

## Is you is, or is you ain't?

Written by William Reed, Business Exchange  
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July 11th to the 16th, 2009, the NAACP held its 100th Annual Convention at the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center in New York City, where you there? The NAACP is unquestionably the best in the business of advocacy for racial progress. Since its founding, for the past century the NAACP is unparalleled in its unique role in race relations. Yet, many in Black America openly oppose the NAACP and question its relevancy.

The NAACP is as "relevant" as Black Americans want it to be. Often NAACP critics don't pay dues, but are direct beneficiaries of its century of work in people of color's struggles to overcome their historical exclusion from the American Way. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People is the personification of "identity politics": racial solidarity movement to advance the group's agenda(s) and to be a competing force in the American body politic.

Instead of collective activities to define their own interests and push legislation toward their own benefit, mainstream media has many Black Americans cowering under rhetorical smoke screens that the NAACP and the concept of "identity politics" is detrimental to "the American Way". Identity politics was the cornerstone of America's founding White Anglo-Saxon Protestants, but is now used by dominant society to discredit affirmative actions with cries of "reverse discrimination". Too many Blacks have fallen prey to talking heads' visions of America; not noting that their role is to protect white interest. Those in the employ of network media denounce Blacks that advocate cultural solidarity, even though it is clearly a defining characteristic of dominant society in America.

Names and causes of the NAACP, Negro College Fund is rued and deemed "irrelevant" by many among the mainstream. Blacks' difficulty in forging sustainable political unity is perpetuated by African Americans in the mainstream that have internalized the values of the dominant white majority and consequently believe that to move against the majority is tantamount to moving against themselves. With so many groups grabbing power through identity politics - gays, Latinos, women - African Americans' continual abdication of a political device others are employing successfully is naïve, at least.

To gain full rights and privileges, Blacks must exert group strength commensurate with their numbers in the population as leverage for attaining full rights. Marshaling requisite unity, such as support for NAACP causes, remains an elusive. But, keeping the NAACP strong is vital. Larger segments of Black Americans should be focused on "identity politics". Considering that, while every slave and his/her direct family are deceased, African Americans continued to suffer disproportionately from segregation, and discrimination; at times continue to be the victims of bias; remain disproportionately disenfranchised when it comes to net worth and home ownership; and still suffer from a sense of a lack of self-worth.

The notion that we are in a "post racial" period in American politics is premature, misleading and undergirds many Black Americans case against unifying. In comparison, an ethnic group institution analogous to the NAACP, the Anti-Defamation League, enjoys monumental political impact and Jewish Americans, are not making any precipitous moves to disassemble it. Most are pledged to ADL's \$45 million annual budget. For the majority of Blacks, the American Way is as it's always been. For the few that have gained middle and high income status, the

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question is: What actions they've made to correct the American situation that on all major economic indicators - income, wages, employment, and poverty - African Americans were worse off in 2007 than they were in 2000?

How Although the American economy has grown significantly since 2000, the majority of African Americans have not shared the prosperity. The unemployment rate for African-Americans was 14.7% in June 2009, compared to 12.2% for Hispanics and 8.7% for whites. Unemployment for Black men is at 16.4%. American society is still based on color and talk of a color-blind, post-racial society is pure nonsense. In these times, Blacks, as usual, are suffering more than most. It is imperative to take stock, clearly define political and economic priorities, and strategically address barriers to sustainable progress.

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