

Relief for fat cats but not for the unemployed?

By Julianne Malveaux
Special to Sentinel-Voice

The United States economy is shedding jobs way faster than a grooming dog sheds fleas. Employment has been dropping for nine months in a row with 159,000 fewer jobs on the books in September than in the month before.

So far this year, payrolls are down 760,000, and 969,000 in the private sector. The unemployment rate has held steady at 6.1 percent for the past two months, but it is up 1.4 points during the past year. Nearly 10 million people are "officially" unemployed, which means they are officially looking for work. These numbers do not include those who have dropped out of the labor force, in other words people with jobs who have just stopped looking.

It also doesn't include people who are underemployed, or working at jobs that they are overqualified for. The Bureau of Labor Statistics develops several rates of "labor utilization", including one that includes people who work part time because they can't find full time work, and those "marginally attached."

With such a measure the unemployment rate would double to 11 percent. And, surprise, surprise, African-American workers are

doing much worse than other workers in the labor force. While the unemployment rate was 5.4 percent for Whites, it was 11.4 percent for African-Americans.

If the White unemployment rate were 11.4 percent, someone other than a humble columnist would be asking about a bailout for the unemployed. But because we are simply looking at a Black unemployment rate, there has been little discussion about what to do about excessive unemployment. According to the Economic Policy Institute (www.epi.org) all of the gains African-Americans made in the 1990s were wiped out by job losses in the last several years. The report, written by Algernon Austin, suggests that African-American workers have been among the hardest hit by our economic downturn. There's nothing for Black folks, but plenty for banks.

We saw our Congress rush to action to provide a bailout for financial markets. It was said that it was an emergency, that we had no choice, that the \$850 (up from \$700) billion bailout was a matter of life and death for the nation's economy. Ask the person who has



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Yet these people have been virtually ignored by policymakers. Furthermore, the number of people who are involuntarily part time, or who would rather work full time, has skyrocketed.

The number grew by 300,000 in September, and by 1.6 million in the past year. Six million people who hold part time jobs want and need full time jobs, the largest number in fifteen years! Again, we keep hearing about markets, but the focus is on every market except the labor market.

Just about every sector of the economy is experiencing job losses, from factory jobs, to service jobs, to jobs in the financial services industry. Only in healthcare and government services to jobs continue to grow. There is barely a safe haven for those who

been unemployed for the last six months how they feel about life and death. Some of these folks have exhausted their unemployment insurance. Some have lost their homes and their families.

One in five unemployed people have been unemployed for at least six months, the highest share of long-term unemployment in three years.

are losing their jobs. The economic policy institute cites one piece of legislation as providing possibilities for those at the bottom.

The Emergency Unemployment Compensation program extends jobless benefits an extra 13 weeks. The EUC provision has run out and can be renewed by Congress. That's the least thing a group of bailout-focused lawmakers can do for ordinary people who also need a hand.

Realistically, though, lawmakers aren't likely to do much more. They are rushing home to get involved in a close election, and leaving the employment mess until after November or, more likely, after January.

Yet if trends continue as they have, we will have lost at least a million jobs this year, and we will have experienced an indifferent congress that can be whipped into fearful bailout submission by Treasury Secretary Paulson. Who speaks for workers? And will working people get a bailout?

When your congressional representative comes home to campaign, ask what they will do for workers. It's a fair question to raise as our economy continues to spiral out of control.

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Wall Street gets money, contracts, huge free pass

By Harry C. Alford
Special to Sentinel-Voice

P.T. Barnum once said that there is a "sucker born every 5 minutes." Well, the famous hustler would have been proud of the Wall St. lobbyists and Treasury Secretary Paulson as they shook down over 300 million suckers — the American taxpayers.

Not only did they get the \$700 billion of quick money, but the opportunistic Congress decided to take the opportunity to pull out their wish list and add 16 earmarks to the bailout for an additional \$140 billion. That's right, the bailout — or should we say rip off — totals \$840 billion.

That is \$2,300 for every man, woman and child living in this nation. That equates to a family of four now increasing their debt by \$9,200. Congress could have been more productive just passing that money out to the citizens of America and letting Wall Street pay for its own sins. Even "anti-earmark Sen. John McCain" went along with all of this pork. The lobby is too strong and the perks for the cooperating legislators is too sweet. Our Congress was bought and sold.

Now, they have the money and the world is still in the same predicament. The economy is in the tank as much now as it was before the giveaway. They played the stock market to scare and fake out Congress. After the bailout was passed, many assumed the market

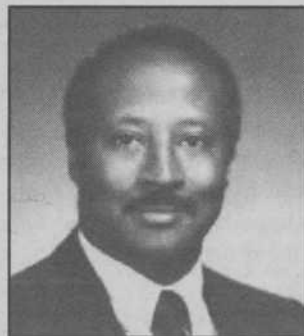
would increase. Silly folks — the stock market dropped over 400 points from a plus 250 to a minus 156. We are still in the fix but only about \$1 trillion deeper in debt.

They have the money and now they must steal all of the big contracts that will come as a result of the supreme hustle. They will do this through no-bid contracts. This form of deception was created in the early days of Iraq and perfected during the Hurricane Katrina recovery.

No-bids and severely inflated dollar amounts for work they will find someone else to do at predatory rates. This is done by declaring an emergency and waiving contracting law — Federal Acquisition Regulation, the FAR, thus eliminating affirmative action and minority participation requirements.

The procurement director for the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) declared a waiver after Katrina for 90 days.

Ninety days was all they needed to set all the inflated contracts for the political favorites all of whom were White. Corruption was rampant and even the OMB director eventually went to jail for favors he did for the infamous Jack Abramoff who is also currently in jail.



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good old White boys. It fakes out the Congressional Black Caucus and others by further stating:

"In any solicitation or contract where the Secretary has, pursuant to subsection (a), waived any provision of the Federal Acquisition Regulation pertaining to minority contracting, the Secretary shall develop and implement standards and procedures to ensure, to the maximum extent practicable, the inclusion and utilization of minorities."

If you believe this, then I have a bridge in Florida to sell you. In the end, like Katrina and Iraq, there will be some fronting going on and some fake contracts but no true Black business participation.

They will find a few Alaska Native Corporations who will sign contracts as minorities but then flip all of it to White firms. They do this in corrupt ways now and get caught

from time to time.

Only this time, it will be perfectly free of prosecution because the law is waived!

The cadre of Black firms in the housing and financial business that former Secretary of HUD Alphonso Jackson developed will be totally ignored. Normally, their contracts would be enlarged to include the new volume. With the above waiver they can be totally ignored and they certainly will.

If Sen. Obama is elected president, we may have a chance at the back end of this to break off some "bones." However, these guys have well over 90 days (like Katrina) to set all the traps and bring in the fat contracts for their chosen few.

A contract will be for "4x dollars." The contractor will then go to the marketplace and find someone to do it for "2x dollars," and that person will find someone to do it for "x dollars," which is the true value of the work.

The culprits will pocket the excess. When you deal with wholesale corruption like that via a "license to cheat and steal" Black folk need not apply. This isn't true federal procurement; it is corruption at its worse replete with pure racist vile. The American taxpayer is the major victim and Black business will be "road kill."

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makes sense that if the value of the dollar is dropping, we will need more of them to purchase the necessities of life.

How do we get more dollars? Barter a portion of our goods and services with one another. Especially now, in a time of financial uncertainty when banks are on the ropes, Black folks should form Collective Banking Group Chapters across this country and leverage reciprocity from the banks that we of-

ten complain about.

Churches must get together across denominational lines and beliefs to take care of their business. It makes no sense to complain about anything that you are not willing to do something about.

Black folks should establish their own investment pools and loan funds in order to create and grow Black businesses. How can we expect to advance in this country if we don't create and maintain jobs for our chil-

dren? Are they to grow up and continue the cycle of seeking jobs from others rather than creating jobs for themselves and their peers?

It's one thing to rail against the greed and corruption that has overtaken this country; it's another thing to act appropriately to take care of ourselves, despite the actions of the greedy.

Collectively we have already demonstrated that we can do whatever we want and need to do. The lessons are there for us to

use over and over again. We must follow them.

The greedy will continue to trample the needy; that is, if they are allowed to do so. It's time to rally around the economic principles that led our ancestors to own and control economic enclaves all across this country. Get busy!

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