

This Way for Black Empowerment: Matters of Life and Death

BY DR. LENORA FULANI

This past Sunday night the five white men who call themselves "real" Democrats and say they are the ones we can count on to turn this country around appeared on a televised debate to tell the people of New Hampshire—who will vote in the country's first primary on February 18—why they are qualified to lead this country. But they only succeeded in proving that they are hypocrites and cowards who couldn't lead the way out of a potato sack.

They don't understand anything at all about the American economy and why it is dying, so they have no idea how to revive it.

The only thing that can bring America back to life economically is democracy. The reason is that when ordinary people—not profit-minded corporate bigshots and the professional politicians who are beholden to them—determine what the social priorities are, they choose people (and life) over profits (and death).

It is no secret that, with very few exceptions, the politicians who run our country do so on behalf of Big Business. The politicians of the major parties—Democrats as well as Republicans—are mostly puppets whose strings are pulled by the richest of the rich. Senator Tom Harkin of Iowa, for example, who poses as the most liberal of the Democratic rivals for George Bush's place in the White House, receives more money from political action committees representing the medical industry than anyone else in the Senate except for the right wing senator from Utah, Orrin Hatch. He and his kind are paid to worry about the health of the insurance conglomerates, the pharmaceutical companies, and the American Medical Association—not the tens of millions of Americans who don't have health insurance.

Senator Bob Kerrey says the words "national health insurance" every time he opens his mouth—but refuses to pay

the costs of providing health insurance for many of his employees in his chain of fast food restaurants back home in Nebraska. (Kerrey is the racist-in-populist-clothing who makes fun of Vice President Quayle—an easy target for pseudo-liberals—for having said that a "help wanted" sign in a Burger King proved that the economy is on the mend. What the American people need, says Mr. Kerrey, are go-somewhere careers in high tech industries. What he means is that it may be okay for Black folks to be serving hamburgers for the minimum wage into the 21st century, but white people need real jobs.)

Although a national health care bill has been sitting in the Democratic Party-controlled Congress for 27 years, it's never even made it to the floor of the House. Despite the fact that 80% of the American people want a national health plan, we don't have one. Why? Because the politicians who run America aren't interested.

They do have a big interest in the military industry, however; more than half the members of the Senate have major investments in the armaments business. For 40-years they and their buddies got away with spending trillions of dollars to "defend" us against the "great menace" of the Soviet Union. But that "menace" was really just an excuse for a handful of fat cats to get even fatter at our expense.

The truth is that people (unlike corporate profiteers) don't get anything out of the military industry. Tanks, guns, missiles, bomber planes and bombs aren't socially productive; they don't create more jobs, they don't make anyone healthier; better fed or clothed or housed. They don't enable people to express their love for other human beings, their ideas, or their talent. They destroy, they cripple and kill, and then they rot into dust.

Every now and then the U.S. government makes wars for the purpose of heating up the economy, but's like

applying electricity to the heart of someone who's already dead—you may get a few pulse beats, but no life.

For more than a generation the two major parties tried to terrorize us with "The Russians are coming" threats. But that was just an excuse for shelving the production of health care, education, housing, clean air and water, and everything else that people need to live decent and productive lives; instead we got military destruction, and the murder of the American economy, and all along the killers have been sitting right up there in the state houses, on Capitol Hill, and in the White House—and now some of them have the nerve to tell us to our faces that they're the ones who can lead us to the promised land.

But they aren't qualified. They're the ones who took us into the desert.

While these men were sitting up in a television studio lying to the people of New Hampshire, I was outside (in zero-degree weather) leading a multi-racial democracy picket of 400 people who were protesting my exclusion from the debate. On the eve of the celebration of the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., these white men who claim to be leaders (and who had, on or off the record, said that they thought I should be included) had crossed our picket line—because not one of them had the guts to take my hand and escort me inside—the only African American and the only woman running for president of the United States in the Democratic Party primary.

There's more to being a leader than saying you are one. That's a fact of political life that the American people need to learn.

Dr. Lenora Fulani is the chairperson of the New Alliance Party and a practicing social therapist in Harlem. She can be contacted at the New Alliance Party, 2032 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10035 and at (212) 996-4700.

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Most tax professionals charge a fee for the preparation and transmission of your return. To find someone to transmit yours, look in your local telephone directory. If you want quick relief at filing time, electronic filing is the way to go!

Inward Ho!

In Oregon and across the country, groups of men are gathering to chant, drum and talk about issues close to their hearts. They're part of the new "men's movement." Is this merely a fad? Or a serious inward exploration by men similar to the women's movement of the 1960's?

The men's movement has many facets: it includes elements of spirituality, healing, male bonding and even feminism. Men in this movement expect resistance. They expect skepticism and even anxiety. They believe some women will be threatened by this new empowerment of men. They suspect that many men are not yet ready to confront their feelings of isolation, and may mock those who do.

The men's movement has lofty goals: to make men more "human"; to enable men to be more creative and less destructive; to merge their personal and

political selves; to show greater appreciation for women and minorities and the challenges they've faced; to let go of the need to dominate and control; and to become more emotionally healthy.

What goes on in "men's groups"? Why are some men drumming and chanting? What are the goals of the men's movement? How are the men who participate changed? Will men's liberation come at women's expense or will women benefit, too?

Join Jack Faust and an all-male audience for this discussion on Sunday, February 23, from 6-7 p.m.

For seat reservations, please call Frank Mungeam, Alison Highberger, Liza McQuade or Lynn MacRitchie at 231-4620. Guests should arrive at KATU studios (21st & N.E. Sandy Blvd.) between 5:00-5:15 p.m. The public is welcome, but reservations are required.

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