

Could new party aid democracy?

By Ron Walters
Special to Sentinel-Voice

There are forces that see the bankruptcy of both major political parties and want to profit from that fact by creating a third party to enter the 2008 election. The most current response was offered by Hamilton Jordan, White House chief of staff for Democratic President Jimmy Carter and Doug Bailey, former Republican party strategist and founder of The Hotline, in the form of a "Unity '08" party.

This effort, not to be confused with the Unity campaigns of the National Coalition of Black Civic Participation that run Operation Big Vote and Black Youth Vote for many years, proposes to be an entity that unites Democrats and Republicans in one presidential ticket, using a popular referendum on the Internet.

My first response to this was that it is a hair-brained scheme, since the kind of unity sought by Jordan and Bailey would be monumental to achieve in an atmosphere where the conservative movement has driven not only the political parties farther apart, but has capitalized on divisive issues to split the American people as well.

Yet, these two believe there is room for

such a party, because a poll they commissioned found the obvious: 82 percent of the respondents in the poll think that the existing political parties cannot solve America's problems and 75 percent want more political choices. These responses may be regarded as either normal in an atmosphere where nothing is perceived to be working, or they may be the fuel to ignite a sizeable political firestorm beginning this fall and continuing on into the 2008 elections.

So, what kind of "unity" would they be able to achieve? It will depend on either the nature of the agenda they finally arrive at, or the entrance of a charismatic candidate. I am reminded that Ross Perot was a charismatic millionaire businessman who came into the election of 1992 and capitalized on a generalized mood of discontent among the American people, fostered ironically by the failure of George H. W. "Read my Lips" Bush, who lost credibility among conservatives in his own party when he raised taxes.

Perot's constituency was difficult to define, but his movement sailed along on the



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strength of his personality. Then, George Wallace was not as charismatic, but his anti-civil rights, anti-government platform was enough to attract a following among several Southern states, such that he was able to keep Democrats from the White House.

Whether the Unity '08 party achieves viability, it most certainly will be more of

a threat to the Democratic Party since Jordan and Bailey offer a version of "centrism" that has been the leading edge of the politics of the party for more than a decade. Such a party could shave off some adherents to that philosophy inside the Democratic Party, while affecting Republicans less, because they have been more ideologically coherent as a conservative party.

This would appear to be the kind of environment within which Black politics could make some headway. However, what may keep this from happening is an even more fierce loyalty to the Democratic Party prompted by the threat posed from within. The fear that Democrats might lose because of the impact of a third party has always been

a strong motive for "party unity." Simultaneously, it has kept Black Democrats wedded firmly to the party, so firmly that they were afraid to use the strategic position created by a third party to make demands in exchange for their support.

The idea of having a progressive Rainbow line looks good because it could not only counter the centrist philosophy that threatens the Black agenda by becoming an official political party. It could also provide Blacks with significant leverage over the Party at a time when it faces a split in ranks. Is this cold-blooded politics?

Yes, but look at the lengths to which a Hamilton Jordan will go to have leverage over the fate of the Democratic Party and over the political process in general. That is really cold-blooded. The fact that we have not been up to this kind of politics is a marker suggesting why the growth in political participation by voting and electing Blacks to office has not yielded the kind of dividends that it might.

So, let get in the game, too. We've been on the sidelines far too long!

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Undocumented worker debate ignores problems

By Lorinda M. Bullock
Special to Sentinel-Voice

WASHINGTON (NNPA) - As the Black community debates whether Hispanic immigrant workers create competition for jobs with low-income African-Americans, the president of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists says too little attention is being paid to educated immigrants taking high-tech jobs away from middle- and upper-class African-Americans.

"That is much more of a threat to us than picking let-

tuce," said William Lucy, president and founder of the labor group.

There is one facet of the recent immigration bill passed by the U.S. Senate that Lucy said Blacks in technology should be especially concerned about the 200,000 guest visas the country would allow annually.

Nearly 12 million illegal immigrants live and work in the U.S., according to the Pew Hispanic Center.

Over the last 10 years, the annual quota for the H-1B visas — specifically for highly-

educated and skilled immigrants — has fluctuated between 65,000 and 195,000, depending on how well the high-tech and scientific markets were doing.

Under the H-1B visa, immigrant workers can stay in the U.S. for up to six years or even 10 years in some cases.

After the first year of the visa, they aren't counted into the annual quota, allowing a new wave of immigrants to enter the country.

Lucy said the increasing number of Blacks earning de-

grees in technology and engineering won't need to worry about competition from Mexico, but from other countries.

"It's much more dramatic at the high wages," he said. "These are the jobs that are going to India and Pakistan."

Legislation recently passed by the Senate would set up a guest worker program, primarily for Hispanics, and allow a pathway to citizenship for illegal immigrants already living and working in the U.S.

A stronger, more punitive bill passed earlier by the House would declare undocumented workers felons and speed their return to their homeland. Emotions run high on both sides and the immigration debate and it is not yet clear whether the House and Senate can reach a compromise acceptable to both chambers.

National opinion polls show that while African-Americans are generally supportive of undocumented workers, they worry about the possibility of losing jobs.

Recent data from the Department of Labor shows that despite the creation of 138,000 new jobs in April, the overall Black unemployment rate is 9.4 percent, well above the national unemployment rate of 4.7 percent.

One newly created group, Choose Black America, believes that unlawful immigration can exacerbate that gap.

"This is not an argument with Hispanics. I don't care who it is. If you have 12 million anybody coming in, it's going to come out of my pocket," said a member of the group, Kevin Fobbs, president of the Nation Urban Policy Action Council in Detroit.

"It's not a radical idea to stand up for protecting your children or protecting your community," he said. "It's not being racist. It's not being politically incorrect. It's being American."

Although Fobbs views illegal immigrants as taking from the federal treasury and not giving anything back, the Urban Institute released a study that found the opposite.

In addition to undocumented workers paying sales tax for items they purchase, the Social Security Administration estimates that three-fourths of undocumented workers pay payroll taxes and contribute \$6 to \$7 billion into a Social Security system they are barred from enjoying.

Bernard Anderson, an economist and professor at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, said blaming the high Black unemployment on immigrant workers is unfair.

"Their (immigrant) presence in the American labor market has not had a major detrimental effect on the wages and employment of African-American workers," Anderson said.

According to Anderson, there isn't any statistical evidence to back up the talk of immigrants "stealing" jobs from Blacks.

"Most of it is based on observation and anecdotes. It's not based on systematic research," he said.

"Either Black workers have left the labor market altogether or Black workers have moved on to other jobs that pay more or pay the same."

A 2004 study by George J. Borjas, a Harvard University professor of Economics and Social Policy, presents a contrary picture.

"Although the 1980-2000 immigrant influx lowered the wage of White workers by 3.5 percent and of Asians by only 3.1 percent, it reduced the wage of Blacks by 4.5 percent and that of Hispanics by 5.0 percent. The adverse impact of immigration, therefore, is largest for the most disadvantaged — native-born minorities," the study said.

Claud Anderson, president of the Harvest Institute, a Washington, D.C.-based Black think tank, is deeply concerned about the issue.

"As a direct result of massive immigration, the last 50 years totally eradicated progress Blacks made in income," he said.

According to the Census Bureau, between 1967 and 1990, there was a 12 percent increase in the Black median (See Workers, Page 15)

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headed political pundits, and especially you wannabe political office-holders, the marriage amendment has already been written, passed, and instituted by God a long time ago. He sanctioned the first marriage and His word does not change; He does not need help from George Bush, Bill Frist, or anyone else with defining what constitutes a marriage. The arrogance of those who promote this amendment nonsense amazes me. Although most of us know it's only a diversion and an attempt to regain the Republican base, we fall for it anyway.

The immigration issue has been reduced to discussions about Black people disliking Latinos. How silly is that? This issue is about Black people loving ourselves enough to stand up for our own rights, which have been trampled not only by the Establishment but by other groups that have come to this country. They walk on the legacy left by our relatives who suffered and died to get their "rights," as we silently do our best Stepin Fetchit impression and move to the end of the line — once again.

Here's the deal, Black folks, and I do

mean "Black folks." You cannot allow these shallow-minded, unconscious, conniving, political hacks, and "misleaders" to cause the destruction of the Black race. We have made mistakes by trying to assimilate, by trying to make others love us, and by buying into the minority game.

We are suffering the consequences of silly political slogans and disingenuous politicians who want to be Black only when it comes to getting the Black vote. That is our fault; nobody else's.

We must turn from being Stepin Fetchit and become Lincoln Perry, the man who "played" that role but was much smarter than people thought. He invented his game and played it well; he controlled his game. When are Black folks going to control our game? Right now we are out of control, and melting away fast in this melting pot called the United States. The sad part is that there are other Blacks aiding in that process, and we cannot allow them to get away with it. As they do in Detroit, "Call 'em out!"

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