

Ron Daniels resurrects Institute of Black World

*By Jamal E. Watson
Special to Sentinel-Voice*
NEW YORK (NNPA) - In its heyday, the Institute of the Black World was a major political organization that uniquely brought together scholars and activists who were bound in their quest for social, political, economic and cultural empowerment.

Based in Atlanta at the time, formed in the aftermath of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the participants formulated political strategies and conducted workshops and conferences aimed at eradicating racism, sexism and other forms of oppression.

But then, IBW dismantled, only to be resurrected in 2002 by Ron Daniels, who has served as the executive director of the Center for Constitutional Rights, a non-profit legal and

educational organization dedicated to advancing and protecting the rights guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution. Daniels is now leaving the center to devote all of his time and energy to building the infrastructure of IBW.

"I think it's absolutely imperative that there is a mechanism where we can do aggressive research and policy formula and advocacy," said Daniels, whose political activism spans several decades, including serving as a key advisor to Rev. Jesse L. Jackson's run for president in 1984 and 1988.

"Our core mission is to play a role in bringing different organizations together. The whole operational unity and networking model is a powerful think tank that we can do, and not enough of this is currently being done."

Rev. Al Sharpton said that



Ron Daniels plans to resurrect the Institute of the Black World, which had been a powerful civil rights organization.

the need for an activist think tank like IBW is needed, particularly in light of the pressing problems that beset African-Americans.

"I think this is a great idea,

particularly now," said Sharpton. "We're not focusing enough on policy issues, and we've been reduced to letting the mainstream, White media interpret our

interests. An organization like this is needed now more than ever."

On December 2, IBW will host "An Evening with Dr. Ron Daniels" at Bethany Baptist Church in Brooklyn.

Congressman John Conyers, who is Dean of the Congressional Black Caucus, and well-known poets Haki Madhubuti and Sonia Sanchez are among the speakers.

Among the other leaders and luminaries who will be participating in the program are: Rev. Dr. Tyrone S. Pitts, general secretary of the Progressive National Baptist Convention; Imam Mahdi Bray, executive director of the Muslim American Society Freedom Foundation; Dr. James Turner, chairman emeritus, Africana Studies and Research Center at Cornell University; Leonard

Dunston, president emeritus, National Association of Black Social Workers and Roy Hastick, president of the Caribbean American Chamber of Commerce.

The event is a fundraiser to help endow a visiting professorship at a State University of New York or City University of New York school which Daniels would occupy as he is building the infrastructure for IBW. The professorship would be named in honor of Charshee Lawrence McIntyre, longest-serving president of the African Heritage Studies Association.

IBW will hold its regular monthly State of the Black World Forum at 2 p.m. on Saturday, Dec. 3, at the House of the Lord Church in Brooklyn.

A distinguished panel of
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Push for Parks' statue could heal old political wounds

*By Hazel Trice Edney
Special to Sentinel-Voice*
WASHINGTON (NNPA) - U.S. Rep. Jesse Jackson Jr., who introduced a historic bill, passed by the House and Senate last week to place a life-size statue of civil rights heroine Rosa Parks in Statuary Hall at the capitol, said the ceremonies surrounding the passage of the bipartisan legislation could provide great opportunities to address long-ignored problems.

"A signing ceremony would provide an opportunity — if the White House had this kind of vision — not only to invite the family, but to invite leaders from the civil rights community to have an opportunity to, one,

participate in any kind of ceremony, but to also have an opportunity to meet with them and to talk about the Voting Rights Act and other critical agenda items that are confronting African-Americans from [Hurricane] Katrina on back to issues of education," Jackson told the NNPA News Service.

The Nov. 18 passage of the bill by unanimous consent in the House and Senate comes three weeks after Parks became the first woman to lie in state in the U.S. Capitol and nearly 50 years after her Dec. 1, 1955, refusal to give up her seat to a White man on a bus. It was a move that changed the course of U.S. history by

sparking the Civil Rights Movement.

The bill still has to be signed by President Bush, who has not said how he will handle the signing. The Parks family has requested a White House signing ceremony, Jackson said.

Yet another honor in memory of Parks, the "Mother of the Civil Rights Movement" who died Oct. 24, the twin bill was initiated in the Senate by Sen. John Kerry, D-Mass.

The five-sentence bill, H.R. 4145 is concise and direct: "To direct the Architect of the Capitol to obtain a statue of Rosa Parks and to place the statue in the United States Capitol in National

Statuary Hall," it states. "Placement — not later than two years after the date of the enactment of this Act."

But, Jackson's hopes that excitement surrounding the historic statue will transform into anything more than symbolism from President Bush may be far-fetched.

"All of us wish that he would turn symbol into substance, but the fact of the matter is that he [Bush] has engaged in such a way that it has trapped him into certain policies," said University of Maryland Political Scientist

Ron Walters. "He was one of those who was encouraging the Congress to move ahead very quickly and very vigorously on cutting the budget and, in particular, cutting social programs in order to make it possible for his tax cuts to be permanent, he has been, likewise, very loud about staying the course in Iraq... He doesn't have the flexibility to sit down and negotiate with the civil rights community, to sit down and negotiate a different path. I wish he did, but I don't see it."

Whether it impacts any civil rights policies, the passage of the bill was of great personal significance to Jackson, who at 40 is one of Congress's youngest members. His father, Jesse Jackson Sr., was involved in the Selma to Montgomery movement in 1965, at the time he was born, just four days after the infamous "Bloody Sunday" march across the Edmund Pettus Bridge, March 7, 1965.

President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Voting
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Jackson

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cut-off date until early January.

That still falls short of acceptable in Jackson's view. He says more time and a workable plan is needed.

He issued an Open Letter to the White House on Saturday in which he implored President Bush and his administration to follow through on its commitments to help survivors of the disasters, but strongly chastised their current efforts.

He wrote: "...It is also disturbingly clear that you are not, in the least, committed to doing whatever it takes, for how long it takes, for them to rebuild their homes, their communities and their lives."

Jackson said he meets with affected men, women and families around the country, as he did in his visit here, and sees first-hand their difficulties, desperation and despair, leading many to feel there's less "hope and promise" based on the lack of effective action by the federal government.

Jackson outlined the primary demands he

insists be placed in force to help those he says are "in exile."

He asserts the displaced citizens' right to return to their home (city); the right to vote; the right to receive information, and the right to reconstruction of their communities and city.

He is highly critical of the way federal expenditures are made readily available for foreign rebuilding efforts, but little for domestic crisis.

In replying to a question about reconstruction contracts, Jackson named "Halliburton" and "Bechtel" as the beneficiaries of biased federal spending to the detriment of survivors' emergency funding needs.

In other comments, Jackson told of plans to open a coalition office in New Orleans for Rainbow/PUSH.

He also spoke about the need for coalition building in Nevada among groups with kindred concerns, especially Blacks and Latinos, regarding labor and "economic development interests," and voting bloc power.

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