

Race and PoliTricks II: **DISSIN' CYNTHIA**

The Search for Alternatives Ignores the McKinney Campaign

Off in the distance, struggling to be heard above the din of **Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton** and **John Mc- Cain**, a plaintive, High-Pitched Voice is calling.

"Hello? Anyone hear me? *Is anybody there?*"

As the Clinton campaign was using her family fortunes to spread her message decrying elitism and busily courting the White working-class votes in West Virginia and Kentucky, and Afrikan-American voters were circling the wagons around Obama because "one of us finally has a chance to contest for the White House", the High-Pitched Voice was calling again.

"Anybody want to hear my platform? Anybody want to ask me any questions? Challenge me to a *debate?*"

As speculation swirled around the newly-victorious Obama campaign as to whom the Democratic Party nominee would choose as his running mate, as Republican standard-bearer McCain began his political attack strategy, even as Afrikan-American leftists meeting in North Carolina speculated on how Pan-Afrikanists, Black Nationalists and others in the Black Left will deal with a potential Obama presidency, I could still hear the High-Pitched Voice.

"Hello? My name is **Cynthia McKinney**. I am currently a candidate for President of the United States. I'm running on the **Green Party** ticket. Oh, and by the way, *I am Black too.*"



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Bob Law on Supporting Our Own

An Appeal for Appropriate Behavior

Bob Law is a Black Talk Radio icon, having hosted *Night Talk* on New York's 1600 AM WWRL and radio stations across the United States. He currently works with the National Coalition For Justice.

We have often talked about economic sanctions as a way of combating racism and injustice. We are aware of the more than *Six Hunderd Billion* consumer dollars being spent by Black Americans annually. We have talked about withholding those dollars to punish those who offend, exploit, and all too often, deny us justice.

However, we have rarely talked of using those same dollars to reward and support those who have dedicated their lives to serving the Black community.

When **Rick Warren** wrote the book *The Purpose Driven Life* it immediately became a million seller because his constituents bought it without hesitation. Sight unseen, no questions asked. There are those in this society who can count on each other.

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Diaspora Notes: Engaging with the African Union

The concept of bringing the Afrikan Diaspora, known to some as the "Sixth Region" of the Pan-Afrikan World, into the **African Union (AU)** has led to an unusual amount of confusion and controversy, even among Pan-Afrikanists who see the unification of Afrikans around the world as a critically important goal. The five current *official* Regions, according to the African Union, are: North, South, East, West and Central Afrika. The **Sixth Region Diasporan Caucus (SRDC)** is one of the principal organizations in the Western Hemisphere that are leading the way for the Diaspora to become an official part of the AU as the "Sixth Region".

Mr. Eddy Maloka, Chief Executive Officer of the **Africa Institute of South Africa** and a member of the Secretariat of the **New Partnership for Africa's Development**, discussed the importance of including the Diaspora in the official Pan-Afrikan World:

The Executive Council of the African Union has defined the African Diaspora as "peoples of African origin living outside the continent, irrespective of their citizenship and nationality and who are willing to contribute to the development of the continent and the building of the African Union". ...

A number of conclusions can be drawn, namely that:

--The largest concentration of the African Diaspora is in the Americas and the Caribbean;

--African Diaspora immigrants are in parts of North America and constitute a dominant African Diaspora presence in Europe and, of course, Asia and the Middle East; and that

--African Diaspora communities are generally excluded and marginalised in their respective countries, with a section of those in the Caribbean the only ones in possession of the state machinery. ...

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Dissin' Cynthia, from Page 1

A History of Activism and Struggle

We've put together information on her political history, her Vice Presidential running mate and her documented stands on many of the issues. We've attempted to be as accurate and true to the historical record as we can. Much of this information comes from the **Wikipedia** web site.

Cynthia Ann McKinney was born March 17, 1955 in Atlanta, Georgia, the daughter of **Billy McKinney**, one of Atlanta's first Black law enforcement officers, and a former Georgia State Representative, and **Leola McKinney**, a retired nurse.

In 1986 her father, a representative in the Georgia House of Representatives after he decided to leave his law enforcement career, submitted her name as a write-in candidate for the Georgia state house. She did not win that race, but in 1988, she ran for the same seat and won, making the McKinneys the first father and daughter to simultaneously serve in the Georgia state house.

First terms in Congress

In the 1992 election, McKinney was elected to the US House of Representatives by the newly created, 64% Black 11th District. She was the first Afrikan-American woman to represent Georgia in the House. She coasted to re-election in 1994.

In 1995 the US Supreme Court ruled in *Miller v. Johnson* that the 11th District was an unconstitutional gerrymander because the boundaries were drawn based on the racial composition of the constituents. McKinney's district was subsequently renumbered as the 4th and redrawn to take in almost all of DeKalb County. McKinney asserted that it was a racially-discriminatory ruling, since the Supreme Court had previously ruled that Texas's 91% White 6th District was constitutional. But she won anyway in 1996, as well as two more times with no substantive opposition.

But in 2002, McKinney surprisingly lost the Democratic primary to DeKalb County judge **Denise Majette**, 58% to 42%. McKinney protested the result in court, claiming that thousands of Republicans, knowing they could not win in the general election in this heavily-Democratic district, had "crossed over" to vote in the Georgia's "open" primary (voters may participate in whichever party's primary election they choose) to eliminate her. But the district court dismissed the case, the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals upheld the ruling, and the Supreme Court refused to overrule.

Other factors in her defeat were her opposition to aid to Israel, a perceived support of Palestinian and Arab causes and charges of anti-semitism by her supporters, even though she has been endorsed by several Jewish activist organizations over the years.

Out of Congress, But Not Out of Activism

On Sept. 9, 2004, McKinney was a commissioner in the The Citizens' Commission on 9-11. On October 26, 2004, she was among 100 prominent Americans and 40 family members of those who were killed on 9/11 who signed the **9/11 Truth Movement** statement, calling for new investigations of unexplained aspects of the 9/11 events.

Swimming Against the Current, Again

Majette declined to run for re-election to the House in 2004, opting instead to run for Senate. Thus, McKinney reclaimed her Congressional seat after a two-year absence. However, contrary to traditional practice, the Democrats did not restore her seniority, which would have made her a senior Democrat on the International Relations and Armed Services committees, as well as ranking Democrat on an International Relations subcommittee.

Initially, McKinney kept a low profile upon her return to Congress. However, she was soon back in the spotlight of controversy as she resumed her challenges to the established order.

She hosted the first delegation of Afro-Latinos from Central and South America and worked to win recognition for Afro-Latinos. She stood with Aborigines against Australian mining companies, and with the **U'wa people of Colombia** against oil rigs.

She was one of the 31 in the House who objected to the official allotment of the electoral votes from Ohio in the 2004 US presidential election to incumbent **George W. Bush**.

On July 22, 2005, the first anniversary of the release of the **9/11 Commission Report**, she held a well-attended Congressional briefing on Capitol Hill to address outstanding issues regarding the September 11, 2001 attacks. Despite the expert analysis of a wide variety of experts on several panels throughout the day, an *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* editorial only questioned why she was once again taking on the issue that was believed to have cost her her House seat before. They declined to publish her reply.

The 9/11 Commission sealed all the notes and transcripts of 2,000 interviews, all forensic evidence, and both classified and non-classified documents used to compile its final report until Jan. 2, 2009. McKinney's interest in

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9/11 relates to her opposition to excessive government secrecy, which she has challenged with numerous pieces of legislation.

She has submitted to Congress two different versions of the "MLK Records Act" (one in 2003, the other in 2005) to release all currently sealed files (sealed in 1998 and not due for release until 2028) concerning the 1968 assassination of the **Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.** The bill has received numerous endorsements from former members of the House Select Committee on Assassinations, but has apparently not been passed.

Hurricane Katrina, Anti-War and Anti-Bush

McKinney has been an advocate for victims of **Hurricane Katrina** and a critic of the government's response. Over 100,000 evacuees from New Orleans and Mississippi relocated to the Atlanta area, and many have now settled there.

During the Katrina crisis, evacuees were turned away (*at gunpoint*) by the Gretna Police when they attempted to cross the Crescent City Connection Bridge between New Orleans and Gretna, Louisiana. McKinney was the only member of Congress to participate in a march across the Crescent City Connection Bridge on November 7, 2005, to protest what had happened.

She chose to be an active participant in the Select Bipartisan Committee to Investigate the Preparation for and Response to Hurricane Katrina, despite the Democratic Party leadership's call for Democratic members to boycott the committee. She submitted her own 72-page report. She sat as a guest along with only a few other Democrats.

The Congressional Black Caucus' **Omnibus Bill (HR 4197)** was introduced on November 2, 2005, to provide a comprehensive response to the Gulf Coast residents affected by Hurricane Katrina. McKinney sought a **Comprehensive Environmental Sampling and Toxicity Assessment Plan**, or **CESTAP**, to minimize harm to Gulf Coast residents from the toxic releases into the environment caused by the hurricane.

McKinney along with Rep. **Barbara Lee** (CA) produced a "Katrina Legislative Summary," a chart summarizing House and Senate bills on Hurricane Katrina. On June 13, 2006, McKinney pointed out on the House floor that of the 176 Katrina bills identified on the chart, 163 remained stalled in committee.

On August 2, 2007, McKinney was in New Orleans to help launch the **International Tribunal on Hurricanes Katrina and Rita**, which was held from August 29 through September 2 in New Orleans, Louisiana. An international panel of judges heard testimony from members of the Afrikan-American, Latino immigrant, Indigenous and poor communities, as well as several scientists and researchers, on acts of judicial misconduct, police brutality, environmental destruction and gentrification plans that were and are being pursued by local, regional, federal and big business officials in the aftermath of the hurricanes.

McKinney worked on legislation to stop conventional weapons transfers to governments that are undemocratic or fail to respect human rights. Her legislation to end the mining of **coltan**, a mineral used in the manufacture of cell phones, computers, CD and DVD players, in eastern **Democratic Republic of Congo** was mentioned in the United Nations Security Council's "Special Report on Ituri" (a province in DR Congo).

On Nov. 18, 2005, McKinney was one of only three House members (out of 406) to vote for Republican House Armed Services Committee chairman **Duncan Hunter's H.R. 571**, which called for an *immediate* withdrawal of US forces in Iraq.

At the end of the 2006 legislative session, McKinney introduced articles of impeachment against President **George W. Bush** as **H.Res 1106**, which makes three charges against Bush: manipulating intelligence and lying to justify the war in Iraq, failing to uphold accountability, and violating privacy laws with his domestic spying program. The second article also makes charges against Vice President **Dick Cheney** for helping to "fix" the intelligence in order to justify the Iraq War, and against Secretary of State **Condoleezza Rice** for making false statements about Iraq's alleged weapons of mass destruction program. Ohio Representative and recent Democratic presidential candidate **Dennis Kucinich** introduced 35 articles of impeachment against Bush and Cheney in June, drawing high praise from McKinney.

The Capitol Police incident

On the morning of March 29, 2006, McKinney entered the Longworth House Office Building's southeast entrance and proceeded past the security checkpoint, walking around the metal detector. Members of Congress have identifying lapel pins and are not required to pass through metal detectors. The officers failed to recognize McKinney as a member of Congress because, they said, she was not wearing the lapel pin. About halfway down the hallway she was grabbed by US Capitol Police officer **Paul McKenna**, who states that he had been calling after her. Two days later, McKenna filed a police report claiming that McKinney had struck "his chest with a closed fist."

In the midst of a media frenzy, McKinney made an apology on the floor of the House of Representatives on April 6, 2006, neither admitting to nor denying the charge, stating only that: "There should not have been any physical contact in this incident."

2006 primary: Redistricting Wins At Last

McKinney finished first in the July 18, 2006 Democratic primary, edging DeKalb County Commissioner **Hank Johnson** 47.1% to 44.4%. However, since McKinney failed to get at least 50% of the vote, she and Johnson were forced into a runoff, which Johnson won on August 8th, 59% to 41%. Her defeat in the runoff is attributed to yet another redistricting, as well the highly publicized Capitol police incident.

2008 Green Party presidential candidacy

Green Party members had attempted to recruit McKinney both in 2000 as a vice-presidential running mate for **Ralph Nader**; and in 2004 as the nominee for president, but she chose to concentrate on reclaiming her congressional seat.

Following her defeat in the 2006 congressional election, McKinney spoke at the California Green Party strategy retreat in Sonoma. She then appeared at the July 15 Green Party National Meeting in Reading, Pennsylvania, where she suggested that the Green Party could become a progressive political force. "[T]he disgust of the American people with what they see before them — all they need is the blueprint and a road map. Why not have the Green Party provide the blueprint and the road map?"

At an August 27, 2007 peace rally in Kennebunkport, Maine, she confirmed the depth of her disenchantment with the Democratic Party, urging San Francisco voters to replace **Nancy Pelosi** with activist **Cindy Sheehan**.

In mid-October, McKinney filed with the Federal Elections Commission. She formally announced her candidacy with a video on her web site and on *YouTube* on December 16, 2007.

At first, it seemed that there would be a crowded field for the Green Party nomination. **Jared Ball**, a Washington, DC activist, withdrew to support McKinney's candidacy. Nader, the 2000 nominee, had contested the early primaries, but chose to mount a fully-independent campaign. And former Black Panther Party chair **Elaine Brown**, who had started an energetic Green campaign of her own, abruptly quit the Party after she was apparently slighted in an early primary. Supporters say that the Green Party had mistreated her and owed her an apology, while others claimed that her platform, with little emphasis on environmental issues or other traditional Green Party planks, was not consistent with the party in the first place, while McKinney had championed several environmental issues and was endorsed by the League of Conservation Voters, among others.

So, in the end there was only McKinney as a major candidate, and on July 12, at the Green Party Convention, she was officially awarded the nomination for president of the United States.

Rosa Clemente, Green Party VP

On July 9, 2008, Cynthia McKinney named her Vice Presidential running mate. She is **Rosa Clemente**. The following information is from Wikipedia and www.campusprogress.org:

Rosa Alicia Clemente is a community organizer, independent journalist, commentator and Hip-Hop activist. Born and raised in the South Bronx, she is a graduate of the University of Albany and Cornell University. She has been delivering workshops, presentations and commentary for over ten years. **Chuck D** says "When you need a dynamic, stylish woman to get your campaign going or to get your organization excited about activism, Rosa is the person you are looking for. She speaks from the heart with truth, fire and passion. She is one of this generation's most important political voices and community organizers."

Her academic work has been dedicated to researching national liberation struggles inside the United States, with a specific focus on the **Young Lords Party** and the **Black Liberation Army**. While a student at SUNY Albany, she was President of the Albany State University Black Alliance (ASUBA) and Director of Multicultural Affairs for the Student Association. At Cornell she was a founding member of **La Voz Boriken**, a social/political organization dedicated to supporting Puerto Rican political prisoners and the independence of Puerto Rico.

She has written for *Clamor Magazine*, *The Ave. magazine*, *The Black World Today*, *The Final Call* and numerous websites. She has been the subject of articles in the *Village Voice*, *The New York Times*, *Urban Latino*, and *The Source* magazine. She has appeared on *CNN*, *C-Span*, *Democracy Now!* and *Street Soldiers*. In 2001 she was a youth representative at the United Nations World Conference against Xenophobia, Racism and Related Intolerance in South Africa. Seeing a need for young people of color to be heard and taken seriously she began presenting workshops and lectures at colleges, universities, high schools, and prisons. In the past ten years she has presented at over 200 colleges, conferences and community centers on topics such as

African-American and Latino/a Intercultural Relations, Hip-Hop Activism, The History of the Young Lords Party, and Women, Feminism and Hip Hop.

In 2003 Clemente helped form and coordinate the first ever National Hip Hop Political Convention that drew over 3000 activists who came together to create and implement a national political agenda for the Hip-Hop generation. As an independent journalist 10 days after Hurricane Katrina ravaged parts of the south, she traveled to the areas as an independent journalist and her on-the-ground reports were broadcast on independent radio stations and programs all over the world, including *Air America*, *NPR*, *Pacifica Radio*, *Democracy Now!*, *Indymedia*, *Hard Knock Radio* and many other independent and mainstream media outlets. **Davey D**, prominent hip hop historian and founder of the largest Hip Hop website www.daveyd.com, said, "Hip Hop activist Rosa Clemente was one of the few 'non-mainstream' journalists allowed into New Orleans where the flood waters and damage has occurred. She brings to us a heart-wrenching eye opening account of what's really going on... She talks about the smell of death in the air and how things are much worse then we could ever imagine."



Elaine Brown and Ralph Nader.



The McKinney Political Record

The Web Site "On The Issues: Every Political Leader on Every Issue", www.issues2000.org, gives some good information on McKinney's documented positions. Here are a few:

Budget & Economy: We have money for programs; it's just misallocated; Get minorities into home ownership & global marketplace.

Civil Rights: Reparations for former slaves; End racial profiling; Constitutional Amendment for equal rights by gender; Rated 97% by the NAACP,

indicating a pro-affirmative-action stance; Supported legislation on violence against women.

Corporations: Corporate media limits discourse & voters therefore drop out; Astounded at the corporate influence in Farm Bill; Require reporting of outsourced jobs; Sponsored bill on Code of Conduct for US corporations abroad

Crime: End racial disparities in sentencing; Police take communities of color as rampaging ground; Voted YES on alternative sentencing instead of more prisons; Voted NO on more prosecution and sentencing for juvenile crime; Voted YES on maintaining habeas corpus rights in Death Penalty Appeals

Drugs: Legalize medical marijuana & needle exchanges; Detoxification & rehabilitation—not incarceration

Education: Something wrong with \$38 billion on education & \$700 billion on defense; No Child Left Behind aimed at dismantling public education; Voted YES on \$84 million in grants for Black and Hispanic colleges; Voted NO on vouchers for private & parochial schools; Supported funding for teacher training & other initiatives

Energy & Oil: Declare US carbon-free and nuclear-free; Implement Kyoto; oppose drilling Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and offshore; fund sustainable power sources; Rated 100% by the CAF, indicating support for energy independence

Environment: Sustainable production and consumption policies; Add organic farming as well as a ban on Genetically Modified Food to Farm Bill; Recognize Katrina victims as Internally Displaced Persons; Assess toxic contaminants in aftermath of Katrina & Rita; Voted NO on de-authorizing "critical habitat" for endangered species; Ban commercial logging on public land

Families & Children: Voted YES on reducing Marriage Tax by \$399 billion over 10 years; Supported funding child care, health and housing

Foreign Policy: Close the School of the Americas; Targeted by the America-Israel Political Action Committee (AIPAC) for opposing Israeli occupation; Make US a partner for global peace; Listen to advocates in Israel & Palestine, not to AIPAC; Voted YES on \$156M to IMF for 3rd-world debt reduction; Allow Americans to travel to Cuba; Multi-year commitment to Africa for food & medicine

Free Trade: Put a stop to these "free trade" agreements, and quickly; Voted YES on withdrawing from the WTO; No Most Favored Nation for China, condition trade on human rights

Government Reform: Longtime supporter of publicly financed elections; End privately-owned and party-run voting machines; Do better on government contracting for small & minority business; Voted NO on requiring photo ID for voting in federal elections; NO on restricting independent grassroots political committees; Election reform is #1 priority

Gun Control: Voted NO on prohibiting product misuse lawsuits on gun manufacturers; NO on decreasing gun waiting period from 3 days to 1

Health Care: Supports single-payer universal health care; Take insurance companies out of health-care equation; Increase funding for AIDS treatment & prevention; More funding for prescription benefits, community health, women's needs, family, pre-natal, post-natal and children's coverage; Cover senior prescriptions under Medicare

Homeland Security: End the rollback of our civil liberties; Oppose Patriot Act; We have not heard the truth about September 11; Allow concurrent veterans' disability & retired pay; Suspend use of depleted uranium munitions; Voted NO on allowing electronic surveillance without a warrant; Voted NO on continuing intelligence gathering without civil oversight; Voted NO on continuing military recruitment on college campuses; Voted NO on \$266 billion Defense Appropriations bill; Voted NO on deploying "Star Wars"; End the use of anti-personnel mines; Recognize women veterans; assist military families

Immigration: No skilled worker visas, but no border fence either; Corporations used "illegal immigrants" as scapegoats; Voted YES on extending Immigrant Residency rules

Jobs: Authored a living wage bill; Gainful employment at a guaranteed income for every family; Unions essential to protecting wages & worker safety; Debt relief for Black farmers who were cheated in '80s loans; Voted YES on \$167 billion over 10 years for farm price supports; Sponsored bill requiring disclosure of outsourced employees

Principles & Values: Helped draft the Reconstruction Party Manifesto; Advocate of Hip-Hop movement for social justice

Social Security: Voted YES on raising 401(k) limits & making pension plans more portable; Voted YES on reducing tax payments on Social Security benefits; Supported pension reform and tax credits for long-term care

Tax Reform: Voted NO on retaining reduced taxes on capital gains & dividends; Voted NO on eliminating the Estate Tax; Supports progressive taxation; eliminate marriage penalty; Tax incentives for child care, education, new schools, & families

Technology: Voted YES on establishing "network neutrality" (non-tiered Internet); YES on increasing fines for indecent broadcasting; Close digital divide with training

War & Peace: Immediate withdrawal from Iraq & from rest of world; Voted NO on declaring Iraq part of War on Terror with no exit date; Voted against the invasion of Kosovo; Condemns anti-Muslim bigotry in name of anti-terrorism

Welfare & Poverty: Voted YES on providing \$70 million for Section 8 Housing vouchers; Reduce the concentration of wealth & wage inequality

Reactions from Afro-America

The reactions from the Afrikan-American community to the McKinney campaign have exposed a degree of confusion even among Afrikan-centered activists. Many of us speak as though we don't even know she's running. Others dismiss her as the 2008 version of Nader, who was seen as costing the **Al Gore-Joe Lieberman** ticket just enough votes in Florida to allow Bush to steal the presidency in 2000. In his commentary "The Parade of Anti-Obama Rascals", poet and activist **Amiri Baraka** writes:

[I]t is criminal for these people claiming to be radical or intellectual to oppose or refuse to support Obama. I hope we don't have to hear about "the lesser of two evils" from people whose foolish mirror worship would have us elect the worst of two evils.

For those who claim radical by supporting McKinney or, brain forbid, the Nadir of fake liberalism, we should have little sympathy. As much as I have admired Cynthia McKinney, to pose her candidacy as an alternative to Obama is at best empty idealism, at worst nearly as dangerous as when Nader used the same windy egotism to help elect Bush.

The people who are supporting McKinney must know that that is an empty gesture. But too often such people are so pocked with self congratulatory idealism, that they care little or understand little about politics (i.e. the gaining maintaining and use of power) but want only to pronounce, to themselves mostly, how progressive or radical or even revolutionary they are.

Faced with the obvious that McKinney cannot actually do anything by running but put out lines a solid left bloc should put out anyway, their pre-joinder is that Obama will be running as a candidate of an imperialist party, or Imperialism will not let Obama do anything different or progressive ... that he will do the same things any Democrat would do and that the Democrats are using Obama to draw young people to the Democratic party. Also that there is a sector of the bourgeoisie that supports Obama to put a new face on the US as alternative to the Devil face Bush has projected as the American image.

Some of these things I agree with, but before qualifying that let me say that no amount of solipsistic fist pounding about



Rosa Clemente

"radical principles" will change this society as much as the election of Barack Obama will as president of the US. Not to understand this is to have few clues about the history of this country, its people, or the history of the Black struggle in the US. It is also to be completely at odds with the masses of the Afro-American people, let us say with the masses of black and colored people internationally. How people who claim to lead the people but who time after time fail them so badly must be understood. It is because they confuse elitism with class consciousness. ...

Obama is the Democratic nominee. Only repeats of the outright election theft of Florida in 2000 and Ohio in 2004 can put McCain in the white house. ... It is up to revolutionaries and progressives and radicals of all stripes to make it difficult for another larceny in November. We should agitate for serious disruption across this country and internationally if such a criminal attempt to steal the US presidency is mounted.

For the so called left and would be radicals (and some grinning idiots who say they don't even care about politics) the McKinney gambit is to label oneself "Quixote of the loyal opposition" to pipsqueak a hiss of disapproval at the rulers while being an enabler of the same. Neither McCain nor McKinney will help us. Only Obama offers some actual help.

While I do not seek a fight with Baba Amiri, haven't we played this one before? **Bill Clinton** was seen as a "savior" to Afrikan people who jumped on the Democratic Party bandwagon and chose to distance themselves from **Rev. Jesse Jackson's** campaign. We regarded Clinton as "the first Black president" as he donned sunglasses and grabbed a saxophone on *The Arsenio Hall Show*. And what did our devotion to Democratic Party values get us? The Omnibus Crime Bill, the Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act, the Welfare Reform Bill, all of which disproportionately hurt Afrikan people; eight years of continuous bombings in Iraq, even without a declared war; campaign race-baiting aimed at Jackson, **Sista Souljah**, and (this year) Obama. Clinton's influence on the Democratic Party was to push it to the right through his **Democratic Leadership Council**, which he had organized before he became president.

Obama has recently shown a similar rightward drift. His stances on the Iraq War and the **Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act** (which, a year ago, he had threatened to filibuster, only to vote for it outright this year when a few cosmetic changes were made) have noticeably Republicanized themselves since he won the Democratic nomination. This has led some to wonder: Is Obama a Black Shining Prince or a Black Trojan Horse?

The pundits prattle on about the "differences" between Obama and McCain. McCain says "win the war in Iraq"; Obama says "take the war to Afghanistan". And *this* represents "both sides of the debate". With a more *unsafe* world, a national treasury on the verge of collapse and a nation's collective soul at stake, where is the voice that says "*No War On Terror AT ALL*"?

Meanwhile, there's McKinney. Some say her candidacy is futile, even treasonous to Afrikan people's interest. Others say that any movement must start somewhere, and that this is the single step that starts the thousand-mile journey. Some express the fear that her campaign will cost Obama the White House. Still others answer that even an Obama victory will not necessarily be a victory for *us* due to the influences already being exerted on him by members of his inner circle and the moneyed elites.

When the mindless blather we call news actually *does* go to more "independent" voices, it's usually Nader (Independent), **Bob Barr** (Libertarian Party) or **Ron Paul** ("renegade" Republican). To many, Cynthia McKinney *still* does not exist.

Perhaps the best *likely* scenario is: Obama defeats McCain, thus giving him at least four years in which to prove himself one way or the other, while McKinney garners enough votes to signal the dawn of a new era in politics (which everyone seems to agree is necessary), an end to the domination of the two "corporate" parties (again, much agreement from the masses) and a signal to the next president that *we'll be watching*, that if he betrays the trust of the American people and sells out the Afrikan community, he will have to hear the High-Pitched Voice yet again. Only this time, it will not be so plaintive, and it will not be so tiny.

Or will Obama's political waffling, coupled with McCain's stumbling, somehow lead to the High-Pitched Voice speaking to us from the White House? *Nawwww. ... You think?*



An Appeal For Appropriate Behavior

Bob Law Column, from Page 1

What if the conscious Black folks in New York City could count on each other? What if the Black Nationalists would immediately buy **Camille Yarbrough's** new CD? She has been a sister warrior all of her career, and makes excellent music. What if the conscious Black folk would eat regularly at **Bob Law's Seafood Café**, or attend the live music performances at **Sistahs Place**? What if these people who constantly look for ways to *serve* the Black community, could count on the *support* of the Black community?

Black businesses and independent Black institutions fail weekly, as gentrification sweeps through Harlem and Brooklyn with a vengeance, displacing Blacks as whites continue to make calculated choices about where to spend their money and who to support. *The Wall Street Journal*, in an article on whites returning to the city, states as a matter of fact that "Beloved institutions in traditionally Black communities--minority owned restaurants and book stores--are losing the customers who supported them for decades."

The problem does not lay simply with whites, although their racism is the primary problem. Another real concern is that even the people who have spent their lives working on *behalf* of the Black community, cannot count on the *support* of the Black community. *Not even support from the Black nationalist or conscious Black folks.*

We have become very comfortable with symbols of Blackness--African clothing, African greetings and we begin many meetings and events with libations recognizing our ancestors--while current day warriors are being ignored. We must match symbol with substance.

What if we launch a meaningful campaign to **Bring Back Black**, with Conscious or Nationalist Black folks leading the way?

As we dedicate ourselves to supporting every group that ventures near Black consumer dollars, let's begin immediately to use our resources to support each other as well. Let Black Solidarity mean solid support for the enterprise of our own brothers and sisters.



Contact the National Leadership Alliance at cfjustice.org.

SRDC Diaspora Notes

Sixth Region Diaspora Caucus, from Page 1

The engagement with the Diaspora, in this context, is not only part of the implementation of the objective of building a better world, but also fits into advancing the African Agenda....

The Diaspora ... is one motive force that stands to gain from a world better than the one we have today where might is right and the poor have no share of the cake.

The African Agenda ... is about the promotion of democracy on the continent, the eradication of violent conflicts, advancing Africa's development and combating underdevelopment, poverty, diseases and illiteracy, protecting and affirming African culture and enhancing Africa's global standing. Africa, of course, has to lead in the realisation of this Agenda, but certainly not without partners outside the continent. Here, the African Diaspora can make an invaluable contribution ...

But engagement with the African Diaspora is in no way limited to the contribution this constituency can make towards the African Agenda and the building of a better world. First, African Diaspora communities, for the most part, are confronted with problems of marginalisation and exclusion in their respective countries; their plight should be Africa's cause. This also applies to those in the Caribbean ... who, like the African continent, are marginalised and excluded at the global level.

Secondly, in spite of having being separated from their mother continent for centuries, African Diaspora communities constitute a significant African presence in their respective countries in, for example, their music, dance, dishes, mannerism, and religion. This strong and enduring cultural bond with the mother continent needs encouragement and nurturing.

And thirdly are issues of common concern between the continent and its Diaspora which are still on the global agenda whose resolution will depend in large part on collective action between the continent and its Diaspora.

The principal example here is the legacy of slavery as a crime against humanity and the issue of Reparations.

--Eddy Maloka, Engaging the Diaspora as a force for a better Africa, Umrabulo #30, November 2007

When the **Constitutive Act** of the African Union Constitution was re-written in 2003, the aim was clearly stated to bring the Diaspora into the AU. Guidelines were established and the **Western Hemisphere African Diaspora Network (WHADN)** was charged with guiding the effort in the western hemisphere. WHADN has since left the fray as its contract with the AU ended, but the Diaspora was to continue to organize itself in the sub-regions designated (Canada, the US, Mexico/Caribbean, South America, Brazil, Europe), set Councils of Elders, educate the people about the process, then choose Representatives and Observers. SRDC has taken on the task of assisting the sub-regions. Each sub-region was allotted a certain number of Representatives that would join in the 20-member Diasporan delegation to the African Union's **Economic, Social and Cultural Council**.

Maloka goes on to describe that process:

Africa's engagement with its Diaspora has a long history, dating back to the Atlantic slave trade and the beginning of the Pan-African movement.

However, it was with the transformation of the Organisation of African Unity into the AU that this engagement received a new impetus.

Accordingly, the Protocol on the Amendments to the Constitutive Act of the African Union proposes in Article 3(q) an additional objective of the AU which is to "invite and encourage the full participation of the African Diaspora as an important part of our Continent, in the building of the African Union".

Whereas this Protocol is yet to enter into force, member states have already taken decisions at both Summit and Executive Council levels, to give effect to this proposal. The AU and some member states, including South Africa, are now actively involved in engaging the Diaspora. At the level of the AU, the Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC), is driving the Diaspora agenda, targeting civil society agents. There are provisions in the ECOSOCC Statute for Diaspora participation in the structures and activities of the organ. A co-ordination mechanism has been established in the various Diaspora regions for the facilitation of this participation.

Thus, it's clear that the intention of the AU is to include the Diaspora "in the building of the African Union."

While the AU decides on the specific means by which we in the Diaspora are to become incorporated into its operations, we are expected to organize ourselves. The AU will not do it for us. In fact, the AU expects that the Diaspora will choose its own representatives, through a democratic process that allows the people, not the elites, to decide who will represent us.

In the United States, the path chosen was to have each state elect 2 representatives and up to 6 observers, as well as determine a State Council of Elders and set that state's Pan-African Agenda. The delegations from the states all meet annually to set the common Agenda for Afrikans in the US and decide among them who from the US would become part of the 20-member Diasporan delegation that would travel to the AU Summit that year.

Dr. David Horne of the **SRDC Secretariat** explains it thus:

Currently, the largest and most effective Diasporan group is the Sixth Region Diasporan Caucus Organization, with branches in California, Washington state, Arizona, New York, Ohio, Maryland, South Carolina, all six countries of Central America, Canada, Martinique and Guadeloupe, Brazil, ten countries in Europe, and counting as the coordination effort continues. The primary objective of the SRDC is to get a critical mass of the 275,000,000-strong Diaspora organized well enough to accept the AU's invitation to join that body as voting members so that the Diaspora can help shape the future of a unified Africa.

As part of its approach, the SRDC focuses on local and state Town Hall meetings that elect Community Councils of Elders and Diasporan Representatives answerable to the communities that elect them. There is no imposition from above--each community controls its own process and identifies its own people. It is an inclusive process, not an exclusive one, in compliance with the ECOSOCC Statutes and other guidelines.

SRDC is not the only organization working toward gaining access for the Diaspora into the AU, but SRDC is unique in that it incorporates the model called for by the AU and ECOSOCC, which is to allow the communities to choose their representatives, as opposed to having them chosen or "anointed" by elites or political leaders. One of SRDC's goals is to seek a "meeting of the minds" with those other organizations. As Dr. Horne states,

Another part of the SRDC approach is to meet with other Diasporan groups who are trying to positively organize toward the AU

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Forum Discussion**



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*invitation. Thus, we have already met with the **World African Diaspora Union** leadership in April of this year in New York. Hopefully, we will meet with them again and complete our discussions. We will also meet with any other relevant group. The purpose of such meetings is to try and get all of us on the same page--to coordinate our approach towards the AU. There are currently over 450 Diasporan organizations worldwide working in some capacity toward becoming a part of the AU; however, as became crystal-clear at the November 2007 AU-Diaspora meeting in South Africa, the AU is not and will not deal with 450 Diasporan organizations. The primary contingency for the AU's invitation to the Diaspora is that we must organize ourselves into some kind of coherent, viable form(s). Failure to do that means we have reneged on the invitation.*

There are, of course, organizations who see even attempting entry into the AU as a waste of time. Dr. Horne answers them:

To be sure, not all Pan African Nationalists see joining the AU as a worthwhile goal. Those colleagues with that perspective should work on some of the other very important tasks that have to be accomplished. Those of us who are clear on the Delany-Garvey-Nkrumah-Toure-Nyerere connection to the AU's invitation will focus on accomplishing this task and we will get it done. There is a very huge elephant blocking the door in the Pan African room and more than enough work for all of us (and many others) to do to remove or get around that elephant.

At the moment, the “Sixth Region” designation is unofficial because the AU has not finalized the specific means by which it is to incorporate the Diaspora. There has been debate among Pan-Afrikanist groups as to whether or not the “Sixth Region” actually exists. In fact, Maloka himself seems to doubt this:

... organised African Diaspora constituencies keep raising with the AU and African governments that the African Diaspora should be declared the 6th region of the AU. This issue has even developed into an urban legend: for some reason, there is a belief out there on the continent and in African Diaspora communities that the AU had already taken the decision to declare the Diaspora its 6th region. Meetings and conferences are being held across the world to prepare proposals for the operationalisation of the 6th region!

We would say that the “Sixth Region” *does* exist, if not in name, just as the Afrikan Diaspora exists, but it has yet to be officially recognized as a political entity, just as the Afrikan Diaspora has not been officially recognized as a political entity. This is the source of much of the powerlessness that is felt by Diasporan Afrikans around the world. This is why we can be abandoned in the hurricane-ravaged Gulf Coast of Louisiana and Mississippi. This is why we can be ignored on the world stage in the Caribbean. This is why we can be marginalized and exploited in Europe and various parts of the Americas. And this is why we can be hunted and murdered in grievous numbers in our own ancestral home without as much as a whimper from the international community until the slaughter reaches the level of genocide.

No, the Diaspora has not officially been designated as the “Sixth Region”. Regardless of this, it’s vitally important for the Diaspora to begin the process of organizing itself, based on a degree of faith that the African Union will follow through on its intention to include the Diaspora “in the building of the African Union”. To designate the Diaspora as the “Sixth Region” would only make sense from a logistical perspective. But to become bogged down in semantics is to miss the point. As the African Union continues to struggle with the means by which we are to join it, the window for organizing the Diaspora is closing. The momentum that was started when the Constitutive Act was amended in 2003 is running out as apathy begins to once again take hold, and yet another opportunity to energize the vast potential that resides in the Diaspora to help free Afrikans everywhere in the world will be lost unless we take the initiative to organize ourselves in anticipation of our incorporation into the AU.

Thus, while some organizations insist that there is no “Sixth Region” and others consider the concept a vain one, still others, such as the SRDC, are working toward its official organization and recognition as an important step toward real Pan-Afrikanism. While we anticipate the day when we will joyously reunite with our Sisters and Brothers in the Continent, however, we realize that this effort could be scuttled by those both inside and outside the Continent who, for whatever reasons, oppose such a reunification. In that case, the Diaspora *still* must organize itself. We must be organized either as *a part of* the African Union, or as *a partner to* the African Union operating independently, to help bring about the Afrikan Renaissance at home and around the world. 