

# Blueprint for second hundred hours

By Ron Walters

Special to Sentinel-Voice

Much has been made of what would happen in the first days when the Democrats took control of the Congress, and Democratic politicians speak boldly about an agenda that would privilege "the middle class." But since the Democratic Party used to speak for the working class, one now wonders who speaks for them?

Maybe this is a trick, since psychologists know that many poor believe that they belong to the "middle class" when they really don't. But Democrats also figured out that poor people don't vote, but the middle and upper classes do, so why pitch to poor people?

A substantial part of the Democratic base is falling more rapidly into the lower-income category, losing out in the new knowledge-based economy where jobs are flowing overseas and where they are now the subject of intense job competition right here at home. So, newly-empowered Democrats need to fashion policies that are targeted to the working class, a substantial portion of their voting base, some of whom are indeed middle class and a substantial portion of whom are poor.

Blacks constitute a disproportionate share of the Democratic base that needs social and economic policies that work to alleviate ma-

terial discomfort. And now that Blacks have voted and made the difference — disproportionately — they should expect a return. So, I think that after the agenda laid out by Nancy Pelosi, one they believe they can accomplish rather quickly, is finished, they might move on to an agenda that rewards their base.

When you ask this question of Black political accountability, the answer that often comes back is that, well, healthcare, the minimum wage, ethics reform, beefing up college tuition assistance, and the other issues that include Blacks as well — since they are all citizens. But there is also the problem that public policies rarely have an impact on the Black community; and so, targeted policies are needed.

Here, Democrats need to resurrect the focus on Urban Policy, something that been out of fashion for decades, because it is associated with both the riots and with the build up of the Black population. And thus, the advocacy of urban issues has become the new "third rail" of politics that may prevent officials from being re-elected in White major-



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ity districts and propels them to re-election in Black majority districts.

Raising the minimum wage from the current level of \$5.15 to \$7.25 is a good start, but it is meeting opposition from those who believe like the Federation of Small Businesses, a Republican lobbying group, and from George Bush, who will support it, if it is tied to decreasing the impact on his base. Nevertheless, a new Associated Press poll finds it wildly popular with more than 80 percent of Americans supporting it, so it will probably enable Pelosi to take the measure directly to floor for a vote rather than through the committee system.

But with that done, many will feel like they have taken care of the working class and move on. But the data shows, for example, that in the Baltimore-Washington corridor, the median income is about \$75,000, but in both cities one in every five residents are living below the poverty line. So, obviously, those cities need far more than just increasing the minimum wage. At least, they need a living wage, and some states have passed such measures; the states need job training

that helps people in a knowledge-based economy; and they need increased social supports so that single mothers with children can go to work and stay at work. There is also a need for strengthening educational programs to enable women to earn a degree, for her children to be educated at a public school and for college students to ward off crushing tuition debt.

Cities also need to be able to build affordable housing with a revenue stream that doesn't depend on a tax-abatement incentives to businesses through "Empowerment Zones" alone. The research is mixed on the extent to which this measure has led to viable urban economic development. The spigot needs to be loosened up considerably on the Community Development Bloc Grants that have been cut mercilessly in recent years by the Republicans.

In the second hundred hours, more attention needs to be paid to those measures that will make the voting base of the Democratic Party feel like it has something to vote for in the 2008 elections. But without some attention, who knows what could happen?

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## Extra! Extra! More Black organizations for sale

By James Clingman

Special to Sentinel-Voice

"I thank God that most of the money that supports the NAACP comes from Black hands; a still larger proportion must so come, and we must not only support but control this and similar organizations and hold them unwaveringly to our objects, our aims and our ideals."

W.E.B. Du Bois wrote those words in the *Crisis* magazine in 1915, the same year Booker T. Washington died. Ironically, what was written in the *Crisis* has now become the crisis in the NAACP and other so-called Black organizations.

Just six years after the NAACP was established in 1909, yes, by Black and White folks, Blacks put their money up and supported the organization. Today, nearly a century later, the NAACP and many of its local chapters would go out of business if they did not receive money from non-Black corporations and individuals whose "controlling interests" have reduced the NAACP to paper-tiger status in many of our communities.

Whose fault is it?

If Black people provided the majority of the money to the NAACP in 1915, what should our commitment be in 2007 with our nearly \$800 billion in collective annual income nationally? Sure, White-owned corpo-

rations and individuals should donate funds to Black organizations, but that is no reason for Blacks to abdicate organizational control and support.

We just celebrated Kwanzaa, one of the principles of which is Kujichagulia, which means self-determination. How can we be self-determined if we have to rely on the whimsical notions of folks who could not care less about our aspirations and goals? Where can self-determination be found in having to beg someone to purchase tables and program booklet pages for an awards banquet at which we really have nothing to celebrate?

How can we ever be self-determined if we fail to plan and execute initiatives that move our organizations toward ownership and economic self-sufficiency? The foundations of Black organizations must be laid with Black dollars, just as Du Bois admonished in 1915. That way, any contribution given by others is icing on our own cake.

Du Bois was very concerned about outsiders controlling the NAACP, and today we know that internal control of Black organizations such as the NAACP, the Urban



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League, Black chambers of commerce, and other vital Black institutions is of paramount importance.

As long as these organizations remain docile and compliant to the status quo, they are supported; let them get "too big for their britches," let them get "out of their place," and watch the funds dry up. The same thing applies with Black me-

dia. Surely you have seen this scenario play out in your city at some time or another. Here in Cincinnati, we are currently fighting for the local chapter of the NAACP, which has been taken over by corrupt people, some of whom call themselves, and are called by others, "preachers" and "religionists." If you didn't know it already, the NAACP national convention is scheduled for Cincinnati in 2008. The deal was made despite some serious problems in this city, namely Black disparities and discrimination.

The folks who run the local chapter, as well as some "hidden hand" culprits, can't wait to get in on the corporate goodies that will be handed out. They even went so far as to rig the NAACP presidential election to make sure they are there when the convention comes to town — as if a convention is the end-all for our problems in this town.

Well, they lost the election, despite lying and cheating, and despite collusion with the state NAACP office to keep their person as president. Now, we are waiting to see what will happen as the former president and her cronies refuse to vacate the premises or to concede the election. And once again, with the ghost of W.E.B. Du Bois looking over its shoulders, the NAACP in Cincinnati is in a crisis, attributable to the outside influence of outside money.

One of the executive board members, a "preacher," to justify the former president

staying on (and I suppose to also justify their cheating) was quoted as saying, "...corporate Cincinnati will only deal with [the current president]." That's code for, "If we don't play along with the powers-that-be, they won't fund our convention — and we won't get our share."

How sick is that? It's shameful that there is no law to which some of our brothers and sisters will not stoop, and there is no muck in which they will not wallow in order to get a few dollars. Corruption abounds in our current NAACP administration, and much of it has been caused by the love of the almighty dollar.

To reiterate, the saddest part about the situation within Cincinnati's NAACP is the involvement of church leaders who are acting like straight-up gangsters and thugs. They lie, they curse, they threaten, and they operate behind closed doors to cut deals that literally sell their own people, and the NAACP, down the river.

We will see if Du Bois' words take hold within our organizations, in this town, as well as other towns across this country. We must stop the corruption; we must put an end to the selling out; and we must do what Du Bois suggested: Support our institutions with our own money first, and take the "For Sale" signs down.

As for the Cincinnati chapter of the NAACP, as we await intervention by the national office, which has been quite slow in coming, I will definitely keep you informed. Meanwhile, as Du Bois must have noticed, and as we know today, the mission of the NAACP, which refers to "equality of rights of all persons," is inconsistent with its name, which says the "advancement of colored people." Newsflash! "All" people are not in need of equality of rights; "colored people" are.

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## Curry

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mayor of Trenton, N.J., said at the time. "As mayors of cities in the richest and most powerful nation in the world, we cannot simply stand by as our residents — families with children — continue to suffer. We have a responsibility to work together with our federal partners, as well as the private sector to turn the tide of those most in need in America." Palmer also noted that cities are having difficulty providing shelter for the homeless.

President Bush has essentially slashed

domestic spending to fund an unnecessary war and unnecessary tax cuts that largely benefit the wealthy.

If Democrats want to make their mark, they should start by repealing the tax cuts and quit funding the war. They can't credibly say they're against the war yet continue to provide the financing.

Bush has forced Democrats to finally deal with the war. Now, Democrats should force him to deal with a strong domestic agenda.

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