

Still too soon to judge a president, but Obama gets an A

Written by Julianne Malveaux, NNPA Columnist
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In an era of instant spin, there is no wonder that people are grading President Obama on his performance in his first 100 days.

It is way too soon to judge the three-month president, but if pressed to offer a grade, I'd come back with an A.

To be sure, there is much room for improvement around appointments, especially at the assistant secretary level. At the same time, the Obama administration has so hit the ground running that we absolutely have to applaud.

It took less than 60 days for President Obama to pass a stimulus package that will jump start our economy and create jobs. The dire state of the economy may have helped recalcitrant Republicans get off their dime, but the aggressive posture of the administration made it clear that stimulus is a top priority.

I frankly think the stimulus should be larger and stronger, and at the same time understand the compromises that have been made around stimulus. This is an opportunity to applaud leadership.

On the issues that hit me closest to home – educational access and affordability – President Obama is right on time. Again, I'd have raised the Pell grant to more than \$5,350. At the same time, President Bush promised to raise it to \$5,000 and never managed to do so in his eight years in office. I am hopeful that we will see additional money available for Pell and, again, applaud the first step of getting those dollars up.

Similarly, President Obama has tackled the issue of student loan affordability, suggesting that cutting the middleman out of the loan process is efficient and effective. Bravo! While the bureaucratic federal government can probably not take on an additional task, if there is a task to take on, financing our nation's education future is one of them. Students deserve a break in loan financing. The federal government has made it possible for auto companies to offer zero percent interest on cars. What about zero percent interest on student loans?

President Obama went to the mat on the issue of credit affordability and the many abuses that credit card companies rain on their customers. You sign up at one interest rate, and then when the people feel like it, you get another one. You miss a payment for one card, and another card decides to penalize you for it. You are a day late and you end up paying double interest on your bill.

Our President has warned credit card companies that they need to do better and be more consistent. Give him high marks for taking on an industry that is well supported by lobbyists. There is likely to be splash back from this one, and the President has shown, in his first 100 days, that he does not mind breaking eggs to make omelets.

I have been disappointed that the President will not send US representation to the UN Conference against Racism. I have also been disappointed that matters of race have not been addressed by this administration. However, I am not prepared to put race on the front burner of

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an evaluation of this president.

Implicitly, he does lots for race relations, just with his presence. Additionally, this may be an issue he will tackle in his first year. I do not think that having an African American president requires us to suspend critical thinking, Obamanuts (the people who are so nutty about Obama that any minor criticism is considered “race traitorism”) notwithstanding.

At the same time, I think it extremely appropriate to “give due where due is due.” Thus, my criticisms about race matters do not deter from the high marks I give this administration.

What’s not to like in this first 100 days.

There has been energy, focus, economic acumen (well, except for the appointment of Larry Summers as an economic advisor), and balance. There has been the equanimity in handling the media and detractors. There has been the “swagger” and the leadership.

I think 100 days is too soon to judge a President, but on the basis of these first 100 days, President Obama has earned the highest marks.

Dr. Julianne Malveaux is President of Bennett College for Women. She can be reached at presbenett@bennett.edu