

# **The BLACK C o M M e n t a t o r**

An independent weekly internet magazine  
dedicated to the movement for economic justice,  
social justice and peace - Providing commentary,  
analysis and investigations on issues affecting  
African Americans and the African world.

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## **Oct 25, 2012 - Issue 491 Vote Smart and then Prepare for the Next Stage Left Margin By Carl Bloice BC Editorial Board**

By the time these words go out into the internet there will be about 10 days left before the election. So, it doesn't seem worthwhile taking the time to address the proverbial question on the Left: who to vote for or whether to vote at all? Some readers will be out actually working to re-elect President Obama. I assume others are beating the bushes for either Jill Stein of the Green Party, Rocky Anderson of the Justice Party, James Harris of the Socialist Workers Party, Stewart Alexander of the Socialist Party, Libertarian Party presidential candidate, Gary Johnson, or Constitution Party nominee Virgil Goode. I suspect few are pushing Mitt Romney.

Most people reading this column regularly can have little doubt about who I'm voting for. But, hey, this is California; the Obama-Biden ticket can assume it has our electoral votes sewed up. I'll be rushing off to the polls with urgency because we've got some critical state measures before us (don't we always?). The big money, buy-elections people are trying to strangle union and progressive expression with one measure (Prop. 32). Insurance moguls are spending millions of dollars on a proposal to sock it to working class drivers (Prop. 33). Liberals and progressives are trying to insure that any genetically engineered Frankenfoods sold at the supermarket are labeled as such (Prop. 37). And, while it doesn't go as far as most of us on the Left would like, there's a proposal that would mean more resources for our state's underfunded schools (Prop. 30). Also, I think affordable housing activist, Christina Olague, is the best choice to represent our inner-city district on the San Francisco City - County Board of Supervisors.

I don't vote absentee unless I have to; I like going to the polls and seeing my neighbors there and having them see me and wearing the little badge reading "I voted" on my lapel as I shop or enter the neighborhood bar.

The fundamental question in this campaign, I believe, is the country's future economic policy. As begrudging and inconsistent as it is, the Obama policy is generally in favor of a neo-Keynesian direction of further investment in the economy to increase consumer demand, while the Romney-Ryan approach is tax cuts for the rich and regulatory deregulation. The difference between these two policies is not inconsequential. Tenaciously high unemployment and growing poverty is a reality. For millions of working people, decisions made over the next four years will have a direct impact on their daily lives. The same, I think, can be said about immigration policy, reproductive rights, and LGBT equal rights.

Yea, I've heard the argument. For every negative thing that can be said about the GOP there's something awful to cite about the other party; for every positive thing the Obama Administration may have accomplished there is something it did that is grossly offensive. One Left commentator wrote last week that he hoped Obama is reelected because his future failures will further radicalize us. That's just another version of the tired old, and morally dubious, worse-the-better argument.

Not that the Administration hasn't done some outrageous and indefensible things. For instance, supposedly "leading from behind," the Obama Administration has joined the European former colonial powers in creating another Somalia in Libya. That's the real scandal. Of course, the Republicans won't say so because, having embraced the neo-conservative warhawks from the Bush Administration, they are now agitating to create another one in Syria. And U.S. policy toward Latin America sucks big time. One thing I find particularly galling is that having put forward a rather modest proposal to alleviate the jobless crisis, which continues to hit the African American community particularly hard, the President dropped the ball, when carrying the fight to the mat would have been the correct response to the opposition's intransigence.

There can be no question of the meaning of the election for labor. The anti-labor intent of the Republican Party is spelled out clearly in the party platform and is underscored by the action of the party in state after state over the past few years.

There are, I believe, two other issues that are forefront in this period. The first is racism, and there can be no doubt that it is a major element in the campaigns. Something akin to the "southern strategy" is at play and I suspect it will intensify in the coming two weeks. The other is the threat to democracy. This is reflected in the conscious and deliberate voter suppression drive and efforts to rig the system to give financial advantage to capital over labor in politics. For all the talk on the Left about the need for electoral and campaign finance reform, I don't think there has been sufficient acknowledgement of the fact that things are actually moving in the opposite direction. While I don't endorse the notion of an imminent "fascist" threat, I think the danger of the assault on democracy is real.

This latest well-financed and deceptive effort to restrict labor's ability to influence political decision-making in California and the nation are not unrelated to the coordinated efforts to smash public sector unions, the Citizens United decision, and the ongoing voter repression conspiracy. The plutocrats and the Right-wingers have seen the handwriting on the wall in terms of political and demographic trends in the country and they are determined to reshape politics in the interest of the one-percent by curtailing democratic decision-making. As Leonard McNeil, the vice mayor of San Pablo, Ca. put it, these are efforts to "curtail and stifle the voices of working people" and "a frontal assault on democratic pluralism to advance the agenda of corporations and the wealthy."

Which brings me to the next question: what happens after the election?

If the Right-wingers win the presidency, liberals, Leftists and progressives will have their backs against the wall, especially if the Right ends up in control of Congress. But whatever the results are, a real danger lurks. While we sleep, plotters are at work aiming to construct a "grand bargain" that will have only negative consequences for working people and the poor. Behind the slogans of "shared sacrifices" and the threat of a "fiscal cliff," the economic and political elite are working on a "bipartisan" deal that will shift much of the burden of the current crisis of capitalism onto the backs of working people. The gains made in social welfare and economic security, won through struggle over a century, will be put at risk. Think of that every time you hear the words "Simpson-Bowles."

No matter who wins, when the election is over the critical political struggle will continue in earnest.

Economist, Jared Bernstein, has made the point that this is not simply a Right-wing conspiracy. Though conservatives have introduced recent things like Social Security privatization, and private accounts for health care and unemployment, this is not a story of good Democrats and bad Republicans. "It is the story of the ascendancy of a largely bipartisan vision that promotes individualist market-based solutions over solutions that recognize there are big problems that markets cannot effectively solve," he wrote recently.

"We cannot, for example, constantly cut the federal government's revenue stream without undermining its ability to meet pressing social needs," Bernstein wrote. "We know that more resources will be needed to meet the challenges of prospering in a global economy, keeping up with technological changes, funding health care and pension systems, helping individuals balance work and family life, improving the skills of our workforce, and reducing social and economic inequality. Yet discussion of this reality is off the table."

A critique of the Obama campaign on this matter is still in order, though I doubt it will make much difference at this late date. But progressives must be resolute in defending such critical things as Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid. Vice-President Biden has made somewhat reassuring statements about this matter, while Obama has continued to indicate a readiness to strike a "deal." Rev. Sharpton is on to something when he says the election is "not about Obama but about yo' mama." But the economic security of your mama - and your daddy - won't be secure after Nov. 6. The struggle continues. Take nothing for granted.

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