

Black Joblessness Becoming Showdown Between Black Leaders And Black President

By Hazel Trice Edney
NNPA Editor-in-Chief

WASHINGTON (NNPA) — African-American joblessness — nearly twice the national rate — is quickly becoming the first showdown between Black leaders and the nation's first Black president as national Black and civil right leaders raise their voices telling the Obama Administration it's time to end the jobs crisis in the Black community.

"We're sending a strong message to the president and Congress that we need to step up. We need immediate jobs — not some time six, eight and 10 months down the road," National Urban League President Marc Morial said in an interview with the NNPA News Service. "African-American leaders are not just saying do something. We're offering solutions."

Morial has sent a letter to the Obama Administration and Congressional Leaders outlining specific recommendations for job creation as President Obama prepares for a job summit this week in the wake of national unemployment numbers that grew into double digits — 10.2 percent — in October. In his letter, dated Nov. 24, Morial reminds the Administration that the Black community has suffered double digit jobless rates for well more than a year.

"While I applaud the Administration for publicly acknowledging the gravity of our

nation's employment situation, I would add that double-digit unemployment has been a reality for communities of color since last summer — for African Americans since August, 2008, and for Latinos since February, 2009," he writes. "As President and CEO of the National Urban League, the nation's oldest and largest community-based movement devoted to empowering African Americans to enter the economic and social mainstream, I have firsthand knowledge of the tremendous obstacles these families have been facing, not just since national unemployment reached 10.2 % in October, but for over a year now."

Morial's strongly worded letter came on the heels of a Nov. 17 statement issued by leading African American civil right groups, the NAACP, headed by Ben Jealous, the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, headed by Wade Henderson, and other major civil rights organizations.

"Despite an effective and bold recovery package we are still facing a prolonged period of high unemployment. Two years from now, absent further action, we are likely to have unemployment at 8% or more, a higher rate than that attained even at the worst point of the last two downturns," said the joint statement, which was issued in conjunction with a forum sponsored by the Washington, D.C.-based Economic Policy Institute.

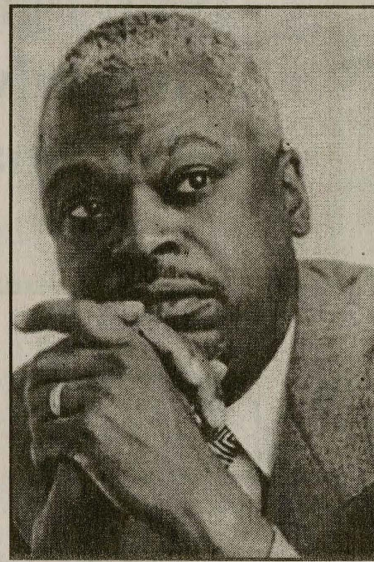
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"Unless we resolve our national job crisis, all of our other priorities — from reforming health care and fixing our broken immigration system, to stemming home foreclosures and expanding economic opportunity for all Americans — are in real jeopardy."

— Wade Henderson
LCCR President and CEO



"Joblessness on this scale creates enormous social and economic problems—and denies millions of families the ability to meet even their most basic needs. It also threatens our nation's future prosperity by casting millions more children into poverty, foreclosing educational opportunities for many, limiting the investment and innovation that will fuel future growth, and dimming long-term labor market prospects, especially for younger workers."

The joint statement credits the Obama Administration for prioritizing the economy as its first major action, pushing through a \$787. billion stimulus package approved by Congress and already creating more than a million jobs. But the groups are pushing for greater action.

Despite the issue of health care, still very much on the front-burner as it is slated for Senate debate this week, the jobless crisis is demanding equal attention as it boils to the top. House leaders hope to vote on a jobs bill by mid December

while Senate leaders have indicated they would take up a jobs bill after the health care debate.

"Make no mistake — this is the civil rights issue of the moment," said LCCR President and CEO Wade Henderson, in a statement posted on the organization's website, Civilrights.org. "Unless we resolve our national job crisis, all of our other priorities — from reforming health care and fixing our broken immigration system, to stemming home foreclosures and expanding economic opportunity for all Americans — are in real jeopardy."

The joint statement, also signed by the AFL-CIO, the National Council of La Raza, the Center for Community Change, and the Economic Policy Institute, indicates that the crisis-level concern is escalating as the numbers grow out of control — and with racial disparity.

"Nearly 16 million Americans who are able and willing to work cannot find a job. More than one out of every three unemployed workers has been out of a job for six months or more. The situation facing

African American and Latino workers is even bleaker, with unemployment at 15.7% and 13.1%, respectively," said the statement, titled, "An Urgent Call to Action to Stem the U. S. Job Crisis".

At a White House press conference last spring, President Obama fielded a question about rising Black unemployment by saying, "A rising tide lifts all boats," meaning as he addresses unemployment overall, Black unemployment will also be addressed. But, economists and civil rights leaders say general economic remedies will not be enough to rescue unemployed people who have nearly sunk to the bottom in their struggle to find work.

"A rising tide lifts all boats for those that are in the boats," Morial said. He says reported unemployment percentages only reflect those that are still looking for work; not those who have all but given up after repeated rejections.

"The real overall unemployment rate is something like 17 percent. And it's higher than that in the Black community," he said.

Morial's letter is addressed to Lawrence Summers, director of Obama's National Economic Council, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, and Congressional Black Caucus Chair Barbara Lee. The following is a synopsis of his recommendations:

- Fund Direct Job Creation by offering financial support to cities, counties, states, universities, community colleges and non-profit community based organizations to hire the personnel necessary to provide critical services in communities across the nation.

- Expand and Expedite the Small Business Administration's Community Express Loan Program through a reduction of the interest rate to 1 percent targeted for those businesses located in areas where the local unemployment rate exceeds the state average.

- Create Green Empowerment Zones in areas where at least 50 percent of the population has an unemployment rate that is higher than the state average.

- Expand the Hiring of Housing Counselors Nationwide by investing \$500 million to fund housing counseling agencies nationwide to help delinquent borrowers work with their loan servicers to secure more affordable mortgages.

- Expand the Youth Summer Jobs Program for 2010 by investing \$5-7 billion to employ 5 million teens. The unemployment rate for African-American youth is over 40 percent.

- Create 100 Urban Jobs Academies to Implement an Expansion of the Urban Youth Empowerment Program (UYEP) to employ and train the chronically unemployed.

"At a time of the year when we traditionally give thanks and prepare to share generously with those around us, the American people are both frustrated and disappointed," Morial concludes. "Despite the ambivalence of most Americans with regards to spending billions of dollars to bail out the very businesses they felt had previously taken advantage of them, they understood the need to take swift and deliberate action to avoid a major national, or even global, financial crisis. We ask that the same urgency be given to the people experiencing a personal financial crisis in cities throughout this country."

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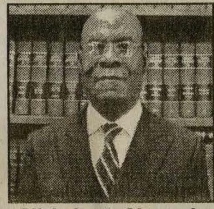
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Police Shooting

Continued From Front Page

siege, a SWAT team entered the home and found it empty. But police said Clemmons had been there.

Police frantically chased leads on Monday, searching multiple spots in the Seattle and Tacoma area and at one point cordoning off a

park where people thought they saw Clemmons. They found a handgun along with a pickup truck belonging to the suspect with blood stains inside, and alerted hospitals to be on the lookout for a man seeking treatment for gunshot wounds.

Seattle Human Rights Day

Thursday, December 10

7-8:30 p.m.

Town Hall Seattle 1119-8th Ave.

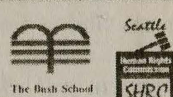


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Authorities in two states were criticized amid revelations that Clemmons was allowed to walk the streets despite a teenage crime spree in Arkansas that landed him an 108-year prison sentence. He was released early after then-Gov. Mike Huckabee commuted his sentence.

Huckabee cited Clemmons' youth in granting the request. But Clemmons quickly reverted to his criminal past, violated his parole and was returned to prison. He was released again in 2004.

"This guy should have never been on the street," said Brian D. Wurts, president of the police union in Lakewood. "Our elected officials need to find out why these people are out."

Huckabee said on Fox News Channel's "The O'Reilly Factor" Monday night that Clemmons was allowed back on the street because prosecutors failed to file paperwork in time.

Pulaski County Prosecutor Larry Jegley, whose office opposed Clemmons' parole in 2000 and 2004, said Huckabee's comments were "red herrings."

"My word to Mr. Huckabee is man up and own what you did," Jegley said.

Clemmons was charged in Washington state earlier this year

with assaulting a police officer and raping a child, and investigators in the sex case said he was motivated by visions that he was Jesus Christ and that the world was on the verge of the apocalypse.

A psychological evaluation conducted in October found he was a risk to public safety, but not a bad enough risk to justify committing him, The News Tribune of Tacoma reported.

The confidential report acquired by the newspaper was ordered by a Pierce County Superior Court judge to determine whether Clemmons was competent to stand trial on the rape and assault charges. He was found competent and was released from jail after posting bail with the assistance of Jail Sucks Bail Bonds.

At the time of his arrest, he allegedly made "religiously-themed comments, told the officer President Obama and Lebron James are his brothers, Oprah (Winfrey) is his sister and referred to himself as 'the beast,'" according to the evaluation.

Contributing to this report were Associated Press writers Manuel Valdes in Seattle, Rachel La Corte in Tacoma, George Tibbitts in Seattle, Andrew DeMillo and Jill Zeman Bleed in Little Rock, Ark

New Future For Memorial Stadium Site

Seattle Mayor Greg Nickels recently sent a bill to City Council authorizing an agreement between the City of Seattle and Seattle Public Schools on the future of Memorial Stadium on the campus of Seattle Center.

Under the proposed agreement, the city would acquire the Stadium site and lease the adjacent parking lot from Seattle Schools. Both the city and school district would share the use of a redeveloped, open-air amphitheatre. The Memorial Wall, which honors Seattle students killed in World War II, would be restored to a place of honor on the site.

"Seattle Center is often called 'Seattle's family room.' Consider this agreement the equivalent of tearing up the shag carpet and replacing the popcorn ceiling to create a more modern, livable, and beautiful space," said Nickels. "In 2012, Seattle will mark the 50th anniversary of the Century 21 Exposition — the 'Seattle World's

Fair. We have the opportunity now to ensure Seattle Center remains a vibrant community gathering place for many generations to come."

Two years ago, Nickels tasked the Seattle Center to work with Seattle Public Schools on the future of Memorial Stadium. Execution of the MOA is a significant step towards implementing the Seattle Center's Century 21 Master Plan, the City Council-adopted blueprint for major campus improvements over the next 20 years.

While the MOA authorized by the bill outlines the terms under which the city would purchase the existing stadium site and lease the adjacent parking lot from Seattle Schools, it does not obligate the city to implement the agreement until adequate acquisition and construction funding for the project is secured. The City's option to exercise its rights extends through Dec. 31, 2015.

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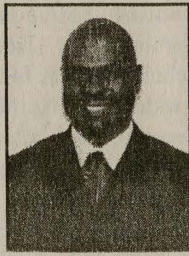
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