's time for you to follow the advice of Pastor Miles McPherson, Do Something! The statement is title of his book, which I have just started to read. Pastor McPherson leads The Rock Church whose congregation committed 600,000 "Do

Something" hours of volunteer service during 2009. More than 100,000 of those hours were given to the city of San Diego, alone.

There is certainly a lot of work for all of us to do. Find what it is that you can do well and help keep hope alive!

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Bishop Jackson is the guest editor of the January-February 2012 issue of *Ministry Today*.