

# It's four more years, so dry your tears

It's Four More Years, So Dry Your Tears

By: James Clingman

--Guest Columnist--

This may be difficult for some of you to take, but it needs to be said and, more importantly, it needs to be heard and acted upon. I cannot count all of the articles I have written over the past 10 years that deal with Black folks' emotional investment in politics.

Just as I thought, on Nov. 3—after the “most crucial election of our lifetime”—Black folks were, once again, shocked and amazed at what took place. They were calling talk shows, whining about the outcome and asking, “What are we going to do now?” Well, we should have had a plan for that long before now.

Black participation in this game called politics always results in one of two things: Lamenting the fact that our guy lost or celebrating the fact that our guy won. Beyond the crying, complaining, whining, lamenting and, in some cases, tears, our “loss” means absolutely nothing.

Beyond the celebrations, glad-handing, ataboys, euphoria and happy-days-are-here-again rejoicing, scenarios result in either a depressing, almost fatalistic, blue funk kind of despair, or in a temporary state of exhilaration, excitement and victory-at last!

Neither outcome really benefits Black people; we have experienced both and have remained in the same relative position for the past 50 years. When will we learn to apply what our elders taught us? When will we move away from thinking that politics will solve our problems? When will we invest in something that will give us a reasonable return on that investment?

Yes, Black people have been “played” yet again. Now many of us will crawl back into our cocoons and hibernate until the next “most crucial election of our time” comes along. We won't do anything; we won't change; we won't even attempt to participate in an economic strategy for empowerment; we will simply say, “Wake me when I can vote again.”

The campaign for the hip hop generation was “Vote or Die!” Sounded real good. Got some folks fired up. It even made some young folks go to the polls and vote. Maybe some of them are now thinking, “Man! I voted, and I am still dying.”

Maybe P-Diddy, et al, should start a new campaign now. How about “Start your own business (like he did) or die!” Maybe it could be, “Pool your money or die!” Or, maybe even, “Economic empowerment or die!”

I wonder what message the hand-wringing, alarmist Black politicians will give us now. Will they finally capitulate to the message of gaining economic empowerment first, and then move on to political empowerment?

Let me be as plain as I can be. We ain't got no juice in this political game! And we will never have juice until we get our economic act together and start leveraging our vote against the benefits we want to

receive from either party that is willing to reciprocate. Of course, we could also form our own independent party to demonstrate how serious we are. But didn't they try that in 1972 in Gary, Indiana? Again, we did not listen.

Many of the folks we depend upon for information—preachers, radio talk show hosts, and politicians and their operatives—are ignorant and willingly complicit when it comes to misleading Black people on politics. They make the weak and ignorant among us actually believe that the single act of voting will take us to new heights of freedom. Newsflash! It will not!

For most of us, it will be back to the drawing board, back to the political strategy sessions, and back to whining about what Pres. Bush and his cronies are not doing for us. Many of us will return to our pattern of begging our politicians to do the right thing by us. All of this is futile without leverage, without the ability and willingness to reward our friends and punish our enemies—the leverage we must have to accomplish that is found in economic empowerment.

My advice is what it has always been: Stop putting all of your hope in politicians and the political process. It's a huge gamble, and Black folks have no chips in the game. Let's work together to build up our chips and then get into the game.

I direct you to Claud Anderson's quote in the Harvest Institute Newsletter (Fall 2004). He notes that Black folks are outnumbered eight to one by non-Blacks in this country. He writes, “When one rabbit is fenced-in with eight hungry hound dogs, how important is the rabbit's vote on what the hound dogs want for dinner? In a racial context, they only way Blacks can expect to receive benefits from their vote is to first build and control their own economic structure. Then, they can use their economic power to back, rent or buy politicians who will support the interest of Black Americans.”

I say, since we are going against hound dogs, we had better at least have enough money to buy them dinner.

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**Wishing You a Festive Christmas**

Light the tree and hang the holly; 'Tis the season to be jolly! Sing the carols, old and fine, Like Silent Night and Auld Lang Syne!  
Greet dear friends, both far and near, With cards, and gifts, and much good cheer. And say it loud for all to hear -  
Have a joyous Noel, and a Happy New Year!

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