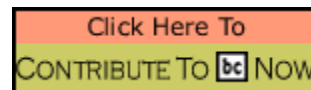
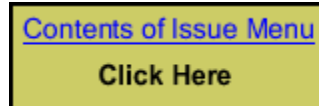




**May 15, 2008 - Issue 277**



[Home](#)

**Cover Story:**  
**The Working Class is Back. And Guess What. It's White.**  
**Left Margin**  
**By Carl Bloice**  
**BlackCommentator.com Editorial Board**



Click [here](#) to listen to Mark's interview with Carl

Click on the back button of your browser to return to non printer friendly page of this article

[Click here](#) to get helpful hints for viewing and printing this printer friendly plain text page

After decades of the major media's refusal to link the word "working" with "class," the print pages and airwaves are now alive with talk about the conditions, aspirations and views of working people. Journalists, who only a few weeks ago would have scoffed at the mere mention of there being a "working class." are now throwing the term around with abandon. The problem is that it being employed to only cover part of that class; African American, Latino, Asian and Native American working people are somehow being left out of the demographic equation.

Up until quite recently there was only the "middle class." The term always defied precise definition. In contemporary U.S. mass media parlance it has come to be defined by income. That is, people - no matter what they do nine-to-five - who make too little money to be rich and too much to be poor.

On the other hand, traditionally and more logically the working class is defined as being made up of people employed by someone else - usually the rich, but sometimes the government - making refrigerators, waiting tables or data processing. In it are people of all races and creeds. However, as this year's presidential campaign got rolling, "middle class" began to give way to "blue collar" as the nom-de-choice for describing working people. But that didn't last long. Soon the group whose votes the candidates were targeting became not just the working class, but the "white working class."

There is method to this madness.

The experts may argue over just how bad the economic situation is but there is no question we are in the middle of a downturn, and a lot of people are feeling insecure about the future, or are already feeling the pain of unemployment and a rising cost of living. Never mind that - as usual - African American and other non-white ethnic groups are experiencing the negative effects disproportionately. We are being told that economic issues are the concern of white people. Black people do not vote according to their economic interests but on racial identity and, conversely, white people vote their interests and not their racial identity - or so this nonsense goes.

If you want to see how stupid (and devious) all this is, consider the words of former Bush Administration political strategist Karl Rove: "The primary has created a deep fissure in Democratic ranks: blue collar, less affluent, less educated voters versus the white wine crowd of academics and upscale professionals (along with blacks and young people)," he wrote in the *Wall Street Journal* last week. African American voters here become a throwaway category, not part of the working class. This despite the fact that they are overwhelmingly working class and make up nearly a third of the Democratic Party.

"MSNBC's Chris Matthews, for example, differentiated between 'regular people' and black people," wrote columnist David Sirota wrote last week. "Pundits refer separately to the 'working class' and to African Americans - as if they are mutually exclusive."

"I have a much broader base to build a winning coalition on," presidential candidate Hillary Clinton told *USA Today* last week, going on to quote an *Associated Press* article that showed how Sen. Barack Obama's support among "working, hard-working Americans, white Americans, is weakening again, and how whites in both states who had not completed college were supporting me." That was not a poor choice of words. It was part of the effort to make the racial equation the only important one in the primary campaign - and Clinton the Democrats' logical choice for the nomination.

Then there's Clinton booster Paul Begala warning that the Democratic Party can't win with just "eggheads and African-Americans." And *New York Times* columnist Paul Krugman - putting it a tiny bit more delicately - describing Obama's "deep but narrow base" as "composed of African Americans and highly educated whites." (Lord knows

how you define "highly educated" here or what happened to college educated African Americans of whom there are millions.) Then there's rightwing luminary Pat Buchanan chiming in that, "What Hillary and Begala are saying is politically incorrect, but it is also patently true" and then going on to rap about "Hillary Democrats" who "are white, working- and middle-class, Catholic, small-town, rural, unionized, middle-age and seniors, and surviving on less than \$50,000 a year."

Actually, MSNBC pundit Buchanan (who by the way recently penned a piece in *Human Events* called "The Way the World Ends," in which, citing world fertility rates, he concluded that "God has another end in store for us" and rued that "The Caucasian race is going the way of the Mohicans" by the year 2060) got most of that wrong. He, Rove and some other commentators want us to think that young voters are classless. They overlook the fact that in Indiana, Obama was the favorite among all voters between the ages of 17 and 45 and 47 percent of those between 45 and 60. Yea, some of them are in school, but most, like their parents, work somewhere. In North Carolina he got the most votes in the 17 through 60 year-old category.

In North Carolina, Obama got a larger percentage of votes from members of families earning less than \$50,000 a year than those earning more than that amount.

The reaction to Hillary's statement in the blogosphere was hot. "OK, I think I've got it," Tom wrote in the *New York Times* space. "White = hard working, African American, Latino, Asian, Native American, others = not hard working. Thanks for clearing that up, Hillary. The non-use of 'and' between 'hard working Americans' and 'white Americans' is telling."

"When Clinton says 'working, hard-working Americans' she tries very hard not to use the term 'working class,'" wrote Adam. She "almost slipped but caught herself. What it says is, we still have a class system in America, and we need to change that. Obama is the solution and Obama will win the general election handily."

On May 8, M.S. Bellows, Jr. writing on the *The Huffington Post* described a May 7 telephone press conference the previous day, called by Clinton Communications Director Howard Wolfson, wherein the Clinton campaign "firmly reiterated its intention to keep seeking the Democratic Presidential nomination, spinning both her striking loss in North Carolina and her slender win in Indiana as positive developments - while also appearing to admit that she is not going to win a majority of elected delegates even if Michigan and Florida's delegations are counted - and parsing primary results in starkly racial terms that are likely to exacerbate the tensions of the contest and her increasingly significant troubles reaching out to minority voters."

"At points, the Clinton representatives' demographic parsing bordered on surreal," observed Bellows. "Wolfson seemed to imply that gasoline prices are primarily a white issue, suggesting that Clinton's proposal for a gas tax 'holiday' had helped her with white voters and promising that she would continue urging that proposal on the stump. In response to a pair of questions about whether African Americans would support Clinton in the general election, Wolfson repeatedly referred to Obama's 'passionate supporters,' seeming to conflate the two."

All this will feed the speculation that's already out there that there are some in the

upper echelons of the Democratic Party who care far less about who wins in November than who captures the party nomination and for whom it's anybody but Obama. If they keep dissing black voters they could get their way.


There are black, white and brown members of the working class but there is no white working class. The term has been trotted out in an effort to portray African Americans as something apart from the class to which most of them belong. Yes, African Americans know that racism is always a factor in the politics of our country. The last few weeks have made that abundantly clear despite Obama's attempt to have it otherwise. But I have some news for Rove, Begala and the others. Black working people also know a lot about what their interests are and what side of the bread their butter is on. The price of gasoline is an issue for them as is the home mortgage crisis, the awful state of the educational system, the country deteriorating physical infrastructure, unemployment, healthcare and that ghastly war in Iraq. The effort to set them apart from other working people is as inaccurate as it is nefarious.


What is needed now is for leaders in the unions, churches and working class communities to come forward and say clearly that this splitting campaign is repulsive, immoral and defeating. To say that without unity among the social forces some people are trying to slice and dice to serve their own ambitions, we will never have a progressive majority.

**BlackCommentator.com** Editorial Board member Carl Bloice is a writer in San Francisco, a member of the [National Coordinating Committee of the Committees of Correspondence for Democracy and Socialism](#) and formerly worked for a healthcare union. [Click here](#) to contact Mr. Bloice.

[Contents of Issue Menu](#)  
Click Here

[Home](#)

Click Here To  
CONTRIBUTE TO  NOW

Click Here To  
CONTACT 

Your comments are always welcome.

### e-Mail re-print notice

If you send us an e-Mail message we may publish all or part of it, unless you tell us it is not for publication. You may also request that we withhold your name.

Thank you very much for your readership.

Website Design and Hosting provided by





Copyright © 2002 - 2008  
[www.BlackCommentator.com](http://www.BlackCommentator.com)  
All Rights Reserved