

Dear Friends:

I am helping to create a policy review document for black civil rights/advocacy organizations. For every topic area, I would like to create a short analytical narrative that discusses commonalities and differences among different civil rights organizations, gaps or omissions of important topics, and important critiques of different positions. The purpose is to stimulate conversations among the various organizations leading to agreements on policy so that black organizations are more unified leading to the 2016 electoral season and beyond.

If you would like to recommend documents on the topics listed in the attached document, or if you care to offer an overview or critique, please forward these to us. I included a short analytical overview I did for one of the topics, "full employment," as an example.

Last, there are many issues on which the major black organizations have said little. International trade, immigration, tax reform, pha crisis, are among them. Areas of real disagreement, e.g., environment. The future economy/advanced manufacturing is virtually absent in policy platforms of black organizations (the Urban League comes closest to this). This is a bit surprising given the emphasis being put on this issue by the Obama Administration. Obama's 2016 budget proposal contains \$5 billion, \$1 billion more than for public housing, just for new partnerships and startups in advanced manufacturing. If you would like to advocate for additional topics, please feel free.

Thanks,

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## **1. Full employment and decent jobs**

- 1.1 Have the Federal Reserve maintain low interest rates (PolicyLink; CBTU)
- 1.2 Penalize banks that do not reinvest borrowed Fed money into the productive economy (Pollin)
- 1.3 Tax Wall Street transactions to fund employment initiatives (CBTU)
- 1.4 Establish a federal works program to employ the unemployed (Darity)

Many African American and other progressive organizations support full employment, yet there are significant differences (although not necessarily incompatible) in what policies groups advocate to achieve full employment. PolicyLink/PERES writes that "the Federal Reserve plays a central role," and "by keeping interest rates low, the Feds can promote continued job creation...."

The progressive economist Robert Pollin disagrees, he notes that, “[T]hanks to [current] Federal Reserve policy, commercial banks have [already] been able to borrow at near-zero rates since the beginning of 2009.” Pollin shows that large commercial banks and large corporations are “sitting on huge [\$3.6 trillion] hoards of cash and other liquid assets.” After making conservative estimates about safety requirements of financial corporations, he maintains that they are holding \$1.6 trillion in excess, most of which they got from the Fed at no borrowing cost. “They are using a large proportion of these funds to engage in financial engineering, such as buying back shares of their own stocks, as opposed to investing in new productive equipment and expanding their operations.” He argues that using \$1.4 trillion of that money for productive investment would create 19 million jobs and drive unemployment down to near 4 percent. To create a favorable climate for private business investment, he also calls for further federal stimulus initiatives, measures to reduce tax burdens of homeowners, taxing excess reserves of banks, and extending federal loan guarantees for small businesses. (Pollin, “Back to Full Employment”)

CBTU suggests a tax on Wall St. financial transactions as a means of funding for full employment initiatives. The problem with this approach is that funds would dry up for employment initiatives during downturns in the business cycle, precisely when they are most needed. CBTU writes: “There must be a societal commitment to full employment. All those who wish to work, should have ample opportunity for gainful employment. First priority must be given to the proper economic policies—insuring that the Federal Reserve makes full employment the primary target and tracks policies against rising wages and the elimination of discriminatory gaps in Black and white unemployment rates; and *the use of the Robin Hood Tax (a .5% tax on Wall Street transactions in order to generate resources that can be used for myriad of challenges such as healthcare, to housing to infrastructure redevelopment)* to insure sufficient counter-cyclical fiscal policy is automatically put in place during economic downturns to keep massive unemployment from occurring.” (CBTU, “A Future for Workers”)(emphasis added)

The economist William (Sandy) Darity argues that using the Fed to achieve full employment adds unnecessary costs and lacks the full commitment of the government should Fed efforts fail. He recommends enforcement of a federal job guarantee and the establishment of a federal department of public works to employ the unemployed to create needed national infrastructure. The public works department could be expanded or contracted to offset business cycle downturns. Like Pollin, Darity writes that full employment could be achieved for roughly the same cost as the 2009 stimulus program. He writes: “[I]t should come as no surprise that the USA has been in violation of another important law that could potentially have disproportionate benefits for black America, the Full Employment and Balanced Growth Act of 1978, known popularly as the Humphrey-Hawkins Act. The law mandates that if the private sector does not generate sufficient jobs to achieve full employment, the public sector should provide the missing work. President Obama could have acted to create a large scale jobs program in the midst of the

current crisis by invoking the obligation mandated by the Humphrey-Hawkins Act... Like the provision of 40 acres of land to ex-slave families, the Full Employment and Balanced Growth Act of 1978 remains a law not implemented. *To meet the mandate of the Humphrey-Hawkins Act and achieve the right to full employment – to bring national policy into conformity with national law – the United States should establish a federal job guarantee for all citizens....* Much of the current effort to restore employment has been driven by stimulus packages and other indirect approaches toward job creation that essentially seek to bribe the private sector into doing the right thing. The federal job guarantee makes the government the direct employer for all who need a job.” (William Darity, “From Here to Full Employment”)

There seems to be little disagreement that full employment means living wage jobs. Decent jobs are safe, healthy, and pay, “a wage level that offers workers the ability to support families, to maintain self-respect, and to have both the means and the leisure to participate in the civic life of the nation.” (from Glickman, “A Living Wage, American Workers and the Making of Consumer Society”)

## **2. Create Healthy Communities**

- 2.1 Full and timely implementation of the Affordable Care Act (National Urban League; CBC)
- 2.2 Eliminate Health Disparities (NUL; PolicyLink)
- 2.3 Develop a Diverse and Competent Health Workforce (NUL)
- 2.4 Offer affordable, high quality, accessible place-based health services
- 2.5 Provide community-centered prevention and social services
- 2.6 Advance community health-sector jobs that benefit residents and members
- 2.7 Actively engage neighborhood voices
- 2.8 Prevent Hunger and Increase Access to Healthy Foods (PolicyLink)
- 2.9 Funding for AIDS Prevention, Treatment, and Education (NAACP)
- 2.10 Increase Minimum Wages for Homecare Workers to \$15/hour (CBC)

## **3. Affordable Housing**

- 3.1 Increase Availability of Safe, Decent, Affordable Housing (NAACP; PolicyLink)
- 3.2 Increase Resources to Fight Housing Discrimination (NAACP; NUL; PolicyLink)
- 3.3 Assist Homeowners Facing Foreclosure (NAACP; NUL)
- 3.4 Increase Funds for Rental Housing (NAACP)
- 3.5 Enact a Comprehensive Program to Combat Homelessness (NAACP)

## **4. Transportation**

- 4.1 Create Affordable Transportation Options for All (PolicyLink;)
- 4.2 Ensure Fair Access to Quality Jobs, Workforce Development, and Contracting Opportunities
- 4.3 Promote Healthy, Safe, and Inclusive Communities (PolicyLink;)
- 4.4 Invest Equitably and Focus on Results (PolicyLink;)

## **5. Education**

- 5.1 Fair and Equitable School Funding for All (NUL; NAACP)
- 5.2 Universal Early Childhood Education (NUL; NAACP)
- 5.3 Re-engage Students to Prevent Dropouts (NUL; NAACP)
- 5.4 Robust STEM Curriculum and Programs (NUL)
- 5.5 Qualified, Effective, and Diverse Teachers (NUL)
- 5.6 Job Training and Job Placement (NUL)
- 5.7 Improve and Integrate Data Systems (NUL)
- 5.8 Public and Community Engagement in Educational Reforms (NAACP; NUL)
- 5.9 Lift Every HBCU (NAACP)
- 5.10 Oppose High Stakes Testing of Public School Students (NAACP)
- 5.11 Oppose Publicly Funded Private School Vouchers (NAACP)
- 5.12 Make College Affordable, Increase Pell Grant Funding (NAACP)

## **6. Civil Rights**

- 6.1 Fix the Voting Rights Act (NUL; NAACP)
- 6.2 Restore Voting Rights for Returning Citizens—ex-felons (NUL; NAACP)
- 6.3 Statehood for DC (NAACP)
- 6.4 Same Day Voter Registration (NAACP)
- 6.5 Campaign Finance Reform (NAACP)
- 6.6 Oppose Photo ID Requirements for Voting (NAACP)
- 6.7 Ensure Fair Representation Through Redistricting (Advancement Project)

## **7. Criminal Justice Reform**

- 7.1 Comprehensive Criminal Justice Reform (NUL;)
- 7.2 End Racial Profiling (NAACP; NUL)
- 7.3 Reduce Mandatory Minimum Drug Sentences (NAACP; NUL)
- 7.4 Comprehensive Gun Control (NUL; NAACP)
- 7.5 Repeal “Stand Your Ground” Laws (NUL)
- 7.6 Reform Juvenile Justice System

- 7.7 Require Police Officers to Identify Themselves (Communities United for Police Reform-CUPL)
- 7.8 End Unconstitutional Police Searches (CUPL)
- 7.9 Abolish the Death Penalty (NAACP)
- 7.10 Promote Prisoners' Rights (NAACP)

## **8. Environment**

- 8.1 Immediate steps to cut fossil fuel emissions with a recognition that countries of the global North have a special responsibility since they got a head start with the Industrial Revolution (CBTU)
- 8.2 The creation of "climate jobs" through the introduction of planned steps to address climate change. This includes new technologies, e.g., advanced windmills, to addressing beach erosion, the planting of trees, advanced water filtration. It also includes planning in connection with accounting for the impact of climate change, e.g., additional funding to FEMA, retrofitting. (CBTU; ECC)
- 8.3 An end to fracking. (CBTU)
- 8.4 A counter to corporate agriculture and, instead, offering support of family farms. Corporate agriculture is contributing to the destruction of the top-soil and diversification of crops will be essential. (CBTU)
- 8.5 Foreign aid assistance to the countries engaged in work to address the environmental crisis. (CBTU)
- 8.6 Ceasing efforts to transplant the waste of the global North to the global South. (CBTU)
- 8.7 Renewed efforts to address toxic pollution that has resulted from corporate America. The corporations should be appropriately taxed to cover this cost rather than placing the cost on the US taxpayer. (CBTU)
- 8.8 "Pursue affordable, abundant and flexible energy supplies by increasing domestic supply and opening international markets, including the export of natural gas and crude oil." (CBC)
- 8.9 Legislate a federal comprehensive energy policy that addresses grid modernization, renewable fuels, research and development, renewable fuels, and climate change. (CBC)
- 8.10 Make public energy policies equitable and fair to communities of color
- 8.11 Expedite the replacement or retrofitting of coal plants (CBC)

## **9. Immigration**

- 9.1 Reform our Nations' Immigration Laws (NAACP)

## **10. Decent Work**

- 10.1 Enable Workers to Join A Union (NAACP)
- 10.2 Equal Pay for Equal Work (NAACP)

- 10.3 Support a Fair Minimum Wage (NAACP)
- 10.4 Ban Use of Credit Checks by Potential Employers (NAACP)

## **11. Communications and Technology**

- 11.1 Buoy Investment in Broadband Networks (CBC; NUL)
- 11.2 Push FCC to Prioritize Access to Broadband in Disadvantaged Communities (CBC; NUL)

## **12. International**

- 12.1 A cessation of free trade agreements and a renegotiation of all existing agreements already in place in order to address environmental, and economic development challenges faced by all signatories. (CBTU)
- 12.2 A commitment by the USA to a plank of non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries unless as part of legal, legitimate multi-lateral bodies, e.g., the United Nations. (CBTU)
- 12.3 A commitment to an international process for the deconstruction and disassembling of all weapons of mass destruction. (CBTU)
- 12.4 Economic assistance to developing countries not conditioned by acceptance of neo-liberal economic policies. (CBTU)
- 12.5 A removal of US military bases from around the world to be replaced by a reliance on international bodies for mutual protection and enforcement of international law. (CBTU)
- 12.6 Expanded services in health care and job placement for veterans. (CBTU)
- 12.7 Eliminate Trade Embargo Against Cuba (NAACP)
- 12.8 Peace in Sudan (NAACP)
- 12.9 Enhance Trade and Development Programs in Africa and Caribbean (NAACP)
- 12.10 Increase Assistance to Haiti (NAACP)
- 12.11 Establish a National Dept. of Peace (NAACP)