

Former 'Green Czar' Van Jones on New Film 'Carbon Nation'

By Kam Williams
Special to *The Skanner News*

Anthony "Van" Jones and his twin sister, Angela, were born on September 20, 1968 in Jackson, Tennessee to Loretta and the late Willie Jones, a teacher and principal, respectively. Van graduated from the University of Tennessee with a bachelor's degree in communications and political science, before earning a Juris Doctor at Yale Law School.

A clean energy pioneer and author of the eco-employment best-seller "The Green-Collar Economy," he was invited by the Obama Administration to serve as Green Czar. But Van decided to resign from the post in the wake of a relentless, right-wing smear campaign which accused him of everything from being a Communist to signing a petition suggesting that the Bush Administration had knowingly permitted the terrorist attacks on 9/11 to transpire.

Jones is currently teaching at Princeton University, where he holds a joint appointment at both the center for African-American Studies and the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs in the Program for Science, Technology and environmental Policy. He is also serving as a Senior Fellow at the Center for American Progress and as a Senior Policy Advisor at Green for All.

Here, he talks about all of the above, and about his appearance in *Carbon Nation*, a cautionary documentary about the consequences of climate change. The film opens in theaters in New York City on February 11, and will open elsewhere around the country later in the month and in March before becoming available on DVD in April.

Kam Williams: Hi Van, thanks for the time.

Van Jones: Thank you.

KW: My readers sent in a lot of questions for you. I'll start with Sam Chekwas, who asks: What interested you in appearing in *Carbon Nation*?

VJ: Back in 2007, I met this white guy [director Peter Byck] with a lot of hair and a video camera, at a conference that I happened to be attending for the launch of an organization called Blacks in Green. I had never heard of him and Peter had never heard of me. We just started talking; he liked what I had to say, so he asked me if I'd be willing to be in this documentary he was doing about carbon pollution. I said, "Sure!" It was kind of a no-brainer.

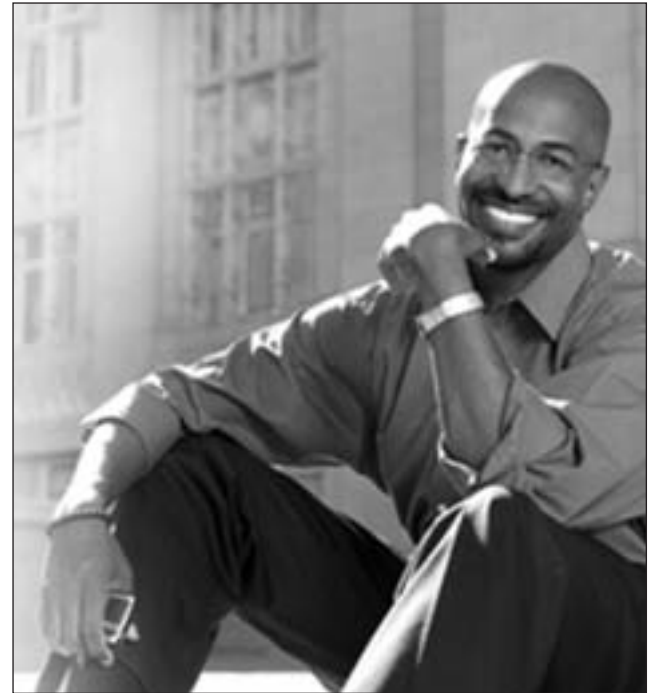
KW: Before you got interested in environmental issues, you started the Bay Area Police Watch, a San Francisco-based organization with an emergency hotline and a lawyer referral service for victims of police abuse. What inspired that?

VJ: I saw in the '90s that we were increasing police power with get tough policies and 3 strikes laws, but without additional oversights. I had this radical idea that the police should obey the law. My view

gotta have some oversight of law enforcement. And though the rampant racial injustices throughout the criminal justice system were offensive to me and to millions of other people, I've never drawn a tight circle around the Black community to define the limits of my moral concern. But that narrative tends to get imposed on you, if you're an African-American activist. But in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, we did create Color of Change, an organization which focused on African-Americans in particular, because we felt that there was a big gap there in terms of online advocacy which had left the black community particularly vulnerable.

KW: Preston Edwards, Sr., asks: Where are the jobs in the Green Economy? In which industries? Who are some of the larger employers? What are some of the entry-level jobs?

VJ: There are 80,000 jobs in the wind energy industry right now. And you can quadruple that number, if you have the right policy in place to promote clean energy. There are about 46,000 jobs supported by the solar industry right now. That's fewer than it should be, too. And you have a whole other set of jobs in energy-efficiency in buildings and in creating the "Smart Grid," as we call it. There's also manufacturing smart batteries and bio-fuels. Those are just the energy jobs. Then we have the water, food and other industries which are also experiencing some redirec-



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was that any human system without adequate checks and balances will tend towards corruption and abuse. That's why you have meat inspectors. Not because you hate butchers, but because of an understanding of human nature. Similarly, I felt like you

tion. As far as employers who are hiring, Vestas is a big wind company, and Solyndra is a solar power company. But some of these companies are starting to struggle in the absence of America's committing to a cleaner future by way of Congressional action. The prospects of green economic opportunity is going to be determined to a great extent by politicians arriving at some sort of bi-partisan resolution.

KW: Ben Thypin asks: How do you respond to those who say that green jobs are, at best, limited in their potential impact in terms of the number of and quality of jobs created and, at worst, "make-work" jobs that form just one part of the grand socialist apparatus designed to crush the private sector and, implicitly, all that is patriotic and holy?

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

FEBRUARY 2011

BULLETIN BOARD

THE SKANNER.com

If you have an event you want to share with the community, email it two weeks in advance to *The Skanner* at info@theskanner.com

Friday February 18

ARE YOU AGE 55+ AND JOBLESS IN SEATTLE - KING COUNTY? If so, this job search workshop is for you! 10 a.m. - Noon. Central Building 810 Third Ave, Suite 150. Seattle and King County residents only. Space is limited. To register call 206-233-7097 or e-mail tina.inay@seattle.gov.

Wednesday February 23

CELEBRATE DIVIRESTY JOB FAIR: Reservations are required. To make reservation for the job fair contact khenry@bellevue.wa.gov Noon - 3 p.m. Crossroads Community Center 16000 NE 10th St. Bellevue.

Thursday February 24

HIP HOP MOGUL RUSSELL SIMMONS READS Russell will talk about this book, "Super Rich: A Guide to Having It All." 7 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. Central Library, 1000 Fourth Ave. Free and open to the public.

Sunday February 27

CULTURAL ENGAGEMENT FILM SERIES: In Honor of Black History Month: The House We Live In, an episode from the PBS documentary series *Race: The Power of an Illusion*: Phinney Neighborhood Assoc. Room 1. 6532 Phinney Ave. N. Please RSVP to Katie@phinneycenter.org or call 206-783-2244, 3 - 5 p.m.

Fitness Fair

Liz Davis, who has lost 180 pounds, did a presentation at a Free Community Health Fair Feb. 12 at the NW African American Museum. Davis transformed herself from before her weight loss to how she looks now. Throughout her mesmerizing performance she talked about how she gradually changed her life around by increasing her exercise and changing her diet to include more fruits and vegetables. In addition to presentations on fitness and nutrition participants could get free blood pressure, cholesterol and glucose screenings. Free mammograms, breast exams and pap tests were also available by appointment.

