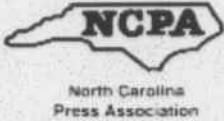


# OPINION/ FORUM

THE CHRONICLE 36 years

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White House Photo by Pete Souza  
 President Barack Obama laughs during a meeting in the Oval Office on Jan. 21.

## Leadership That Counts



**Ben Chavis**  
 Guest Columnist

No one ever expected that the first African American to be elected the President of the United States would be given a free pass with no criticism or pressure from those who did not vote for him. Although the majority of voters in 2008 decided that the United States needed a change in direction

and leadership, there are social and political forces that are attempting to gain momentum in espousing their critique of the Obama Administration. Now that there are renewed calls for the reduction of the fiscal deficit that President Barack H. Obama inherited from President George W. Bush, there are too many people who appear to be confused by the cynics and doomsday predictors who have been relentless in their attempts to unfairly blame President Obama for all the economic and geopolitical woes that United States faces today.

Leadership is defined as the demonstrated ability with a dynamic character that establishes change and attains specific goals and objectives for people who follow and who are impacted as a direct result of the actions of the responsible leader. The executive and political leadership of President Obama has made a positive difference in the quality of life for millions of Americans in his first two years in office. But, all leaders, by definition, will be constantly measured by not just by their abilities, but will be ultimately evaluated by their actions and how their actions will impact the present and the future.

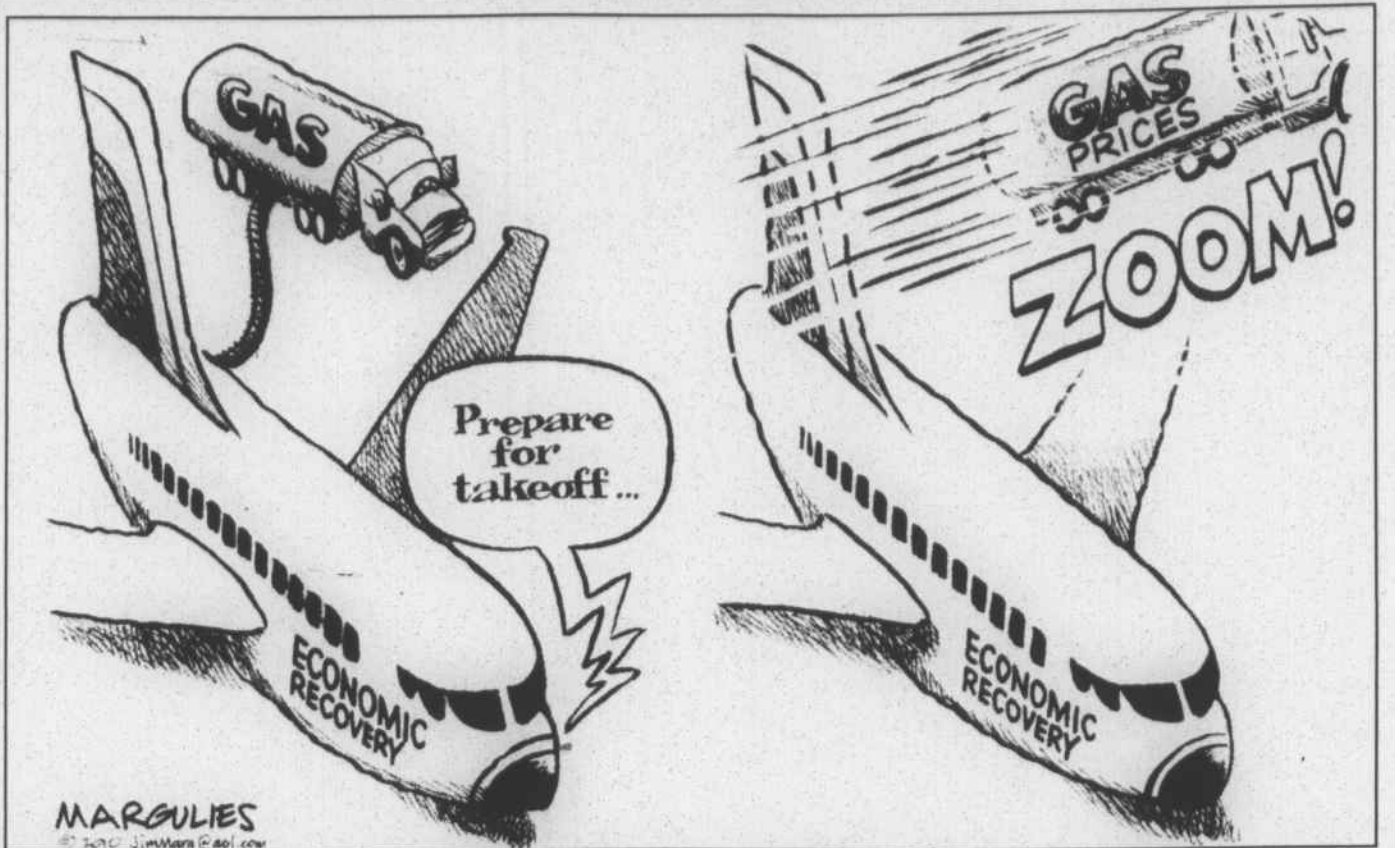
President Obama recently submitted The Federal Budget for Fiscal Year 2012 to the U.S. Congress. The White House issued this statement: "The President's 2012 Budget is a responsible approach that puts the nation on a path to live within our means so we can invest in our future - by cutting wasteful spending and making tough decisions on some things we cannot afford, while keeping the investments we need to grow the economy and create jobs. It targets scarce federal resources to the areas critical to winning the future: education, innovation, clean energy and infrastructure."

I was happy to see that the first notification by President Obama in "winning the future" of America was "education." African Americans, as well as all Americans, know that if we do not improve our standards and performances as a society in the multiple fields of education, then future opportunities for national wellbeing will not be realized or optimized. More than anything else, education is the key to economic growth and prosperity. Our children, and all children, deserve the best and highest quality education without any reservations or limitations. Thus, the budget for education should provide more opportunities and options for children and parents to attain the best education in the world.

Obviously, the federal budget is not about race, class or partisan politics. It is about competence and leadership. It is about fixing the American economy. It is about putting millions of people back to work. It is about financial recovery and economic sustainability. It is about education. One thing for sure is that President Obama can count. The Obama 2012 Budget calls for more than \$1 trillion in deficit reduction during a 10 year period and a five-year freeze on discretionary spending. He stated, "America is emerging from the worst recession in generations. In 2010, an economy that had been shrinking began to grow again. After nearly 2 years of job losses, America's businesses added more than one million jobs. Our capital and credit markets are functioning and strong. Manufacturing is coming back. And, after teetering on the brink of liquidation just 2 years ago, America's auto industry is posting healthy gains and returning money to the taxpayers who helped it through a period of turmoil."

President Obama is on the job. And notwithstanding the chorus of critics and cynics, his leadership is making an important difference for the nation. What we have to do is to not let all the weight fall on him alone. We should be raising our voices more and we should be getting ready once again to cast our votes. Let's make sure that the interests of the education of our children do not get triaged during the current budget debate. Active leadership at the community level should strive to match the leadership now in The White House. Civic responsibility is for all.

Dr. Benjamin F. Chavis Jr. is the Senior Advisor for the Black Alliance for Educational Options (BAEO) and President of Education Online Services Corporation.



## Congress Should Help Right Past Wrongs



**Gary Flowers**  
 Guest Columnist

As Black History Month for 2011 comes to a close, we must keep our collective ears open to the voices of our cultural mothers and fathers whose wisdom is as relevant today as it was in the past. Their voices cry out for people of conscience, particularly African Americans, to place justice and wisdom at the forefront of our family's focus.

I watched with interest an airing of "The Injustice Files" last week on the Discovery Channel. "The Injustice Files" is the work of filmmaker Keith Beauchamp, producer of "The Untold Story of Emmett Louis Till," which reveals the circumstances of three racially motivated unsolved murders of African Americans prior to 1969.

Brilliantly, Beauchamp weaved together whatever he could find—family interviews, police records, eye witnesses—into a compelling exposé.



Acclaimed Filmmaker Keith Beauchamp.

Prior to the "Injustice Files," Beauchamp's most critically acclaimed work brought new attention to the heinous murder of Emmett Till in 1955. The vicious torture and murder of Emmett Till, according to Mrs. Rosa Parks, inspired her to take a more active role in the Civil Rights Movement by refusing to surrender her seat to a White man. As Mrs. Parks did in 1955, people of conscience today must pursue justice by reforming public policy.

The Emmett Till Unsolved Civil Rights Crime Act of 2007 was introduced to establish an Unsolved Crimes Section within the Civil

Rights Division of the United States Department of Justice. Since then, funding issues have stymied progress of the Act.

If "cold cases" such as the ones featured in "The Injustice Files" are to be solved, federal legislation must have enforcement provisions to meaningfully aid prosecutors and families in court. In particular:

- Congress should appropriate funds necessary for fulfillment of the Emmett Till Act
- Congressional oversight hearings are needed to examine activities of law enforcement officials relative to

### Emmett Till Act

- The relationship between federal and local prosecutors must be better defined
- The relationship between Ku Klux Klan members and local police and sheriffs must be revealed
- A "Family Bill of Rights" must be defined in information sharing between law enforcement officials and families

• Families must be given status updates on a regular basis by law enforcement officials

• A full accounting of unsolved disappearances, "accidents," "suicides," and "self-defense" must be compiled

• Cases determined "outside of jurisdiction" of the Emmett Till Act must be covered by new legislation.

Federal legislation must be matched by state, county, and municipal policy that emboldens prosecutors and families and imprisons murderers. The collective voices of our ancestors direct us to pursue justice in unsolved murder cases.

Gary L. Flowers is the Executive Director & CEO of the Black Leadership Forum, Inc.

## Blacks' Historic Ties to the GOP



**Ken Raymond**  
 Guest Columnist

Many former slaves left a political legacy that's being ignored or forgotten - even during Black History Month.

As they struggled against the violence and racism of the mid-1800s, it's likely they thought that this legacy could be left as a heritage that could continue to improve the lives of their descendants.

This legacy is the Republican Party.

For over 50 years, Black people have given more than 90 percent of their votes to the Democratic Party. But that certainly wasn't the case during the mid-1800s, when the Republican Party led the fight against strong Democrats' opposition to pass the 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments to the Constitution, which abolished slavery, granted blacks citizenship and the right to vote, respectively. Back then, it was clear to all Black people who their friends were in the political arena.

According to Dr. Ronnie W. Faulkner, associate professor of history at Campbell University, one-third of the 147 founders of the North Carolina Republican Party were black. They included George Henry White, James Young, E.A. Johnson, John C. Dancy, Issac Smith and James E. Shephard.

White was elected to the

Congress as a Republican from North Carolina's 2nd District in 1896. Congressman White was one of the first 23 blacks - all Republicans - elected to Congress after the Civil War.

In her book "The Negro in Fusion Politics in North Carolina, 1894-1901," Helen Edmond states that the black founders of the North Carolina GOP helped build local organizations and establish Republican voter majorities in 16 counties. They also assisted in gaining 40 to 49 percent of voter strength within 47 counties. Because of the support of Black Republicans, the GOP could challenge the Democrats at all levels of government.

The same scenario played out throughout the South as more Black Republicans were elected to Congress. Black men like Norris Wright Cuney, chairman of the Texas State Republican Party in 1883, became leaders of the GOP.

The alliance between the GOP and Blacks paid off. After winning the White House and Congress, Republicans passed the Enforcement Act, which protected Blacks from the Ku Klux Klan, and the Civil Rights Acts of 1871 and 1875.

So why did Blacks stop giving over 90 percent of their support to the Republicans?

It started in 1892, when Democratic President Grover Cleveland was elected and the Democrats took control of Congress and the Enforcement Act and the Civil Rights laws were



Congressman White

repealed and replaced by Black Codes and Jim Crow laws that severely limited economic, educational, social and political opportunities of blacks.

The Jim Crow laws weren't challenged until 61 years later, when Republican President Dwight Eisenhower sent the Civil Rights Act of 1957 to Congress. At that time, Democratic Senator Lyndon Johnson did not allow the bill to pass in its original form.

The Senate Democrats removed the substance and enforcement aspects of the bill and allowed it to be passed and signed into law. But blacks were still disenfranchised in the South until Senator Lyndon Johnson ran for president on a platform to restore Civil Rights for Blacks in the South, after denying blacks those same rights in 1957. After Lyndon Johnson won the presidency, he restored the substance of the Civil Rights Act and signed it in 1964.

With television taking a larger role in political news coverage at the time, Lyndon Johnson and the Democratic Party appeared to be the party that supported the Black Community. So within 10 years, after the presidential election of 1964, blacks drifted back into the hands of the Democratic Party.

Black people completely forgot about their political roots and generations of black children were not taught their political origins at home or in school. And it's still not being taught today.

There's no question that the Democrats have benefited from the fact that black political history hasn't been taught accurately over the years. And many in the Black community want to continue to support the Democrats.

But regardless of how blacks feel about the Republican Party today, Black history can't be changed. Blacks' contributions to the Republican Party should be taught and recognized, especially since its part of the legacy of former slaves.

Edmund Burke, a famous British politician and author, once said, "Those that don't learn from history, are doomed to repeat it." Anyone that follows the political history of Black America can see that Edmund Burke's statement is very true.

Ken Raymond is a member of the Frederick Douglass Foundation of Forsyth County and the Forsyth County Republican Party Executive Committee.