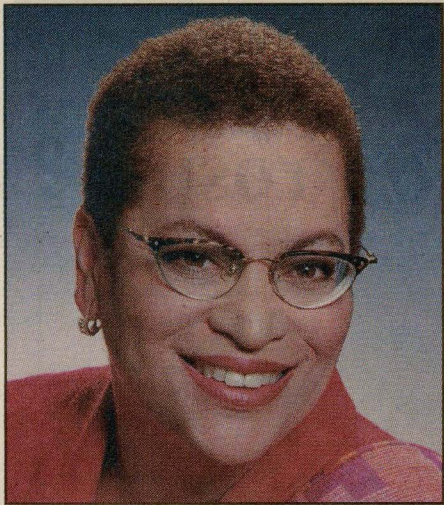


EDITORIALS • COMMENTS • OPINIONS

Alexander Acosta - Bad News In A Slick Package



By Julianne Maleaux

(Trice Edney Wire) - By the time you read this, Alexander Acosta, the 45th President’s nominee for Secretary of Labor, is likely to have been confirmed by the full Senate. He got narrow approval from the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions by a 12-11 party line vote. I don’t blame the Democrats for opposing the Acosta nomination. In his televised hearing, he was as slippery as Supreme Court nominee, Neil Gorsuch, dancing around questions and so exasperating Massachusetts Senator Elizabeth Warren (D) that she said, “This has really been frustrating. You have dodged every one of my questions. None of these were trick questions.”

Warren tried to pin Acosta down on

overtime rules. Presently, workers who earn more than \$23,660 do not qualify for time and a half, or overtime, pay. Someone who earns that little money is earning just over \$11 an hour. They hardly qualify as “executives”. President Obama proposed that the ceiling be doubled, so that anyone earning under \$47,320 could collect overtime. Four million more workers would have overtime protection. Acosta said he would take the lead from his boss, the 45th President, but indicated that the ceiling should be less than \$47,000. He prefers something in the \$33,000 range.

Will you stand up for workers, Elizabeth Warren asked him? That’s the purpose of the Labor Department. We have so many government departments who take care of corporations, but only the Labor Department takes care of the little person. Their regulations on occupational safety and health, pay fairness, and discrimination protect workers when employers are indifferent to their safety and welfare. But the 45th President’s “budget lite” proposes a 21 percent cut in the Department of Labor budget. It would eliminate some job training programs, including the Senior Community Service Employment Program, close Job Corps Centers, eliminate parts of the Office of Disability Employment Policy, and eliminate the Occupational Safety and Health Administration “unproven training grants”. This “America First” budget is disgraceful in its frequent use of words like “ineffective”,

“unproven”, “inefficient”, and “eliminate”, as if there has been any study done, in the scant 60 days of this Administration, to prove inefficiency.

Indeed, while we weren’t paying much attention, 45 signed legislation that took away occupational safety protections for those working for federal contractors. President Obama required companies competing for federal contracts to disclose and fix safety violations, but the Senate voted to revoke the Fair Pay and Safe Workplace Rule. Some Republicans said it “wasn’t fair” that companies with workplace violations couldn’t get federal contracts. They would prefer that contractors who exploit and endanger their workers be allowed to bid on federal contracts without fixing their deficiencies. They want to reward contractors who exploit and endanger their workers.

Acosta doesn’t have the baggage that restaurant executive Andrew Puzder, did. 45’s first nominee for Secretary of Labor was such a hot mess that he withdrew from consideration. Acosta is a lifelong public servant and now dean of Florida International University’s law school, and chairman of the board of the US Century Bank. He has been confirmed by the Senate for other positions, including the National Labor Relations Board and Assistant US Attorney, and he is likely to be confirmed this time around.

Despite the fact that Acosta will be only the first Hispanic on the Trump

cabinet, and the fact that his background – Harvard undergraduate and law degrees – seems impeccable, he is likely to be nothing but a disappointment for workers. Not only will he likely do less for overtime than President Obama required, but he will likely also limit rules that limit worker exposure to cancer-causing substances, and require financial advisors to work in the best interest of their clients. Essentially, he has indicated he will follow 45’s lead, and Trump is notoriously anti-regulation.

Acosta had to offer an apology for past behavior. As Assistant Attorney General, he had an employee who described conservatives as “real” Americans. The rest of us, apparently, are “commies and pinkos”. Never should have happened, he told the Senate committee. While the apology was appropriate, what, really, does he think of liberals? Will it affect his ability to enforce labor laws?

At least Acosta, unlike his boss, has enough integrity to apologize when he is wrong. But his shillyshallying testimony suggests that he doesn’t have many opinions of his own, only Trump’s. He doesn’t have a problem with the 45th President’s plans to shrink the Labor Department and he might support elimination of the Women’s Bureau. Acosta is bad news wrapped up in a slick package. His confirmation is a blow to working people.

It’s Time For Congress To Restore \$6 Billion In HUD Funding



By Charlene Crowell
NNPA Columnist

From youth yearning for the time to have their own place, to older Americans hoping to age in place, the need to have a home is a shared concern of consumers of all ages and locales. It’s where children are raised and memorable moments dwell. It’s also where many people rest, reflect, and shut out the worries of the day.

Right now, the future of our country’s commitment to housing is in jeopardy. In the recently-released White House Budget Blueprint, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) will not resemble its former self. While some programs are proposed to become smaller, others are identified for extinction. Fortunately, while the President proposes a budget, Congress must hold hearings that offer opportunities to amend what some would deem indefensible.

The irony is that so many HUD programs and services that have enjoyed longstanding, broad and bi-partisan support

across the country are among those proposed to end.

For example, since 1974, HUD’s Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program has provided local and state officials the flexibility to fund local priorities for services, projects and partnerships. Whether the need was affordable housing, blight removal, community supportive services or a way to leverage capital in redevelopment projects, local concerns have guided how to make the best use of federal funds.

According to the White House Budget Blueprint, CDBG would absorb \$3 billion of HUD’s proposed \$6.2 billion agency cut. Reactions from municipal leaders and organizations were swift.

“From CDBG block grants, to Community-Oriented Policing Services, the programs targeted for cuts provide support for millions of working Americans and help cities invest in public-good projects like police stations, food banks and domestic violence shelters,” said Matt Zone, a Cleveland city councilmember and president of the National League of Cities (NLC), an organization that advocates for 19,000 cities, towns, and villages. “These unprecedented cuts would be devastating to all our nation’s cities—with the worst impacts felt in small towns and rural communities.”

Yana Miles, a policy counsel with the Center for Responsible Lending noted that, “In housing, the proposed budget would end some of HUD’s most successful programs that help underserved communities including: Community Development Block Grants, the HOME Investment Partnerships, and Choice Neighborhoods.”

What Do We Have To Lose?

campaign rhetoric depicting African-American communities as “completely lawless,” his proposed budget cuts, mass incarceration, and the “rolling back” of the Voting Rights Act.

The CBC began its document by giving Donald Trump a Black history lesson, saying, “...to consider the state of Black America without historical context denies the origins of the problems that continue to plague our communities, as well as the centuries-long battle to bring our people to this point.” The CBC cited every era from enslavement to civil rights; the one that drew most of my attention was enslavement.

The document stated, “Slaves literally built this country, including the United States Capitol and the White House. The uncompensated labor of millions of slaves established the wealth of White America, unjust profits that have never been repaid.” I got excited when I read that part; I kept reading and assumed I would soon get to see the CBC’s demand for reparations, in some form or another to compensate our ancestors’ families for their free labor. I kept reading.

Surely I would find their position on reparations in the next section: Reconstruction. I kept reading. The Great Migration period was next—no mention of reparations yet, but I still had hope. Then came The Great Depression, The New Deal, World War II, Jim Crow, and The Civil Rights period. Where was the

demand for reparations for Black people, considering everything that was pointed out in the document? I kept reading.

Eureka! Finally, I thought. It has to be in the section titled, “Solutions for the African American Community,” which would bring to life the statement its members made in the document, namely, “The CBC has always been committed to actions infused with ‘moral clarity’ and a desire to honestly and forthrightly represent the interests of our constituents, the African-American community, and all Americans.” Yes, I cringed when I read, “and all Americans,” wondering how the CBC could represent the interests of “all,” after citing the words of founding member, Bill Clay, regarding Black “permanent interests,” at the beginning of their document. Maybe the reference to “all” was written in error. I kept reading.

When I read, “Members have always been at the forefront of issues such as economic security and empowerment...” I knew the organization that calls itself, “The conscience of America,” would lay it all out at that point, making its moral case on reparations. I kept reading. Then I read, “Our collective efforts have echoed throughout Congress for decades, and together, we will continue to stand for the many Americans who expect the Caucus to be sound and principled leaders dedicated to progress. Accordingly, we highlight the following problems across several facets of Black life and offer ‘bold solutions’ to

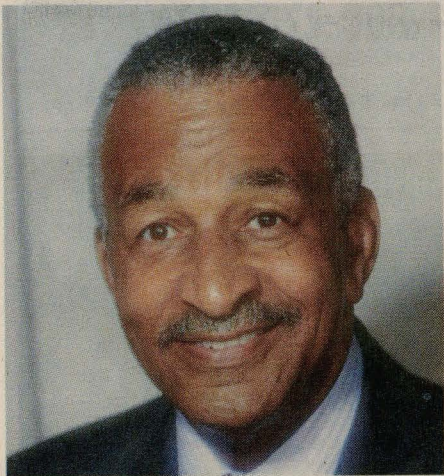
advance Black families in the 21st century.”

I kept reading, only to find that each section thereafter, replete with Black problems followed by CBC solutions, said absolutely nothing about reparations. As a matter of fact there was not even an honorable mention of senior CBC member, John Conyers, who has served since 1965, for introducing H.R. 40 and bringing it up each year since 1989. He only asks for a commission to “discuss” the economic impact of 250 years of enslavement, but his resolution has never made it out of committee.

The CBC walked right up to the reparations line in its “We have a lot to lose,” document; they made a great case for us, but they failed to cross that line by including reparations in their demands—or should I say, “suggestions” to President Trump. I stopped reading.

Clarence McKee wrote in Newsmax, “Since they [CBC] got virtually nothing from Obama to deal with issues impacting significant proportions of their constituencies, you can bet that they... will demand more of Trump than they ever did of Obama.” I don’t know, Clarence; Obama did not support reparations either, so maybe the CBC felt bad about asking Trump to do so.

It took a lot of work to write, so I think I will read the document again. A call for reparations has to be in there somewhere.



By Jim Clingman

(Trice Edney Wire) - During their recent chit-chat with President Donald Trump, the Congressional Black Caucus members made it plain that they were not there simply for a photo-op or just to engage in meaningless conversation. So, they had a serious discussion about what Black folks need Trump to do in several areas, i.e. education, criminal justice, economics, workforce, rural America, environmental, and health. And, they put it in writing—a 125-page document titled, “We have a lot to lose – Solutions to advance Black families in the 21st Century.”

According to news reports, Rep. Karen Bass, D-California, said the group raised “several areas of concern” but added that it was a “positive start.” According to Bass, among the concerns raised were Trump’s