

## OUR VIEW

# Fight to Vote

There's an e-mail about Democratic presidential nominee Barack Obama, the Nov. 4 election and prayer. One variation reads: "Friends and family, I am convinced, no, I believe Obama's campaign has God's blessing on it, I believe God is guiding the campaign and I believe God is using Obama as an agent of change in America and in the world. I also believe that the trials Obama has experienced during the campaign — and will continue to experience if he is elected — will draw him closer to God."

"November 3 has been marked the worldwide day to fast and pray for Barack Obama between noon and 1 p.m., giving up one meal for the day," the e-mail reads. "Instead of eating, pray for the following three things: (1) Pray for the hand of God to move in a mighty way over this election. (2) Pray that this election will be handled in a fair and honest manner and in a way that pleases God. (3) Pray for the protection of Obama and his family."

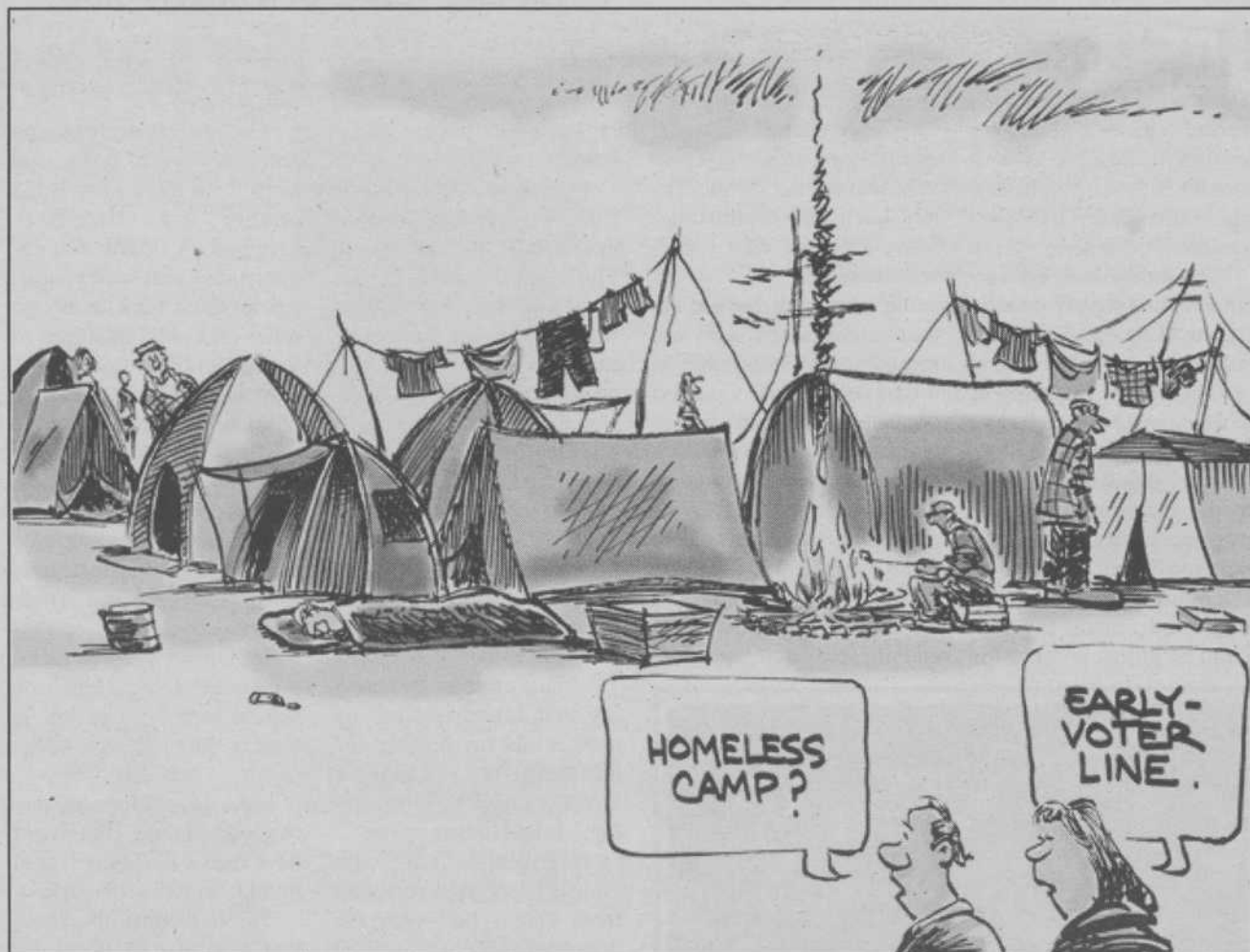
Say what you will about Obama, his policies and the juggernaut campaign he's run, but the Illinois senator has undoubtedly kindled and, in some cases, rekindled, the faith many people have in America, in politics and in the manifest, God-ordained destiny of this nation. To the extent that Obama has energized people of every age, ethnicity, background, religion and socioeconomic demographic, he has come along at precisely the right time. That many Americans, particularly many African-Americans and throngs of those in religious circles, see Obama as a deliverer of sorts, not messianic in the least, but certainly a beacon of salvation from the politics of divisiveness, is a testament to him. All this being said, it's also important to say this: If you believe Obama is the answer to your prayers, you're wrong.

You're wrong, in part, because he says you're wrong. Time and again, Obama has said that this presidential campaign isn't about him. It's about *you*. It's not about his ability to transform to America and change the world, but about *your* ability to accomplish those things. And your power lies in voting. Your vote is your voice. To quote a popular phrase: a voteless people is a hopeless people. All your prayers for Obama will amount to little if you don't cast your ballot. The monies donated, doors knocked on, calls made, parties hosted, events attended and people converted will count nada, nothing, if you stay at home during early voting periods and on Election Day.

You must vote, and be undeterred in doing so. Unfortunately, the right-wing of the Republican Party is at it again, doing whatever it takes to convince you that you can't vote. In Colorado, the Republican county clerk of El Paso County told Liberal Arts college students they can't vote if they are dependents on their parents' tax returns. A McCain campaign office in Wisconsin mailed out absentee ballot request postcards with the wrong return address on them. Students at Virginia Tech University are told that if they register to vote from campus, they could be dropped from their parents' car and/or health insurance, lose scholarships, or their licenses to drive.

Much ado has been made about the false voter registration forms turned in by various offices of the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now. But little has been made of ACORN's self-policing efforts and the firing of staff who may have falsified extra applications just to make more money. The point is this: This election will likely be as contentious as the 2004 and 2000 presidential campaigns, both lost by Democrats — or stolen by Republicans, as many believe. That makes it vitally important for you to vote no matter what. No matter if someone unlawfully demands ID or proof of your residency. No matter if you're a repatriated ex-offender who's being badgered by a poll worker. No matter if a person questions your status as an American citizen.

If you have a cell phone equipped with camera and video capabilities, tape the scofflaws. Get names, if possible. Write down the unlawful behavior. Report it to election officials. Call CNN's Voter Hotline (1-877-462-6608), and send CNN and iReport video. Whatever you do, don't give up and go home without casting your ballot. Because if you do, Obama will certainly need more than prayers.



# The politics of transition

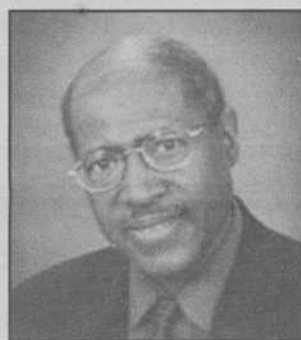
By Ron Walters  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

In many ways, this has been a difficult time for Blacks who believe that a presidential election is an opportunity for policy accountability that must be taken advantage of, because they are afraid that such policy demands would be seen by potential White voters as Blacks playing on a racial connection that they might resent and use to vote against Barack Obama.

But if Obama wins, it would seem to me that the process of agenda presentation to the new president should begin and the immediate opportunity will be the transition period from the end of the election on November 4 to the point at which he takes office on January 20.

By law, both of the major candidates have met with George Bush and covered such issues as: what federal financial and other resources are available to the winner of the election, what responsibility the sitting president has to assist the winner, when and how the sitting president should vacate the White House, etc.

Then, each of the candidates has met with their own staffs to begin the internal transition process. And while John McCain has given minimal attention to the transition, preferring to spend his meager resources on the campaign, Barack Obama



RON WALTERS

has begun an extensive process that has taken into consideration, the logistical issues discussed with Bush, but also the personnel who will run key initial functions of government and the issues they will begin to address.

The transition train is moving very fast now with respect to how the Obama government will be structured and the *New York Times* recently proposed a lineup of probable appointees to posts such as: White House chief of staff and the secretaries of treasury, defense, state and the president's national security adviser featured three candidates none of whom were African-American with the sole exception of Susan Rice for national security adviser.

And while there may be some African-Americans being considered for other agencies, my distinct impression is that the cadre of close policy advisers who are African-American is thin as witnessed by the surrogates who have participated in various policy discussions on behalf of the campaign.

On the issue front, the Obama campaign has presented several policy issues that have been close to those that feature either barriers or opportunities for the Black community. They are social policies such as K-12 education, higher education, universal healthcare, urban policy, job training and development using the environmental engine and infrastructure repair.

These and other initiatives are promising which, together with the passage of a substantial stimulus package, will help to begin the change toward human development policy that is needed by the middle class and poor, Black, White and otherwise.

The concern I have heard is whether Black leaders will attempt to work within the transition process, which would be a natural move, or would there be a continued attempt to keep them at arms length in order to construct a

"race-neutral" style of governance.

Then there is also concern that the specific issues that are of prime interests to the Black community will be received by the transition process. It would appear that the transition period would be an important time to test these assumptions rather than hanging back and celebrating while the governing structure and agenda of the president are being set in stone.

I remember that when Blacks helped elect Jimmy Carter, contrary to all signs that Carter was not a Lyndon Johnson, Black leaders stood by for over a year without making any demands upon his administration until Vernon Jordan, who was then head of the Urban League, said at a press conference, "Where's the beef?"

Now is not the time to sit and wait. With the massive problems confronting the

(See Walters, Page 9)

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