OPINION

Black Vote Taken for Granted, Again

Advertising support is shameful

BY CLOVES CAMPBELL

There are less 100 days until voters throughout the country cast their votes for the next President of the United States of America as well as U.S. Senate, Congressional and State Legislatures.

The campaign war chests for President Obama and Mitt Romney total almost $3 billion dollars! However, as of this writing, not one dollar has been spent in the Black Press.

Once again the Black Press has been unfortunately relegated to an "Oh By the Way" campaign that features one 1/2 page ad placed two weeks before the election in black newspapers across America totaling a shameful $1.2 million! That is the money placed by the Obama for America Campaign. The Romney Campaign has zero dollars allocated!

To put this all into paper perspective, let me fill you in on the process:

In January of this year we had conversations with the Obama campaign. At that time, we were told that money was not coming in as expected so they could not talk about advertising in black newspapers. In late April, after we found out that the Obama campaign had only $800 million, we put together a very detailed advertising proposal for $21 million, which included multiple insertions in all of our member publications from June through November.

The plan suggested a campaign that encouraged three phases of action. The first steps were "Voters Registration - you can't vote if you are not registered." Second was "Proper ID - What to take to the polls." Understanding that voter suppression laws vary from state to state, it is important that voters know what to take to the polls in order to vote. The last stop is "GOTV - get out the vote."

Mobilizing our communities to go to the polls is the key to winning the upcoming election. Our proposal also included an aggressive digital and social media campaign as well.

Today, we are once again in a position of being taken for granted. Does Jim Messina, president Obama's campaign manager, know something about black folks that we don't know?

I am beginning to wonder, where are the black folks that are advising these campaigns? Do they not see the money being spent around them? Are they not asking why are there no black pollsters, ad agencies, placement, firms, or other black-owned businesses reaping the benefits of the incredible amounts being spent in this campaign season?

Show me the money!

At the end of the election, over $3 billion will be spent and some people will be very happy. They will not care who wins. To take a quote from the movie Trading Places, "No matter what happens.....Duke and Duke still get their commission!"

What are we to do? Do we stand by and again wait four more years? Let's get moving now! Come on Roland Martin, Rev. Sharpton, Rev. Jackson, Cliff Kelly, Steve Harvey, and Oprah Winfrey! Let's talk about this now. Show me the money.

Cloves C. Campbell Jr. is co-publisher of the Arizona Informant newspaper and chairman of the National Newspaper Publishers Association.

Hotter than a New Orleans Summer

Honoring living legends

BY MARC H. MORIAL

From start to finish, the 2012 National Urban League Conference in New Orleans was hotter than a New Orleans summer. It also may have been our most successful gathering ever.

The Conference opened on July 25 with a major domestic policy speech by President Obama in which he announced a new initiative promoting educational excellence for African Americans. And it closed on July 28, with words and songs of inspiration by American musical icon Stevie Wonder, who, along with Attorney General Eric Holder, received a National Urban League "Living Legend" Award.

For more than 40 years, Stevie Wonder has gifted generations of Americans with his unequalled talents as a musician, songwriter and singer.

From his days as the harmonica playing, hand clapping 12-year-old "Little Stevie Wonder" in the early 1960's to his status as a multiple-Grammy-winning icon today, Stevie has amassed one of the most prolific and recognizable songbooks in the history of American music.

His repertoire is full of the lyrics of love and music meant to lift the spirit, challenge injustice, heal the soul, and promote peace. In the early 1980's, Stevie was a leader in the campaign to declare Martin Luther King's birthday a national holiday. The song he wrote and recorded about that effort, "Happy Birthday," became an anthem of the King Holiday movement and its chorus has since become a standard sing-a-long at African American birthday parties.

In recent years, Stevie has expanded his social activism even further beyond the stage and studio. He has lent his voice and some of the proceeds from his songs to ending South African apartheid, helping people with disabilities, fighting against hunger and homelessness and aiding the victims of Hurricane Katrina and the 2011 Japanese earthquake and tsunami.

For 16 years, he has provided toys for children and families in need with his annual House Full of Toys benefit concert. In 2009, United Nations Secretary-General Ban ki-moon named Stevie Wonder a United Nations Messenger of Peace.

Upon accepting his Living Legend award during our Whitney M. Young Awards gala, Stevie delivered a heartfelt appeal for people around the world to come together to end prejudice, hatred and starvation and to live up to the high ideals that are the focus of so much prayer and so little action. He said "It's time to get beyond those things that have crippled us for centuries."

One of those crippling drawbacks is voter suppression, which has once again reared its ugly head. Guaranteeing the right to vote for every American is the focus of the National Urban League's "Occupy the Vote" campaign. It was also the theme of our Conference.

At the conclusion of his remarks, Stevie could not resist sitting down at the piano and inviting the rapt audience to join him in a medley of some of his greatest hits, including "Don't you Worry 'Bout a Thing," and "Signed, Sealed, Delivered." It was a fitting way to end our conference.

The Living Legend award honors those who most exemplify the ideals of the Urban League movement. We could not have chosen two better recipients this year than U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder and the legendary Stevie Wonder.

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