

# Black issues priority in run at White House

By Ron Walters

Special to Sentinel-Voice

If the dean of political columnists of the *Washington Post*, David Broder, says that "urban" issues have come front and center in the presidential election campaign, I guess it must be true. But whose focus is the most realistic?

In that urban issues are regarded euphemistically as "Black issues," I always have to explain that's what it means. Black issues are those that are especially relevant to or of interest to the Black community.

For example, at a high level of abstraction, all groups care about education, but when you ask how that issue cuts in various communities, the specific issues come out.

For Whites, it is more college-level AP, or Advanced Placement, courses; neighborhood schools; less commuting, and, apparently, less diversity.

For Hispanics, it is bilingual education and the dropout problem. For Blacks, it is Title I funding, correcting culturally biased tests, getting qualified teachers, and fair funding formulas.

A recent Gallup Poll supports this notion.

While all groups found the war in Iraq as most important, the rest of the priority issues were: Whites — economy, immigration, healthcare and government corruption; Blacks — economy, healthcare, poverty and

crime; Hispanics — immigration, economy, healthcare, government corruption and crime.

Poverty is of particular significance to Blacks. That has become the symbolic issue around which much of the debate about urban policy among the candidates has occurred.

John Edwards has recently completed what he calls a "poverty tour" to several key cities. He is laying out an unusually strong set of proposals to reduce poverty by a third in 10 years and eliminate the 37 million now in poverty altogether by 2036.

How? He would do such things as: raising the minimum wage, focusing on rural America, strengthen labor laws, beefing up HUD, righting predatory lending schemes, and helping low-income workers save with "work bonds."

He further advocates expanding access to bank accounts to fight payday lending abuse, creating "second-chance" programs for dropouts, expanding college education opportunity, expanding Earned Income Tax Credits, fighting teen pregnancy and other measures.

Meanwhile, Barack Obama, the only other candidate to come up with an expansive pro-



RON WALTERS

gram, countered with a set of proposals delivered in his speech at Hampton, Va., in June before a group of Black ministers.

He proposes supporting parents with young children by creating a nurse-parent program for low-income mothers to give them prenatal healthcare; creating a "Youth Service Corps," and supporting ex-offenders with a "Second Chance Act," along with designing prison-to-work programs; investing in transitional jobs to help the homeless and troubled veterans; investing in transportation to help the low-income bridge the "transportation gap," helping them to get to the jobs outside of urban areas; helping minority-owned businesses, and enacting an affordable healthcare program.

My view is that both candidates' programs lack boldness and innovation, and neither comes with a price tag to let us know the extent of the investment they are willing to make.

Many of Edwards' programs would focus on class-based programs in urban areas and programs tailored to rural areas, which is where 90 percent of the families in poverty reside.

Obama's programs include a greater fo-

cus on the impact of incarceration, a tighter relationship to urban areas where Blacks reside.

This is a bold gamble for candidates in a party that has pitched its policy to the "middle class" since Bill Clinton ran in 1992 — to the silence of most Black officials who represent a disproportionate share of the poor.

Much of the success of this will depend upon whether the White poor will move beyond their ideological attraction to conservative politics and embrace something that is in their own interests.

They — and the politicians they follow — seem to use their poverty as a "badge of courage," which leads them to reject substantial government help, freeing their representative politicians to spend money on things that directly affect their own and their well-heeled contributors' interests. When will they wake up?

Obama cannot become the "poverty candidate," now trailing Hillary Clinton in recent polls and with 90 percent of people being "comfortable" with him, but only 22 percent thinking he can win.

That leaves the issue to Edwards, who is running third, which is telling us that the Democrat voter, at large, is not there yet. It seems to be up to us.

Ron Walters is a director of the African American Leadership Program.

## The Million Dollar Club: 200,000 who care, act

By James Clingman

Special to Sentinel-Voice

No, this is not about those individuals among us who have been blessed to be millionaires. This is not about creating new millionaires. This is not even about celebrating millionaires. This is about a national collective of Black folks who have the ability to give a million dollars, over and over again, to Black organizations, Black schools, Black museums and Black causes.

This is about an effort by dedicated Black folks who believe in self-help and are willing to sacrifice just a little so that more of us can have a lot. This is about the Blackonomics Million Dollar Club, the BMDC.

Our call continues for 200,000 persons to sign on as members of the BMDC simply by adding their e-mail addresses to the BMDC mail list on the homepage of Blackonomics.com. Then, they are asked to submit recommendations to which we can each send \$5 or more to a selected recipient. It's just that simple. No middleman, no administrative costs, no fuss no muss. Just a postage stamp and a check.

All funds, let me say that again — all funds — are sent directly to the recipient. One of our members has even set up an online channel for making BMDC donations. What could be simpler and easier for those who are serious about supporting our own organizations

and initiatives? How can we allow those "other" organizations to take money out of our checks even before we see it and not support our own organizations via the BMDC?

Thus far, the BMDC has assisted several African-American-oriented schools across the country from Los Angeles to West Palm Beach, and even one in Africa. We have donated to the Haitian Relief Fund, the William Mayo Defense Fund, the D'zert Club and various Black museums, such as the Black Holocaust Museum in Milwaukee and the Harriet Tubman Home and Museum in Auburn, New York, and Cambridge, Maryland, respectively.

It all started after I visited Piney Woods School in Mississippi. After organizing a national campaign to raise funds for that school, we expanded the concept and started on our mission to help other Black organizations.

We have been successful, but not as successful as we can be if more would sign up and follow through on sending in their donations. Yes, that's the bad news. But we can change it to good news in heartbeat.

We are nowhere near 200,000 members, which really boggles my mind, because I



JAMES CLINGMAN

know at least that many read this column every week, have e-mail addresses and can certainly afford to part with \$5 or more to help our brothers and sisters.

I often wonder why it's so difficult to get folks to do this simple task, why it's such a chore for us to do more for ourselves rather than relying on the largess of folks who really

couldn't care less if our organizations survive or die off tomorrow. They are too busy taking care of their own to get involved with ours, and when their budget cuts come — and they will come — we go into our panic mode and start begging.

We don't have to beg; we have the resources to take care of our own stuff. Yes, other folks' money spends, too, and they should contribute to our causes; we certainly support theirs.

But isn't the primary responsibility for supporting Black causes, Black schools, Black museums, and Black efforts that of Black people first?

With all of the income we generate annually, and all of the intelligence we have accumulated over the years, I know we can do much better.

Look at the NAACP, having to layoff staff, folks who need their jobs. While we should be creating and "owning" jobs, the most famous, the oldest and the largest Black civil rights organization has to layoff Black folks because it is broke, but that's another article for another time.

The point is this: We can and must do better.

Let's pool our resources and leverage more benefits from those resources. Yes, our organizations also have a responsibility to be

good stewards of their funds, and to work for their constituents; to not just hobnob across the country, camping out in plush hotel suites, playing golf and eating and drinking like there is no tomorrow.

In spite of that being the case for a relative few of our Black organizations, we must still find ways to support the ones that are doing good things for Black people. They are the little-known ones, the small ones, the unsung organizations that are out there every day educating our children, keeping our history alive and well, fighting for justice and maintaining venues across this country that are uniquely Black.

Won't you sign up for the Blackonomics Million Dollar Club? And then won't you follow through by sending in your donation when the call goes out?

I know you believe it is well worth it for Black people to be in control of our destiny, for us to be self-determined with our own money. I know we can get 200,000 members, one at a time, if you will just do your part by signing up today.

As I said, this is not about millionaires, although they are more than welcome to join the BMDC; we'd love to have them, but there are no big I's and little you's in the BMDC.

As a matter of fact, most of us have very little knowledge of who else is in the club. That's the beauty of it though, besides, aren't we taught that we should do our alms without shouting it from the rooftops? Aren't we taught that it's better to get rewarded from God for our charitable acts rather than from men?

Go to [www.blackonomics.com](http://www.blackonomics.com) and sign up for the BMDC today! And thanks so much to those who have already done so.

James E. Clingman is an adjunct professor at the University of Cincinnati's African American Studies Department.

## Cannick

(Continued from Page 8)

Nightly News," it might still be on the air.

It's no different from rap music: Labels sign the artists that they think they can market to us, and networks pick up the shows that they feel have the greatest chance of boosting their ratings, thus, attracting advertisers.

Unfortunately, whether you believe it or

not, it starts and ends with us. Unfortunately, the reality is that this show will probably be the networks saving grace, and that, in and of itself, is enough to make you depressed, throwing you into the awful reality that we could do better, but we won't.

Jasmyne A. Cannick is a Los Angeles-based nationally syndicated race, culture and social issues critic.