

A Call for Black Unity Action During The Presidential Election Period Beyond

Written by Paradise Gray / One Hood ID4506

Tuesday, 26 August 2008 05:03 -

The US is on the verge of making history with the possible nomination of the first Black presidential candidate by one of the two major political parties. The massive Black voter turnouts for the Democratic Primaries are a testament of the spontaneous political upsurge that is taking place throughout the national Black community.

There are various pro and con views about Barack Obama's presidential platform. They all have a ring of truth. However, the massive Black support he is receiving represents the desire by Black people and a demand of our historic anti racist struggle for self-determination to have power and a voice in shaping our own destiny as an oppressed people and as part of the wider US working class who suffer from racism, sexism, homophobia and capitalist exploitation. This sentiment cannot be ignored by Black activists who are committed to building a radical mass movement that challenges and seeks to transform the US political and economic system.

However, the Black liberation movement, those Black organizations and social movements that unite within a national framework to organize and empower the Black masses to realize self-determination in our struggles for democracy and national liberation are fragmented. They lack an organized presence in shaping the national mass Black consciousness and direction of this political upsurge.

This fragmentation has greatly weakened the national Black community's response to major government and corporate attacks on Black peoples democratic and human rights which are rapidly intensifying under the current economic crisis. Thus, the differences around the Obama candidacy must not be a source for the continued fragmentation of the Black liberation movement. We have an historical and political obligation to unite around a program of action.

There is a sentiment among the Black masses expressed through the hundreds of local struggles throughout the country demanding radical changes in the US political, economic and social system and in power relationships between the haves and have nots.

The past 30 years has been a period of major reversals in the gains won by the Civil Rights and Black Power Movement of the 1960s and 70s. The past ten years alone have shown the most brutal and execution style murders of unnamed young Blacks by police in cities across the US. The exoneration of the killer cops that murdered Amadou Diallo and Sean Bell are examples of what the Black masses can expect from the criminal injustice system. Racist sentencing has led

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to Blacks constituting 1 million of the 2.3 million people in US prisons. And many Historic Black communities and institutions have been gentrified and dismantled.

The outright government racism and human rights violations against the majority Black and working class population in New Orleans and throughout the Gulf Coast following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, including denying thousands the right to return to their communities, is an unmistakable indication of the genocide facing masses of Black people, if there is no organized challenge to Black national oppression.

Black led mass organizations or social movements that don't engage in a practical way in this mass political upsurge, will be left behind by their own constituencies, who will conclude that they have no program to help provide direction when the masses are in motion. This is especially true among young Blacks, who have been a major part of this upsurge.

The experience of the civil rights movement under the leadership of Dr. King and others shows that the key to change is not relying on presidential candidates or liberal politicians to articulate the platform, but rather building mass movements from below that raises the demands of the Black masses and mobilizes their power. Dr. King organized the Poor Peoples Campaign during President Lyndon Johnson's 1968 run for reelection, despite the fact that he had signed the 1964 and 1965 Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts.

Black activists must see themselves as entering more than just an historic presidential campaign. It must also be seen as an important opportunity and possible juncture in the historical struggle against racism which capitalism uses to super exploit and divide the masses.

And while the struggle against Black national oppression may take on new dimensions depending on the developments during and the outcome of the presidential elections, this struggle will continue and will require a strong and politically conscious mass base, and an engaged national Black liberation movement.

This question of mass based national Black unity and political education is especially critical now. There might be confusion amidst the mass sentiment, thinking that since a Black candidate will be the Democratic Party presidential nominee and possibly the next US president that somehow the US political system and climate may be opening up democratically. The

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recent US senate vote approving a major expansion of the government's surveillance powers makes clear, that the anti democratic and repressive direction of the US government since Sept 11, 2001 has not changed.

Unlike the largely covert COINTELPRO in the 1960s, what we are seeing today, is a more open and in your face direction toward the consolidation of a fascist US government. Obama's support for the bill shows further why the Black masses regardless of their support for him, need an independent program of action.

A program of action must mobilize the Black masses along with other social movements that speak truth to power through visible actions that challenge oppression and attacks on democratic rights, and that calls on Obama and all who seek to lead this country, to hold true to the core principles advanced by Dr. King of ending racism, poverty, repression and war. Direct engagement must be part of movements for justice and democracy.

Part of the task of Black activists is to begin steps toward realigning, rebuilding, politicizing and deepening the mass base of the national Black liberation movement in preparation for the new challenges and opportunities that may occur during and following the election period. Black activists must unite to help organize local forums that provide an independent and democratic framework to engage forces within the Black community in developing and uniting around a transitional program for radical change that addresses and goes beyond the election period.

Our focus must be on organizing our people around a set of demands that unite and reflect their many struggles so that they speak and act in a collective voice. We know that there are Black and Black led mass organizations and social movements engaged in struggles around the important issues of today. However, they are not connected by a national framework and strategic slogan that begins to define the magnitude of the capitalist crisis facing the Black masses.

We call on Black activists, mass organizations and social movements to adopt the slogan We Charge Genocide and participate in a national Green Ribbon Campaign to show a united challenge against conditions and powers that are destroying our lives and communities. We call for the holding of local Black Assemblies to bring together representatives of our many struggles to discuss, refine, unite and mobilize around the following core demands as a National Black Agenda for democracy:

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- Reconstruction in the Gulf Coast and the right of return for Survivors
- Collective bargaining and the right to organize for all workers
- Family supporting living wages and income for the gainfully unemployed and disabled
- Universal healthcare
- End to US wars, military aggression and forced regime change in Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine, Africa, Latina, the Caribbean and throughout the world
- US accountability to international human rights covenants
- End gay discrimination
- Stop gentrification
- The Right to the Cities
- Major funding for infrastructure needs
- Reparations

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- Stop Environmental Racism and global warming

- Immigrant rights

- End police violence

- Economic Justice

These demands should be promoted inside the trade unions and mass organizations and social movements comprising large numbers of the Black working class and other oppressed sectors throughout society. They should be promoted at the Democratic National Convention, throughout the many mass activities aligned with the Obama campaign and by the McKinney/Clemente campaign. We call on Black activists attending the Democratic Convention to convene a Black Assembly near the convention site to bring together Black delegates and activists to engage in actions toward promoting a National Black Agenda for Democracy and Political Change.

Following the general election we call for the organizing of a mass based National Black Assembly in the first quarter of 2009 to develop a more comprehensive program of action.

The Black Left Unity Network

Box-holder P.O. Box 934 Rocky Mount, NC 27802

Saladin62@aol.com

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One Hood

[Http://www.1hood.org](http://www.1hood.org)

[Http://www.myspace.com/paradisegray](http://www.myspace.com/paradisegray)