

Obama advisor: Ample room for everyone at table

By Hazel Trice Edney
Special to Sentinel-Voice

WASHINGTON (NNPA) — Valerie Jarrett, who will likely become a household name very shortly as she serves as a senior advisor and public liaison for President Barack Obama, says the landscape of activism may drastically change under the Obama administration as those who have traditionally fought to be heard will likely have seats at the table.

"You do not need to have demonstrations in front of the White House to convince this president that there is a disparate impact in the African-American community around issues such as healthcare and education. He's got that," said Jarrett in a telephone interview with the NNPA News Service. "The campaign stood for change. It stood for a grassroots, bottom up drive toward a better country. That does not have to be confrontational. It can be engaging."

This may mean a mixture of people at the table of solution-seeking, Jarrett said — those from all generations, races and walks of life, she said in the interview that focused mostly on Obama's style of leadership and how he will maintain a progressive relationship with the Black community.

"It starts with working toward solutions. You don't have to convince him that there's a problem. You have to just work with us to come up with the appropriate solutions. And his strategy is, 'Look if we all come to the table and we have a common goal of trying to solve a problem, there's no end to what ordinary people can do. We can do extraordinary things together.'"

Particularly during the Bush Administration, protest marching surged. Iconic Black activists Revs. Al Sharpton and Jesse Jackson

have led thousands of people in numerous marches over the past several years, pertaining to everything from economic injustice to inequities in the criminal justice system to specific cases of police misconduct and racial unrest.

Jarrett, a Chicago business woman who is already called the "first friend" to the Obamas, has not ruled out the possibility of even Jackson and Sharpton at the table in the White House.

"This administration is about inclusion and not about exclusion," she said when asked whether Jackson, Sharpton and Rev. Joseph Lowery might possibly be among those at the table. "The basic foundation of his philosophy is that too many people have been excluded for too long; the special interest groups and the lobbyists have dominated Washington. And as a result, the voices of every day people have been drowned out. And this grassroots campaign has been about reengaging the American people. And so there's room for everyone at the table."

Acknowledging that it is clearly "a new generation's turn to lead," she said Obama still sees a place for those, such as Lowery, who marched alongside Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and co-founded the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

"You don't turn your back on the older generation," she said. "But, you understand that they're seeing the world through a different prism and in order to move forward, we have to have a new generation of leadership. That doesn't disenfranchise those who have worked so hard who came before us. But, it is a natural succession that you would have this new era in a sense."

Valerie Jarrett knows how

the president-elect thinks. It is often said that talking to Jarrett is the same as talking to Obama. That assertion is close to the truth, she concedes.

"Obviously, he is his own person, but we are very close," she said. "I've had the pleasure of knowing both the president-elect and his terrific wife, Michelle, for over 17 years now. I have worked with them both. They are my very dear friends, so I think we understand each other."

Preparing to lead, they hash out issues daily.

"During the transition now I speak with him several times a day," Jarrett said. "He's in the transition office everyday. I'm there at least some portion of every day. And so, we're deeply in-

involved in the selection of his cabinet and analyzing agency reviews and all of the multiple array of both challenges and opportunities facing our country. And so, we spend a lot of quality time together these days."

She is not only a senior advisor and public liaison, but she will also lead the administration on intergovernmental affairs, working with state and local governments, where many of the nitty-gritty issues, such as crime, poverty, homeless and unequal justice are being fought every day.

"He understands that change starts at the ground," she said.

CEO of a real estate development and management company, Jarrett brings to the

table a plethora of educational and professional experiences that have prepared her for this moment, including degrees from Stanford and the University of Michigan and she has worked for two Chicago mayors, Harold Washington and Richard Daley.

But, Jarrett says she pulls mostly from Obama himself when helping him to make day-to-day decisions on appointments and transition strategies.

For Black people — who have been historically at rock bottom at nearly every negative social statistic in America — that means rising as others rise, Jarrett says.

Citing the racially disparate economic impact on job losses and disparate health

and healthcare statistics, Jarrett acknowledges, "They are far more rampant in the Black community than you see in the general population... So, if you're going to say that front and center is the economy and we take initiatives to jump start the economy and the Black community is most fragile, it's going to inure to the African-American community," she said.

Jarrett says Obama's inclusive leadership style will naturally remind America that what's good for African-Americans is good for all.

"We have to see that we are all inextricably bound," she said. "So, I think he brings to the conversation a way of describing how you (See *Activism, Page 11*)

Your Horoscope Says... Dec. 18-24

ARIES

Your careless ways with money are going to be apparent this week. Financial mistakes you've made in the past will be especially painful. Don't conceal the pain from yourself. It is a warning that you should take steps to prevent future financial crisis.

Soul Affirmation: I let my friendships guide my way.

Lucky Numbers: 13, 22, 35

TAURUS

Take advantage of the great weather and spend time outdoors enjoying and relaxing with Mother Nature. Learn a new sport, and spend time with family and friends. Don't take travel matters into your own hands. Seek a professional who will be able to plan a wonderful vacation for you without breaking your bank. Cook up some goodies for your loved ones.

Soul Affirmation: I change who I am by changing where I am going.

Lucky Numbers: 2, 12, 23

GEMINI

Stay positive, don't let negative people get inside your head. You know that things will work out well. Ease rapidly away from anyone who is a naysayer. During the week, things may seem hard at times, but soon life will be filled with fun. Enjoy!

Soul Affirmation: The slowness of my week gives me time to refresh my energy.

Lucky Numbers: 15, 26, 36

CANCER

The bond that you established with your spiritual side works well in your relationship with a special person. Speak of the reality of the intangible qualities of life. Your lover will understand. Keep attention on the financial matters you've been dealing with.

Soul Affirmation: I obey the rules this week and avoid hassles.

Lucky Numbers: 1, 14, 24

LEO

The link that you've established with your spiritual self will be strengthened by the people who come into your life this week. This week is a week for seriousness about a relationship. Discuss your deepest thoughts with others. They'll understand and thank you for sharing intimate parts of yourself.

Soul Affirmation: Faith keeps me calm in the storms of life.

Lucky Numbers: 44, 49, 51

VIRGO

You've done some of your own love homework. Hopefully you've had an opportunity to learn a new way of seeing the world and in that way you've found a way of loving that is more natural for you. The combination of sexiness and joyful focus can create you a wonderful love experience.

Soul Affirmation: I get joy from giving good things.

Lucky Numbers: 11, 17, 37

LIBRA

Share in the glory of your friend who has been recognized for outstanding work. Plan a small get-together to celebrate the occasion. Your time will come, and you will be placed on the pedestal. Your intimacy radar is sensitive. Watch out for a new romance that might come along. Expect the unexpected! You will be pleasantly surprised!

Soul Affirmation: Love is easier than breathing.

Lucky Numbers: 16, 30, 50

SCORPIO

You've done a lot of things in life that no one has agreed with at the beginning. Finding agreement this week will be difficult, but it should not deter you from moving forward. Feeling sorry for your loneliness will discolor what you are doing. Be happy that you are alone.

Soul Affirmation: I get joy from giving good things.

Lucky Numbers: 2, 10, 31

SAGITTARIUS

Eternal optimist, eternity is now. Get in touch with your hopefulness and be a beacon to others. Try not to be taken in by promises made by others or promises you've made to yourself. Concerning your own affairs, avoid contemplating lofty subjects and seeking long ranged solutions.

Soul Affirmation: Time is the greatest peacemaker of them all.

Lucky Numbers: 14, 28, 39

CAPRICORN

Some say optimism is fantasy. Suppose the good thing you're optimistic about never comes. This week you'll know that the joy of anticipating it is joy enough. Just the certainty of coming goodness is present goodness. The joy of tomorrow is available this week.

Soul Affirmation: This week is the week the Lord has made. I rejoice in it.

Lucky Numbers: 22, 36, 38

AQUARIUS

You might be looking into the buying or selling of a piece of property, and this week seems to be a favorable week for this type of negotiation. Be careful with the intricacies of the matter. Pay attention to details or it could cost you a great deal later.

Soul Affirmation: I care deeply about the feelings of others.

Lucky Numbers: 11, 21, 35

PISCES

What a blessed week this will be. Spend it meditating on all that God has given you. This week think hard about some form of worship. Curtis Mayfield wrote a song called "Who Do You Love?" Someone should write one called "How Do You Love?" For your love lesson, the second song would be the one you should sing.

Soul Affirmation: New intuitions create new plans and a new cast of characters.

Lucky Numbers: 7, 16, 25

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