

# It's time to give low-income empowerment

By Harry C. Alford  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Section 3 of the HUD Act (24CFR Part 135) was written in 1968 to ensure access to employment opportunities for low-income people. Literally, it was a response to the Watts Riot of 1965. Later, in 1992, it was rewritten and strengthened as a result of the Rodney King Riot. The tenants of the law state if you receive HUD funding (housing authority, city, county, state, grantee) 30 percent of the jobs created by that funding should go to people living in public housing facilities, recipients of Section 8 rental vouchers or people living under the poverty level. Also, 10 percent of all contracts generated from such entities must be set aside for businesses hiring such employees, Section 3 companies. If this law was enforced there would hardly be any poverty in America; unfortunately, it has not.

Back in 1998, the National Black Chamber of Commerce held a convention and had the late Deloris Sutherland of HUD make a presentation on Section 3.

She informed us that only four of the thousands of entities receiving HUD funding were actually in compliance with Section 3. We decided to take this on. We joined a formal complaint (1993) in Jacksonville, Fla., in which Sutherland found this city in noncompliance.

The city was fined and had to settle with

the Section 3 contractor. However, a very un-American thing happened. Jacksonville remained in noncompliance and kept on blocking Section 3 residents from job training and employment. The contractor re-entered the complaint and so, here we are, 15 years later with Jacksonville about to be fined again and the contractor about to be paid again. This city has a racist policy and is proud of it.

We turned things around in Indianapolis, San Francisco, Buffalo, Charleston, Peoria, New Orleans, Louisville and other cities where we have viable local chapters. Usually it was negotiated in a civil manner and sometimes, like Peoria we had to take it to the streets. About 90 percent of the current Section 3 activity in this nation is done through the local efforts of the National Black Chamber of Commerce.

It is refreshing to see that in the New Orleans rebuilding all of the HUD funding activity will definitely be in compliance. One of the housing projects, BW Cooper, has started out at 62 percent of employment coming from Section 3 residents. In Louisiana and Mississippi we are going to create jobs by the thousands and drastically reduce the deep poverty that was there before. Praise the



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Lord!

However, there are cities like Milwaukee and Detroit that seek to perpetuate their immense poverty and control the masses through despair and hopelessness. We must rise and address that feverishly. Milwaukee receives \$68 million dollars a year and doesn't create one job with it. Its poverty is bigger than New

Orleans before Katrina. Next week, the NBCC will formally put Milwaukee on notice: "Get in compliance with Section 3 in ninety days or we will sue you on behalf of the residents of public housing and others living under the poverty level and who seek employment." Yes, it's time to get rough and seek to cut off the HUD funding — \$20 billion nationally of which is Section 3 applicable.

Last year, I gave congressional testimony on the proposed Section 3 activity that will be applied to the gulf rebuilding. We were quite happy that HUD was on board with this initiative. While giving the testimony I noticed the keen interest demonstrated by Congresswoman Yvette Clarke of Brooklyn (she's a sister). She later summoned me to her office to discuss Section 3 further and promised her district will enforce it. Not only that but that she would take the subject to Small

Business Committee Chairwoman Nydia Velazquez, also from Brooklyn, for further processing.

These two democratic Congresswomen get it! Today, H.R. 3310, "The Earning and Living Opportunities Act" has been introduced by Chairwoman Nydia Velazquez. What this bill does is put teeth into Section 3. It requires that all housing authorities and community developments receiving HUD funding, as a minimum, must have 20 percent of all work hours going to Section 3 residents.

These entities must report annually to the Secretary of HUD with their documentation. The Secretary of HUD must compile all reports and submit the detailed status to Congress each and every year. Those entities that do not meet the required 20 percent will be fined an equivalent of 1 percent of their HUD funding that will be used for immediate job training activity. In other words, if this were applicable today, Milwaukee would be facing a fine of \$680,000 for its poverty pimping.

Let's support H.R. 3310 as it goes through Capitol Hill. Poverty is a "scab" on the American economy. It is time for all of us to join in and end it. Section 3 is about to become a reality at long last.

Harry C. Alford is the co-founder, President/CEO of the National Black Chamber of Commerce.

## Creating terrorists: Somalia now on dubious list

By Bill Fletcher Jr.  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Bush's so-called war against terrorism entered a further, cynical stage with the recent classification of a Somali group as alleged "terrorists." Al Shabab, the military wing of the Union of Islamic Courts, was declared by the U.S. State Department to be a terrorist organization. The Bush administration claims that "some" members of Al Shabab are affiliated with Al Qaeda.

In order to understand the cynicism of this move it is important to remember that Somalia was a basket case for over a decade after the overthrow of dictator Siad Barre. Filled with clan-based warlords, the country had no stable government. An international attempt to forge a transitional national government resulted in no further stability or end to the violence.

The rise of a right-wing Islamist group known as the Union of Islamic Courts, however, brought about a period of relative stability and internal peace. While the group was and is ultra-conservative in many of its tenets, it was successful in crushing or co-opting many of the warlords. Further, it was an indigenous group to Somalia and not an arm of another country or an external social movement.

Using the pretext of an alleged—and unproven—connection between the Union of Islamic Courts and Al Qaeda, Ethiopian troops—encouraged and backed by the Bush administration—invaded Somalia in 2006 with the stated objective of supporting the Transitional National Government, an institution that

was on its last legs, and had little support within the population. Though the Ethiopians defeated the UIC in formal battle, the situation in Somalia devolved into guerrilla war and chaos. The situation has been going downhill ever since. Al Shabab, whether one supports them or not, is an armed resistance movement. It has been carrying out military actions against troops of the country that invaded Somalia. One does not have to support the UIC or the actions of Al Shabab to recognize that a people have a right to oust those who invade their land.

The Bush administration's action in classifying Al Shabab as "terrorists" further complicates an already difficult situation. As opposed to recognizing that Al Shabab is the



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military wing of a legitimate movement, classifying them as alleged terrorists makes efforts towards a political resolution of the conflict unlikely, if not nearly impossible, just as has happened in Iraq. One does not have to like Al Shabab, or agree with its objectives, as long as it can be demonstrated on the ground that this is a movement that

has a real constituency and is militarily confronting an occupying army.

The Bush administration, as it has done in other parts of the world, e.g., in Turkey with the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), in the Philippines with the Communist Party of the Philippines (and their New People's Army), selectively chooses when to classify an insurgency or resistance as terrorist-based almost solely according to whether the target of the insurgency/resistance is a friend of the Bush administration.

In the case of Somalia, the Ethiopians are

doing the bidding of the Bush administration, as well as serving their own regional ambitions.

There is another piece to this which is worth noting. Throwing around the label of "terrorist" is also aimed at suppressing dissent here at home in the USA. Whether one is a Somali émigré, Somali American, or simply someone who supports Somalia's right to national self-determination, the label of terrorist has a chilling effect on one's willingness to speak out. As witnessed during the Cold War with the manner in which the charge of "communist sympathizer" was used to suppress dissent, the suggestion that someone is either soft on terrorism or, worse, aiding and abetting an alleged terrorist group shuts down all reasonable discussion.

So, let's be clear: the Bush administration is not interested in reasonable discussion. We, however, should be, so we need to push back against this latest outrage.

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## Walters

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report in 1998 indicated that serious crime had been declined for the seventh consecutive year.

Now in the early 21st Century, the jury is still out why the Clinton administration, aware of the disparate racial impact his 1994 Crime Control Act and targeting policing were having upon Blacks who were incarcerated, their families and their future, could hold the position that the Black community suffered more from the violence associated

with the crack cocaine trade.

Nevertheless, it raises the question now of the judgment that has been exercised by Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama on the decision to equalize drug sentencing and eliminate mandatory minimums. This decision could also save lives and since there are more Blacks in prison than in Iraq, it is also more important.

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## Conviction

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armed with a gun and apparently considering suicide, led police on a dramatic, televised chase before surrendering.

In a 4-3 decision, the Louisiana Supreme Court ruled that race had no part in the state's decisions involving Black potential jurors.

When the case was argued in December, the justices were critical of the trial judge, Judge Kernan "Skip" Hand, for overruling many defense objections about the prosecutor's use of race and Simpson's name.

Stephen Bright, Snyder's Atlanta-based lawyer, said the ruling shows there is broad agreement among the justices that courts must closely examine the reasons given for excusing potential jurors when racial motives might be present but not acknowledged.

"The disturbing thing is that courts in Louisiana and elsewhere were just deferring to trial judges, no matter the reasons," Bright said. Snyder will get a new trial as a result of the ruling, Bright said.

The case is Snyder v. Louisiana, 06-10119.