

# Obama: Each job loss signifies a personal crisis

By Hazel Trice Edney  
Special to Sentinel-Voice  
WASHINGTON (NNPA)

— As Christmas nears and families watch their purses to be sure they are spending wisely, President-elect Barack Obama has called on Americans to view the economic crisis from a human standpoint, rather than just another political issue.

"The 533,000 jobs lost last month, the worst job loss in 34 years, is more than a dramatic reflection of the growing economic crisis we face. Each of those lost jobs represents a personal crisis for a family somewhere in America," Obama said in a statement released last week. "Our economy has already lost nearly 2 million jobs during this recession, which is why we need an economic recovery plan that will save or create at least 2.5 million more jobs over two years while we act decisively to maintain the flows of credit

on which so many American families and American businesses depend."

Obama was responding to new job loss reports from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, which also reveal gross racial disparities.

They showed African-American unemployment at 11.2 percent, remaining fairly consistent for the past three months; yet still nearly twice the White unemployment rate of 6.1 percent. The 6.1 percent White unemployment rate remained below the national average, which is at 6.7 percent. The Hispanic rate, at 8.6 percent, hovered just above the national average and 2.6 percent lower than African-American's.

Obama has promised Black leaders that he would not forget that African-American communities are hit hardest.

"This community, our community, the African-American community, dur-

ing these challenging times, suffers more than most in this country," he said in an election-eve phone conference. "Double-digit inflation, double-digit unemployment, stagnant wages; our kids are more likely to drop out, more likely to be in jail, more likely to die. We're going to have to do better. And if we continue the momentum we've seen across this country over the last several weeks, we can do better."

As the world awaits his inauguration on Tuesday, Jan. 20, many are reaching

out to churches and charitable organizations for financial assistance. Some megachurches such as the New Birth Missionary Baptist Church, pastored by Bishop Eddie Long in Atlanta, have established programs through which more prosperous members can give money to help those who are hurting financially.

The Detroit-based auto industry, which — if it fails — could cause tens of thousands of more job losses, has appealed to Congress and the White House for a loan or a

part of the \$700 million economic bailout already approved by Congress.

Meanwhile, Obama says getting back to financial health for the nation will take much time and sacrifice.

"There are no quick or easy fixes to this crisis, which has been many years in the making, and it's likely to get worse before it gets better," he said. However, he has outlined a plan.

"Now is the time to respond with urgent resolve to put people back to work and get our economy moving

again," he said. "At the same time, this painful crisis also provides us with an opportunity to transform our economy to improve the lives of ordinary people by rebuilding roads and modernizing schools, for our children, investing in clean energy solutions to break our dependence on imported oil, and making an early down payment on the long-term reforms that will grow and strengthen our economy for all Americans for years to come."

## New cabinet begins hiring spree

By Simon Breedon  
Special to Sentinel-Voice  
WASHINGTON (NNPA)

— As anticipation builds for President-elect Barack Obama's unprecedented Jan. 20 inauguration, the transition team is expected to review over 80,000 resumes of applicants who hope to claim

one of the 8,000 positions with the incoming administration, 1,177 of which require Senate approval.

All aspiring applicants are directed to the website [www.gpoaccess.gov](http://www.gpoaccess.gov) to access the Plum Book to see the jobs available, and then to the Obama Web page [change.gov](http://change.gov) to fill out a brief letter of intent.

The Obama administration poses the possibility of bringing more jobs to the D.C. area than any other administration prior; in that the President-elect has noted his intent to create the first ever

Secretary of Technology position and a Department for Urban Outreach, each with their respective available lower-tier positions. This means two things for Washingtonians seeking employment.

Currently, the Bureau of Labor estimates the D.C. area has an unemployment rate of seven percent with 15 percent of the Black community listed as jobless. The District has the second lowest unemployment rate among areas with one million or more people. The surge of new jobs Obama brings is ex-

pected to especially stimulate the local economy by revitalizing spending in the D.C. metropolitan area. During, and in the wake of, the inauguration, D.C. business owners can expect a larger flow of revenue.

While there are many jobs up for grabs, the possibility of simply applying for an administration position and then obtaining it is slim. Most of the positions are already in the process of being filled by campaign staffers, or those who earned a name among members of the

## OJ

(Continued from Page 1)

"the 800-pound gorilla in the room."

Before any appeal winds its way to the Nevada Supreme Court, Simpson faces years in prison for a September 2007 confrontation with two sports memorabilia dealers over collectibles that Simpson insisted were stolen from him.

"Prison will be very taxing on him," Galanter said. At 61, Simpson is not in great health, he said.

"He'll be treated like every other inmate," said Howard Skolnik, director of the Nevada Department of Corrections. "The only issue might be whether we have to provide a little more protective custody because of his notoriety, at least at the start."

Gabriel Grasso, another Simpson lawyer, anticipated that Simpson would find friends in prison, adding that Simpson had been buying snacks for fellow inmates at the Clark County jail.

"I think when he does meet people in jail, they're going to treat him well because he treats them well," Grasso said.

Simpson could be moved within a week to High Desert State Prison, about 45 miles northwest of Las Vegas, where a 2004 inmate brawl killed one inmate and wounded 18 others. Skolnik said it was unlikely he would go to Nevada's one maximum security facility be-



Co-defendant Clarence "C.J." Stewart (L) appears in court with attorney Charles D. Jones during sentencing at the Clark County Regional Justice Center in Las Vegas Friday.

cause he was not under a life sentence. Nevada has six medium security prisons.

Wherever he winds up, the accommodations will be spartan.

Skolnik acknowledged that adjusting to prison may be difficult for a man who once lived the high life as a football star, movie actor and advertising pitchman.

Prison cells average 78 square feet. Each cell has a narrow window about four inches wide and 30 inches long. Most have two beds, a commode, a sink, a shelf and a plastic glass window on the

door that allows guards to peer inside.

He won't have much freedom at meal time either. The state allocates \$2.18 for meals per day per inmate, and men get a standard 2,800-calorie diet. Hamburgers, hot dogs, chicken and pizza are among the most popular menu items, Skolnik said.

When Simpson is issued a number, clothing, bedding, toiletries and tennis shoes, he'll be one of about 13,000 state prison inmates. But undoubtedly he will be the most famous prisoner in the yard.

## Defendants

(Continued from Page 1)

Although Simpson was in prison 45 miles away Tuesday, his presence dominated the hearing.

Robert Dennis Rentzer, Alexander's attorney, said it was Simpson's charismatic personality that led the men astray last year when they confronted Fromong and fellow memorabilia dealer Alfred Beardsley in an attempt to retrieve Simpson mementos the collectibles dealers were trying to peddle.

"On that day, everybody was a snake. O.J. Simpson was the snake charmer," Rentzer said. "The man has charisma. There is something about him that captures individuals and draws them into his circle."

The four sentenced Tuesday originally faced charges similar to Simpson and Stewart, but after their plea deals, the probation department recommended no prison time.

Fromong later said he was upset about McClinton's sentence because he had pointed a gun in his face.

"Use a gun, go to jail. That's my theory," Fromong said.

Glass said the four would pay for their lapses even without going to prison.

"If Mr. Simpson wanted something done and wanted you to do something, he asked and you did it," the judge said. "How stupid, but also criminal. You all broke the law and now you're all paying for it ... because you're all convicted felons now."

Glass noted that the quartet included two friends, an acquaintance and one total stranger — Cashmore, 47, of Las Vegas, who

went along at the last minute and received the lightest sentence.

Alexander, 47, of Mesa, Ariz., an old friend of Simpson's, agreed to help the former football star get his possessions back, and took a gun along at Simpson's request but never drew it, said his attorney, Rentzer.

McClinton, of Las Vegas, knew Simpson well enough to feel compassion for the fallen star, said McClinton's attorney, William Terry. Sometimes when they were together, he said, Simpson would be stopped by people asking to take a photograph with him.

"He accommodated them and then the person would turn around and make disparaging remarks about his other case," Terry said, referring to Simpson's 1995 acquittal in Los Angeles in the murders of his ex-wife, Nicole Brown Simpson, and her friend, Ronald Goldman.

When Simpson said he wanted to retrieve family photos, "It hit the heartstrings of Mr. McClinton," Terry said.

"He brought a gun. He was asked to. He looked menacing. He played his role."

Glass noted that Ehrlich, 54, a close friend of Simpson's from Miami, had spent time in prison but had been crime-free for over 20 years before sentencing him.

All four were ordered to do community service.

Jack Neil Swickard, a lawyer for Beardsley, said later he had expected probation for the four men. "I knew that was going to happen, as long as they were good pen-pals and played the game and said what they were supposed to say," Swickard said.