



# ROSSMOOR NEWS

WALNUT CREEK, CALIFORNIA

[Print Story](#)

## Republican Perspective

*By John Littig*

“My Brother’s Keeper”

On Feb. 27, President Obama launched “My Brother’s Keeper,” an initiative to help young black men to realize their potential. I applaud the president for taking this step, and I wish for the success of this initiative.

At the launch meeting, the president addressed an audience of business leaders, politicians, philanthropists, religious leaders and others. Among those attending were retired basketball star Magic Johnson, hip-hop music mogul Russell Simmons, the Rev. Al Sharpton and FoxNews luminary Bill O’Reilly.

Addressing the group, the president cited his personal experience. “I didn’t have a dad in the house, and I was angry about it ... I made bad choices. I got high without always thinking about the harm that could do. I didn’t always take school as seriously as I should have. I made excuses.” He also said young black men must themselves do better, instead of blaming society for their circumstances. He said they must not “just give up or settle into the stereotype.”

O’Reilly had TV interviews with Simmons and also with presidential advisor Valerie Jarrett. He argued that to be successful the task force must enlist the help of the president’s friend Jay-Z and other performers. He suggested the rappers should renounce the toxic celebration of violence, misogyny and promiscuity conveyed in their music and videos. He suggested instead that the performers should come out in support of the behavioral change the president described - a profound cultural turn-around. Further, O’Reilly urged Jarrett to convey that thought to the president and he urged Simmons to initiate that course correction within his industry.

It seems self-evident that the rap industry, and star athletes as well, will have to be enlisted if the president’s initiative is to succeed. But neither Simmons nor Jarrett voiced any enthusiasm for O’Reilly’s suggestion. Perhaps their failure to agree was because of O’Reilly’s overbearing know-it-all approach. Hopefully, both Simmons and Jarrett will act on his suggestion.

I wish the president had taken one of the many earlier opportunities to do this, rather than wait until five years of his presidency had elapsed. Nevertheless, I am enthusiastic that he has finally done it and I support it. Now you are thinking wow, he’s saying something good about Obama? And you may be wondering if there’s a “but” in my praise. Not to disappoint, I do have one nit to pick - or at least one sad irony to point out. So read onward only at your own peril.

President Obama is a multi-millionaire and arguably the most powerful man in the world. As it turns out, he has a brother George who lives in an alcoholic stupor in a one-room corrugated metal hut on the outskirts of Nairobi, Kenya. He lives in a shack that is, even by Nairobi slum standards, a hovel. (OK, George is only a half-brother - the senior Obama having had four wives and at least eight children.)

President Obama has said, “This sense of mutual responsibility - the idea that I am my brother’s keeper, my sister’s keeper - has always been part of what makes our country special.” He has reprised that theme several times. So wouldn’t you expect that he would lend a hand to his brother who lives on about \$10

dollars a month, or the nearby aunt Hama Auma (his father's sister) who subsists by selling scraps of coal on the roadside? Not so.

But George does not fault the president for neglecting him. George is a boot-strapper who has fallen on hard times - very hard times. Asked about the president's obligation to him, George says, "He's got responsibilities. He's not supposed to take care of me. I'm an adult." But, faced with his son's medical emergency, George asked for money from a journalist who had interviewed him. The journalist (who, in fact, did give George the money) said, "Why are you asking me?" And George replied, "I have no one else to ask." Even in an emergency, George cannot turn to his brother in the White House.

The aunt, Hawa Auma, says she would like to get her teeth fixed - and she hopes the president will help. And George, asked if he would accept the president's help, said, "Seriously! Yes! Who wouldn't?" But he doesn't ask for it.

The president tells us that we must be our brother's keeper. Even brothers to whom we are unrelated. There may be good reasons he will not help his own brother George or aunt Hawa - who knows? But he does not do it.

When the Lord asked Cain what had happened to his brother, Cain answered, "I know not. Am I my brother's keeper?" If the Lord inquires after George, what will the president answer?

John Littig can be emailed at [jslittig@aol.com](mailto:jslittig@aol.com).