

# Election Campaign 2016: Major Issues Facing African Americans Largely Ignored by both Clinton and Sanders

Housing, jobs, schools and municipal services must be the addressed

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*Democratic Party candidates Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders are both making appeals to win over African American voters during the final two months of the primary and caucus elections.*

*Nonetheless, very few specific issues are addressed during the course of the debates particularly the New York contest in mid-April.*

*Some of the essential concerns requiring attention include the need for jobs and income, considering the continuing astronomical jobless rate and impoverishment among the masses; housing and land, where over the last century African Americans have lost 13 million acres of farm land largely in the South and during the previous decade millions have been displaced from their homes due to the foreclosure and eviction crisis and the systematic forcing of others from the core urban areas; education prospects are far dimmer than in the 1960s and 1970s with the abolition of affirmative action, the privatization of schools, the closing of school buildings, mass lay-offs of teachers and the cut backs in academic and extra-curricular programs; healthcare issues persists despite the Affordable Care Act as infant mortality rates remain very high in the cities, the proliferation of treatable diseases and the lack of accessible clinics and hospitals; and communications outlets where the corporate media utilizes its influence to systematically demoralize and demobilize the people in an effort to halt the movements aimed at social change and revolutionary transformation.*

## **Housing and the Right to the Cities**



African American communities across the United States have not recovered from the impact of the Great Recession of 2007-2008. In the area of housing, the economic crisis rendered large sections of major urban areas such as Detroit, Chicago, New York City, and Los Angeles, devastated.

Predatory lending schemes initiated by the banks drained the limited household wealth of African American working families. This phenomenon coupled with the loss of jobs and other economic opportunities forced millions to relocate to suburban and out-of-state areas.

Some of the same interests involved in the massive fraud involving home ownership, later moved into rental properties, in part prompting the escalation of rents and fueling the demand for housing in cities and suburbs. Many of the neighborhoods of African Americans and other working class people have been cleared out for what is called “gentrification”, where these same community residents are no longer able to afford to live in the area.

Aggravating the housing crisis even further is the mass incarceration of African Americans and Latinos where existing laws make them ineligible for low-and-moderate-income housing in the restructured metropolitan areas. There has been some discussion about drafting new rules that would make it more difficult for private and public landlords to systematically discriminate against those who have criminal justice records.

Such a revised set of guidelines from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) would solve problems for those being denied rental properties by prohibiting landlords and real estate agencies from refusing service to those seeking housing only because they have been convicted by the courts. (nbcnews.com, April 5)

This initiative, announced on April 4 by HUD, suggests that any refusal to rent or sell to people who have criminal records is inherently discriminatory due to the fact that the nationally oppressed—African Americans and Latinos specifically—are disproportionately profiled, arrested, convicted and imprisoned.

## **Jobs and Income**

During the last year of the life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the founder of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), and a leading proponent of Civil Rights, Human Rights and Peace in the U.S., also advocated for the enactment of legislation to provide jobs to everyone able to work and to set standards for a guaranteed annual income. Such an

approach would alleviate poverty and create much needed employment within the public sector.

In order to implement such a policy it would require a major redistribution of wealth from the ruling class to the working masses, jobless and farmers. There would be a need as well to slash the Pentagon and Homeland Security budgets which are largely designed to oppress the peoples of Africa, Latin America and the Asia-Pacific along with efforts to maintain dominance within the former Soviet Union and Eastern European socialist states.

Organizations based in oppressed nations inside the confines of the U.S. should demand in exchange for their electoral support a well-defined economic program for full employment and a minimum yearly income. A plan for the reconstruction of the cities and the rural areas historically inhabited by African Americans should be the focus of a development program based on the rehabilitation and building of new housing and livable communities.

Based on the historical legacy of enslavement, legalized segregation and modern-day underdevelopment and super-exploitation of African American labor—the banks, corporations, federal and state governments must be compelled to provide funding for these projects. Existing public policies that facilitate the forced removal of oppressed and poor people from prime districts within the urban areas must be immediately halted.

### **Education and Healthcare**

In cities like Detroit the infant mortality rates far exceed countries within the so-called developing world. Cuba, although having faced a blockade for over five decades, has a far superior healthcare system for its people than the U.S., which is considered the leading economic power internationally.

The healthcare status of oppressed communities impacts educational achievements. The lack of prenatal care, the exposure to high levels of lead and harmful metals and chemicals can have a detrimental effect on children's psychological and physical well-being.

Public schools in many urban areas and suburbs are currently under siege, with school buildings in extreme disrepair, subject to closings—where students are taught in overcrowded classrooms by educators whose salaries and benefits are being reduced. Public funds allocated for student education are in many cases channeled to private corporations and their agents within the school system, leaving the bare minimum to the students.

Under the guise of implementing a “business model” of governance in the public schools and municipalities, working people are being denied the bourgeois democratic rights to elect members of their school boards and make decisions about how educational curriculums and programs are to be implemented.

### **Mass Communications and Political Mobilization**

Perhaps one the most critical methods utilized to maintain the class dominance of the wealthy is the way in which the corporate media reinforces the status-quo. The oppressed and working people are blamed for their own social plight while the rich are portrayed as having some inherent right to govern absent of any semblance of democratic practice and accountability.

During the course of the debates for both the Republican and Democratic Parties, these

important issues affecting African Americans and other oppressed and working people are never addressed in a substantive manner. Clinton and Sanders are spending considerable time attempting to win the support of the workers and the oppressed yet it is not clear what programs they are committed to enact if elected to the presidency.

Both Donald Trump and Ted Cruz make no pretenses of soliciting African American voters. The battle among the Republicans is to fashion a far right-wing and even neo-fascist agenda without it being labelled as such.

However, all of the major challenges gripping the African American communities around the country have been brought to the fore through mass demonstrations and other forms of self-mobilization and organization aimed at building mass support for the eradication of racism and economic exploitation.

The call for a \$15 minimum wage, the movement against police violence, the struggle against school privatization and for quality housing is largely centered in the streets, workplaces and educational institutions. Irrespective of who is elected president in November the opposition to bourgeois class rule will continue to be a focal point of the majority of the people in the U.S.

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