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**Acquiring Black Political Power
Worrill's World**

**By Dr. Conrad W. Worrill, PhD
BlackCommentator.com Columnist**

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On November 19-23, 2008, I participated in the State of the Black World Conference II, sponsored by the Institute of the Black World 21st Century, and led by Dr. Ron Daniels. The conference was a great gathering of scholar/activists from throughout the United States who have made significant contributions to the Black Liberation Movement. A host of young scholar/activists were also in attendance that created much needed intergenerational dialogue.

There is no question that the election of Senator Barack Obama to the Presidency of the United States of America is a giant achievement in the history of African people in America. However, the general consensus of the conference was that this achievement should not curtail the movement to continue to struggle for Black Political Power in America just as all other ethnic groups have done and continue to do.

Specifically, I participated, along with Professor Robert "Bob" Starks, Zahi Baruti, Councilmember JoAnn Watson, Councilman Charles Barron, and Representative Constance Johnson in a workshop on "Revitalizing Progressive Black Politics." I was able to present the following in this workshop:

The question that still faces the African Community in America is what are the best methods for us to achieve Black Political Power. I often remind readers of this column that "politics is the science of who gets what - when, where, and most important of all, how."

Since 1996, when Kwame Ture (formerly known as Stokely Carmichael) made his pronouncement that what African people in America needed to strive for was Black

Power, the dynamics of Black politics in America shifted drastically.

It has been over forty years since Kwame made this call for Black Power in June of 1966. Today, there are more than 11,000 Black elected officials in the United States. That includes more than forty congressmen and women, a U. S. Senator, more than six hundred Black mayors, a host of state senators and state representatives, and numerous local elected officials in a variety of elected and appointed political positions. Most of these elected and appointed officials are Democrats.

With this number of elected and appointed officials, the question must be raised in the 21st Century, do African people in America have political power to the extent that we can determine significantly, throughout the United States, "who gets what - when, where, and most importantly of all, how?" The answer to this question is and obvious "NO!"

The call for Black Power in 1966 led to the organizing of the first Black Power Conference that was convened on Saturday, September 3, 1966 at the Rayburn House Office Building in Washington, D.C. The session was called by the late, great, Congressman Adam Clayton Powell and was generally referred to as a National Planning Committee.

As a result of the first Black Power Conference, several subsequent Black Power Conferences were held in 1967 in Newark, New Jersey, 1968 in Philadelphia, and the Fourth International Black Power Conference was held in Bermuda in 1969.

As an outgrowth of the Black Power Conferences, the Congress of African People Conference was called in the summer of 1970 in Atlanta, Georgia. More than 3,000 people of African ancestry attended this meeting. It was at this meeting that a resolution was adopted that a political structure be established to create a National Black Political Convention.

This historic First National Black Political Convention took place in Gary, Indiana in March of 1972. More than 8,000 Black people from every state participated in this momentous gathering.

The follow-up from this convention "created a structure called the National Black Political Assembly which was to continue permanently after the convention." Additionally, it was the aim of the Assembly "to develop a new Black Politics and organize the National Black Political Agenda" that was established at the convention.

The introduction of the 1972 Gary National Black Political Convention agenda stated some profound truths that we should be reminded of as we prepare for the upcoming political season.

First, it stated that "Here at Gary, let us never forget that while the times and the names and the parties have continually changes, one truth has faced us insistently, never changing: Both parties have betrayed us whenever their interest conflicted with ours (which was most of the time), and whenever our forces were unorganized and dependent, quiescent and complaint."

Continuing, this part of the introduction explained - "Nor should this be surprising, for

by now we must know that the American political system, like all other white institutions in America, was designed to operate for the benefit of the white race: It was never meant to do anything else."

Second, in this introduction, another set of truths were revealed, "So when we turn to a Black Agenda for the seventies, we move in the truth of history, in the reality of the moment. We move recognizing that no one else is going to represent our interest but ourselves. The society we seek cannot come unless Black people organize to advance its coming. We lift up a Black Agenda recognizing that white America moves towards the abyss created by its own racist arrogance, misplaced priorities, rampant materialism, and ethical bankruptcy."

It is clear that we should reexamine the 1972 Gary Declaration as we interact with the new Presidential Regime of Barack Obama and our continued quest to achieve genuine Black Political Power.

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BlackCommentator.com Columnist, Conrad W. Worrill, PhD, is the National Chairman of the National Black United Front ([NBUF](#)). Click [here](#) to contact Dr. Worrill.

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