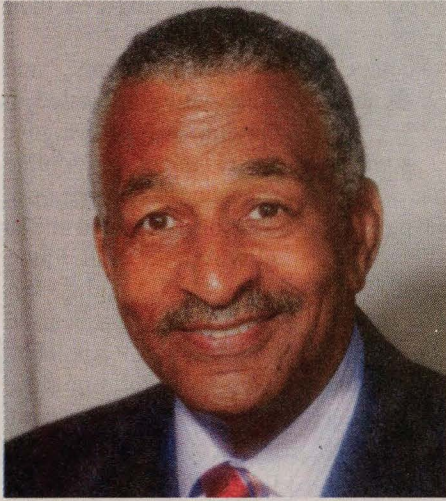


EDITORIALS • COMMENTS • OPINIONS

Blackonomics

Black Dollars Matter!



By James Clingman
NNPA Columnist

The protest slogans addressing our latest struggle for justice and equity compel me to come up with a new phrase. The signs and T-Shirts emblazoned with “I Can’t Breathe!” “No Justice, No Peace!” and the latest, “Black Lives Matter,” carry connotations related to action. I often wonder what the folks who wear the T-shirts and hold the signs are doing to back up the slogans they spout. More importantly, I wonder who makes the shirts and who sells them. With that in mind, my slogan for action – economic action is, “Black Dollars Matter!”

The “I Can’t Breathe” shirts worn by the Brooklyn Nets and Cleveland Cavaliers, for

instance, were sold by NYC Customs, a shop in Long Island, owned by Helen Mihalatos, a friend of Rameen Aminzadeh, member of Justice League of NYC. The initial gesture and resulting “hook-up” came from Nets team member, Jarrett Jack, followed by help from LeBron James and Russell Simmons’ political director, Michael Skolnick. The shirts were ordered by Jay-Z, who bought 1,000 more shirts after the basketball game.

I truly hope those “Big Ballers” and “Shot Callers” had enough consciousness to give the profits to Eric Garner’s family. The *Washington Post* reported that “Skolnick obtained shirts from a store in Long Island City, whose owner confirmed in an interview that the shirts were manufactured by Gildan, a large Canada-based apparel company...According to pro-labor activists, Gildan has a poor record when it comes to respecting workers in its manufacturing plants in Haiti.” The story discloses that Gildan’s workers are paid \$6 per day for their work. Skolnick’s response was, “I think we want to assume sometimes when we’re ordering shirts that they’re not being made in a sweatshop; we’ve got to do better.” You think?

Now you would think that someone in this chain of events involving T-shirts that carry the last words of a Black man killed on the streets of New York City by police officers would be conscious enough to say, “Hold up! Let’s not just go for the

symbolism of wearing shirts on the basketball court; let’s make a substantive statement as well, via a Black business transaction and a financial benefit for the Garner family.” Sound reasonable?

Instead we now have “I Can’t Breathe” shirts sold on Amazon and elsewhere as if they are some kind of novelty rather than a sincere, compassionate, and meaningful response to the homicidal death of Eric Garner, the originator of the “I can’t breathe” phrase. We saw him take *his* last breath; he was the one who couldn’t breathe for real. The above travesty reminds me of an article I wrote after Trayvon Martin was killed, titled, “The Profit of Protest.”

In light of the hype of “I Can’t Breathe” and now the phrase, “Black Lives Matter,” the slogan we should emblazon on shirts, and instill in our brains, the one by which we should live and the one that, if inculcated into our daily lives, will move us from the rhetoric of freedom to the action of freedom is, “Black Dollars Matter!”

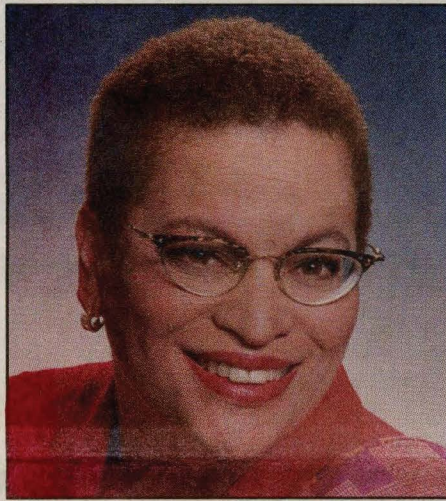
Despite the wasteful and nonsensical spending by Black folks, from the poorest to the super-rich flamboyant celebrities, we must all realize that “Black Dollars Matter” and they should matter to us first. Right now, they matter most to everyone else; and other folks are doing everything they can to get more of our dollars with no reciprocity other than symbolic gestures that make us feel good.

It’s great for athletes to wear shirts with slogans, but they should move to the next step of starting initiatives that not only sustain their gestures but build economic empowerment for Black people. Our athletes and celebrities, as they protest inequities and injustice, should keep in mind that “Black Dollars Matter,” and they should consider that as they come up with their solutions to effect real change within the systems against which they protest – and so should we.

After the chanting, the marching, the protests and demonstrations, the outrage, the threats, and the unjustified killings of our people with impunity, if all we do is sit back and wait on the next crisis, why should we even bother with the above actions in the first place? We must be smarter and we must be conscious. We must always be aware that money runs this country and it has its place in everything, yes, even in the deaths of our people.

Indeed, Black lives matter above all; but to those who kill us, those who economically exploit us, and those who are indifferent toward us, Black lives don’t matter as much as Black dollars do. Start a “Black Dollars Matter” campaign. Make some shirts displaying that attention-grabbing slogan, and act upon it. “Black Dollars Matter,” but only if they start making more sense.

Democrats Still Searching For Winning Formula



By Julianne Malveaux
NNPA Columnist

Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel just got spanked. Despite a campaign war chest of more than \$15 million and the support of President Barack Obama, the former Congressman and White House chief of staff could not avoid a run-off in the non-partisan election.

Garnering 45 percent of the vote to runner-up Jesus “Chuy” Garcia’s 34 percent, he did not clear the 50 percent bar for victory. Emanuel, the darling of the mainstream Democratic Party, has earned the dubious distinction of being in the first Chicago mayoral runoff in nearly 20 years. He also runs the risk of being the first incumbent mayor ousted since Harold Washington beat Jane Byrne in 1983.

The man who delivered the Emanuel whipping, Chuy Garcia is a county

commissioner and former alderman. His base is the poorer neighborhoods of Chicago, the Latino community, and the teachers’ union. He pounded on the theme of income inequality and exploited the widespread perception that Emanuel is arrogant and removed from poor people. Indeed, most of Rahm Emanuel’s support came from wealthy White voters who helped raise his large campaign fund. Garcia didn’t have a fraction of Emanuel’s money, but he had a large cadre of volunteers to help deliver his votes.

There were three other candidates in the race, and their combined 20 percent of the vote will likely determine the outcome of the April 7 election. Just a day after the election, both Emanuel and Garcia were courting their competitors, seeking their endorsements. So far, those opponents have been noncommittal.

Emanuel’s loss is a major setback to the Democratic establishment. Voters are tired of income inequality being acknowledged, with nothing being done about it. Their only recourse is the vote, and on February 24 in Chicago, they used it.

According to the *Chicago Tribune*, Emanuel rode to victory on the coats of Blacks four years ago with 58 percent of the votes in the six wards that are more than 90 percent Black. This time, he won 42 to 45 percent of those same wards. Blacks may determine the victor of the April 7 election.

Another possible Democratic setback is looming as Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) weighs the possibility of

challenging former Secretary of State Hilary Rodham Clinton.

Warren has been portrayed as a champion of the people, especially where consumer protection and financial matters are concerned. She has raised her voice against financial skullduggery by banking institutions, been a critic of attempts to weaken the Dodd Frank bill, and a defender of consumer rights.

The architect of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB), Warren has been the darling of the left, and has enhanced that status with her travel to many progressive gatherings. While she has demurred when asked if she will run for president, her replies, if somewhat definite, also seem coy. Additionally, there have been efforts to draft her into running, with online petitions and other efforts.

While Warren seems to have little baggage, Hilary Rodham Clinton seems less than invincible. Questions have been raised about the Clinton Foundation and the sources of its money, especially when this money has come from foreign governments that have mixed relationships with the United States.

Other questions have been raised about the high six-figure speeches Clinton gives and the audiences she gives them to. Certainly, she is entitled to earn what the market will bear, but some say those who foot the bill are the very Wall Street scions that Elizabeth Warren rails against.

Could Elizabeth Warren seriously challenge Clinton? Is there a chance that she could win the Democratic nomination?

If she chooses to enter the presidential race in the next several months, she will be entering the race at about the time Barack Obama did eight years ago. Like Obama, she has penned an autographical book that explains the origins of her populist views. And like Obama, she has the chance of “catching on” with voters.

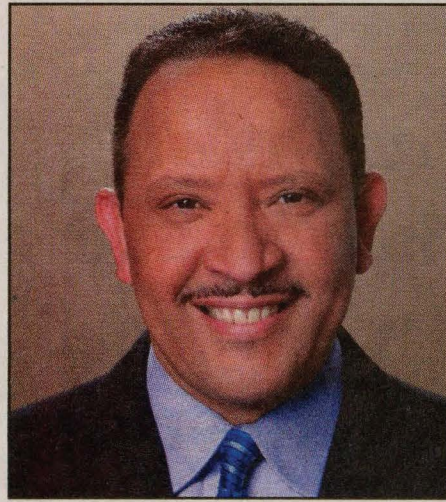
After Clinton, the only competition Warren is likely to have for the Democratic nomination is Vice President Joe Biden. But Biden, at 73, may be considered too old to be considered a viable choice for president. Biden also has a history of both oral and behavioral gaffes, most recently offering a rather intimate whisper into the ear of Defense Secretary Ashton Carter’s wife Stephanie at Carter’s swearing in.

Whether she enters the race or not, Warren’s very presence pushes Clinton to the left on populist economic issues. And if Warren enters the race and pulls three or four states, and about 20 percent of the popular vote, she offers Clinton a serious challenge. If these “draft Warren” petitions catch on and hundreds of thousands of signatures are gathered, that too, presents a challenge to Hilary Clinton.

Voters are looking for alternatives and Democrats aren’t providing them. Instead, they are offering a party line that inhibits discussion of issues and hews to the inevitability of party favorites. Rahm Emanuel’s defeat and the Warren challenge to Hilary Clinton suggest that the party line is unsatisfactory.

To Be Equal

Giuliani’s Words Do More Than Hurt – They Divide



By Marc H. Morial
NNPA Columnist

“A new expression has entered the Westminster lexicon: dog-whistle politics. It means putting out a message that, like a high-pitched dog-whistle, is only fully audible to those at whom it is directly aimed. The intention is to make potential supporters sit up and take notice while avoiding offending those to whom the message will not appeal.”

– *The Economist*, March 2005

After the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in New York City, I brought a delegation of mayors to meet with the city’s then-mayor, Rudolph Giuliani. The

delegation’s goal was to help restore confidence in the still-traumatized city and help rebuild what had been so inhumanly destroyed. At the time, I was mayor of New Orleans and president of the U.S. Conference of Mayors, and Giuliani – widely acknowledged and praised for his leadership after the attacks – catapulted onto the national stage to become “America’s Mayor.”

How times have changed. During a private New York fundraising dinner for Republican presidential candidate Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker, Giuliani popped onto the national stage yet again – not for the qualities he displayed as “America’s Mayor,” but for the unfounded accusation that President Obama does not love America.

“I do not believe, and I know this is a horrible thing to say, but I do not believe that the president loves America,” Giuliani said in response to a question about the president’s foreign policy and counter-terrorism strategies. He added, “He doesn’t love you. And he doesn’t love me. He wasn’t brought up the way you were brought up and I was brought up, through love of this country.”

Speaking in front of a 2016 Republican presidential contender and a mixed crowd of conservatives and business executives, Giuliani – who failed to win the 2008 GOP presidential nomination – attacked the

patriotism of our nation’s president, a man whose grandfather served in World War II, whose grand-uncle helped liberate the Nazi death camp at Buchenwald and who was the chief executive behind the operation to kill 9/11’s mastermind, Osama Bin Laden.

Questioning the president’s patriotism isn’t just inappropriate; it demonstrates a complete lack of respect. It begs the question that as Giuliani continues to seek a prominent role on the national political stage: Will he choose to rehearse only in the Theater of the Absurd?

Giuliani’s response was neither an honest critique of the president’s foreign policy, nor was it a considered analysis of our nation’s ongoing discussion on how to combat terrorism.

It was, however, a veiled attack on the character of our president. It was a better-left-buried relic from 2008 when candidates – including Giuliani – purposely appealed to a particular strain of the GOP base who viewed Obama, the Harvard-educated Black man raised by his White family in Hawaii, as “the other” and “not like us.” It was a rehearsal of the kind of divisive rhetoric that has no place in the 2016 race for the White House.

I am the first to assert that honest critiques of any president, administration and its policies are critical in a functioning democracy. But in this case, there is nothing constructive or relevant in maligning a man

because of the way he was raised. Further, Giuliani has yet to explain how the president’s upbringing jeopardizes the national security of our nation. How can personal attacks ever have a constructive place in our conversations about degrading and ultimately destroying ISIL or creating jobs or energy independence?

White House spokesman Josh Earnest said, “It is sad to see when somebody who has attained a certain level of public stature and even admiration tarnishes that legacy so thoroughly.”

Without hesitation, I can say that the Giuliani I met with that mayors’ delegation in the smoldering aftermath of the terror attacks – a bridge-builder, a reconciler and a healer – was not the Giuliani I heard last week. It is quite unfortunate that his reappearance on the national stage recasts and squanders that legacy for a new one that limits him to catering to groups animated by the rhetoric of division at best, and veiled hatemongering at worst.

If I agreed with anything in Giuliani’s statement, it is that, yes, it was a horrible thing to say on many levels. I would add, in a word of advice to the former mayor of New York, that whenever you feel compelled to preface a comment with “I know this is a horrible thing to say,” it is likely a comment better left unsaid.