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**FEAR ITSELF  
Solidarity America  
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Change is coming!

That's what we were told during the recent presidential election campaign and Tuesday's election alone brought a historic change to America—Barack Obama is the president-elect and he promised more change than John McCain.

But anyone who would bring change to the nation must first find all the parts—the parts of the economy, the country's manufacturing base, and all the jobs that seem to have disappeared over the past 35 years (and with them, our wealth as a nation)—then put them all together again. And, that's just for starters.

And that's not to mention U.S. foreign policy, if there has been any discernible policy for the past eight years...the wars, climate change, natural disasters, and broken health care. It's going to be a tall order for the new president.

Most often, change is accompanied by fear—fear that the change will somehow harm us, diminish our own personal security or upset long-held beliefs, even if they're not based on logic or common sense.

Those who have held sway over the U.S. economy and much of the government for decades have their own fears about the change that's coming. What do they fear? You won't find out on the nightly news or in your daily newspaper. In the mass media, what used to be called the "captains of industry" are portrayed as people who fear little and take what they want, even if it isn't put in such crude terms.

The real opinion makers in America do their work without much fanfare in places where the press is not invited. A few nights before the election, Haley Barbour was featured on a cable news show to speculate about the change to come. Barbour is governor of Mississippi and, in the mid-1990s, was chairman of the Republican National Committee, so he knows the deepest fears of the GOP and its right wing.

He could have mentioned any of a hundred serious problems facing the country, especially if Barack Obama was elected president, but he only mentioned a couple.

One of them was *union organizing!*

Imagine, with New Orleans and the Gulf Coast still suffering from the destruction of Katrina, with two wars that could go on indefinitely, with the financial meltdown of the paper (money) shuffle, one of the things he fears is the Employee Free Choice Act ([EFCA](#)), which would allow workers to organize into unions by card check.

That is, if a simple majority of workers sign union membership cards—or union authorization cards—then the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) would direct the employer to negotiate a contract with its workers. The amendment to the current law also provides for imposition of a contract, if the employer engages in surface bargaining (going through the motions of collective bargaining without any intention to reaching agreement).

Corporate America has suddenly become worried about the democratic rights of American workers, that the EFCA would “deprive” workers of their right to a secret ballot election in their workplace. Union-busting consultants and lawyers have come out of the woodwork, expressing their concern for working men and women, ready to fight against this affront to American “democratic values.”

Of course, they ignore the history of three decades in American workplaces, where employers used threats, coercion, promises, and, when necessary, the firing of union supporters among their workers. Employers have the workers for eight hours a day, during which time they are free to intimidate those who might vote for a union. Workers fired for organizing might get their jobs back years after the organizing drive is over, when the organizing drive is defeated.

Management’s illegal activity is done without any real fear of punishment. The small penalties are just written off as a cost of doing business, and workers are denied their lawful democratic right to organize. In this atmosphere, union organizing in America, with few exceptions, has dwindled and the union movement has nearly been written off.

President-elect Obama has promised to support and sign the EFCA if it reaches his desk and, with Democratic control of the Senate and the House, it seems likely.

In an era when fear-mongering nearly has become an art form, look for the “union avoidance” consulting firms and lawyers to begin their propaganda effort to thwart workers’ efforts to form unions of their choice. They’ve had decades of experience and overwhelming success at it. They’ve renewed their efforts with the prospect of EFCA.

In their advertising and seminars aimed at corporations and employers, the union busters depict all organizers as thugs and warn darkly of people bearing clipboards, who knock on the doors of “your workers,” forcing them to sign cards that will lead to collective bargaining and an enforceable contract.

Workers only want to enjoy their fair share of the nation’s economy, whatever its condition at a given moment. More importantly, workers want the right to protest unfair treatment by their employers and they want safe and healthy workplaces, without the threat of firing or discipline for being so bold.

To Corporate America, that is something to be feared—a union contract and dismissal

of a worker only for cause. Why, it's a sign of democratic rights! Crank up the fear-mongering!

At the GOP convention last summer, delegates and speakers made light of organizers —community organizers. Rudy Giuliani bent over the podium in laughter and derision when he formed the words "community organizer," in describing Barack Obama's entry-level position in the rough-and-tumble political atmosphere of Chicago's South Side.

The vice presidential candidate also had her fun with the idea of community organizing as someone's chosen work. She said it was a job that had no responsibility, unlike her job as mayor of Wasilla, Alaska.

Perhaps, now, they'll all crank up their fear-mongering about organizers, because, probably above all other factors, the GOP was defeated on Election Day by some of the best community organizing the country has ever seen.

And that's what union organizers do. And that's why the GOP and others should be fearful of those lowly organizers, community or union. The EFCA is right near the top of the list of Corporate America's fears.


After all, what's more fearsome than 130 million workers exercising their democratic rights under the laws of their nation?


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**BlackCommentator.com** Columnist, John Funiciello, is a labor organizer and former union organizer. His union work started when he became a local president of The Newspaper Guild in the early 1970s. He was a reporter for 14 years for newspapers in New York State. In addition to labor work, he is organizing family farmers as they struggle to stay on the land under enormous pressure from factory food producers and land developers. Click [here](#) to contact Mr. Funiciello.

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