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BLACK
C o m m e n t a t o r**
Commentary, analysis and investigations
on issues affecting African Americans
www.blackcommentator.com

October 30, 2008 - Issue 297

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**Election Day, November 4th, 2008:
Don't Let Change Pass You By
Between The Lines
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The day we've all been waiting for is less than a week away. There are times in our lives we will remember all of our lives. There are few dates in American history that represent watermark changes in American society. There are less than a dozen one can recall where a date can call up a shift in American culture:

- July 4, 1776 (Declaration of Independence);
- March 6, 1857 (*Dred Scott* Decision);
- January 1, 1863 (Emancipation Proclamation);
- May 18, 1896 (*Plessy* Decision);
- October 29, 1929 (Stock Market Crash);
- December 7, 1941 (Attack on Pearl Harbor);
- May 17, 1954 (*Brown* Decision);
- November 22, 1963 (Kennedy assassination);
- April 4, 1968 (King assassination);
- January 28, 1986 (Challenger Explosion);
- September 11, 2001 (terrorist attacks on America)

These are (by and large) the dates that define the socio-political shifts in America. November 4th will be that same type of social/political referendum. This is landmark in significance and residual impact.

NO ONE could have ever imagined that "that one" could be "the one," this time around. Prior to Barack Obama's candidacy, even remote estimates of a black President of the United States were decades away - if not a fading realization altogether. Even during

the candidacy, the doubts were persistent. However, every challenge that historically stymies successful black candidacies for major office (Senator, Governor, President), primarily money and white support, evaporated in this candidacy. Race is, and will continue to be, a factor - but we will see that it is not as much of a factor as it once was. When states like Virginia, North Carolina, Minnesota and Indiana fall for a black candidate (at least, leaning in that direction), we know many in America are finally getting it - external factors notwithstanding. Even the most cynical of us, me included, must admit that this is a major cultural shift in America's race relations. This is the change we've all been waiting for in America. From the outhouse to the White House is no longer a saying, but a few days from reality. There's nothing left to do but to DO IT.

We've heard all about the expectation that next Tuesday will be the "Mother of all turnouts." There are caveats, of course, like rain, long lines, running out of ballots and the types of things that historically happen when low voter turnout communities suddenly show up. Voter suppression, as a strategy, is real. It is not incumbent on anybody else to make your voting experience convenient or pleasurable. You have to look at this like an escape from slavery, a hard, long walk that you cannot allow to fail. For those who escaped from slavery, failure wasn't an option. For those who were fighting in the civil rights movement for their right to vote, turning back wasn't an option. In the words of the old civil right hymnal, "Can't let nobody turn you around..." Not this day. Not this time. This is the day for which black America prayed over three hundred years, to become a full partner in the political process. Finally, America is willing to let one of us drive the car. Our votes will be the gas that fuels this car. We cannot think about not showing up in this election. Just as we will be showing up for the right reason, there will be others that will show up for the wrong reason, to keep this landmark event from happening. Some still ain't quite there yet. We cannot allow those still stuck in another time and another place, hold the rest of the country back from moving past its past. That's why we must show up.

Change is going to come at every level of government. From the top of the ticket at President, to Congressional seats, and local government seats and initiatives. The most important race in Los Angeles will be the race for County Supervisor, considered the most powerful position in the state (after Governor and Assembly Speaker). Don't sleep this seat, and don't be tricked out of this seat. Mark Ridley-Thomas is the choice for this position. The expectation is that many voters, particularly younger ones, will vote for Barack and nobody else. Vote Obama and Ridley-Thomas and everything in between. Change at the top can't happen alone. Don't bypass the opportunity to make great change this election, and don't let this change pass you by.

Vote Nov. 4th. It's a day that will go down in history like other major landmark changes in the history of American society. It is a day you will tell your children's children about. The day America voted for a black President. The day we thought we'd never see.

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