

Debating the State of Black America in 2011

Next Thursday, I invite you to join the debate about the number one issue facing the nation – the deep and persistent jobs crisis that has been especially devastating in urban communities of color. As part of the National Urban League’s annual Legislative Policy Conference in Washington, D.C., we will convene a free State of Black America town hall meeting on March 31, from 10 a.m. to noon at Howard University’s Cramton Auditorium.

A panel of notable policy experts, scholars, and journalists will lead a public dialogue about ways to end the jobs crisis in our communities. But, the most important voices invited to this meeting belong to you – the student struggling to pay college tuition, the father who lost his job six months ago and is wondering if he will ever be able to support his family again, the single mother having to choose between child

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Marc Morial



care and health care for her kids. The great recession has seen a loss of more than eight million jobs. Many of those jobs are in declining industries and may

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never return. According to a recent CNN Money news report, “Home building lost nearly 1 million jobs since the start of 2008, while the auto industry shed 300,000 manu-

facturing jobs due to plant closings. The finance and real estate sectors lost more than 500,000 jobs.” Unfortunately, many of those lost jobs are never coming back.

That is why the discussion about bringing jobs back to urban America must focus on ensuring that people in our communities are educated, trained, and have access to the jobs of the future. The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that between 2008 and 2018, the industries projected to produce the largest number of new jobs are health care and social assistance, and professional and business services.

Nearly half of all new jobs created during those years will require some type of post-secondary education

Because of high dropout rates and low college graduation rates in communities of color, it is projected that 70 percent of prime

working age African American adults and 80 percent of Hispanics will lack the requisite education

dropouts and older workers whose jobs were eliminated by the recession. We must also do more to

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for almost 40 percent of projected new jobs.

Clearly, immediate action is needed to turn this picture around. The National Urban League’s 12-point Blueprint for Quality Job Creation offers several powerful remedies, including a plan to boost minority participation in emerging Broadband and Green Industries. We also call on Congress to reform, revise, and reauthorize the Workforce Investment Act to focus on preparing and retraining workers for 21st century jobs by targeting young adults with less than college education as well as high school

reverse troubling recent trends in minority high school dropout and college enrollment rates.

These are just some of the ideas that will be discussed at the March 31 town hall meeting. We need your input too. If you can’t attend in person, the event will be webcast live at www.nul.org beginning at 10 a.m. Eastern Time. You can also join the conversation on

Twitter@NatUrbanLeague using #SOBA11 or on Facebook.

Marc H. Morial is the President and CEO of the National Urban League.

Japan: Could Our Inner-City Communities Survive?

I am among the many who are stilled, freighted, and challenged by the tsunami and nuclear power breakdown in Japan. The tragedy raises all kinds of questions including a very selfish one – what would we do if a tsunami hit the United States? As we see people missing, and watch the tragedy, I wonder how we would cope if anything like that happened here. What would happen if New Orleans happened in Washington, New York, or San Francisco? How prepared are we for tragedy?

President Barack Obama has talked about infrastructure development and the many ways that we might improve our highways, byways, and roads. This is a first step. It seems to me that 2001, 2005, and Japan are reminders that all of us need to be concerned about the quality of our infrastructure and our emergency responses to unexpected acts of nature. What might we do if 10-foot gales of water hit one of our major



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okay. We know that we could invest more, and we could achieve more, but we have decided that we don’t want, to quite move in that direction. We have to, we say, pay attention to money. But, we also have to pay attention to our future and to outcomes.

Among the outcomes we must be careful of are outcomes in education. It is challenging to find that so very many people think we should cut educational spending because we are in a budget crunch. Cutting education is like a farmer eating her seed corn, deciding to sacrifice consumption today for investment tomorrow. If we are to excel as a nation, we

strengthen our infrastructure. We must put dollars into education. This is hardly the time to cut back on an investment on the future. Instead of holding back, we must move forward, boldly, with our investment.

Japan should be a wake-up call for all of us. A country that was seen as stable has been destabilized by a natural disaster. Could that happen here? Further, what

else could happen here to hurt us? We are so complacent about education that we run the risk of being run over by dozens of other world powers. Yes, there are dozens of others now, and even that might be disconcerting for those of us who are wedded to a paradigm that places the United States first.

If we take the call to wake up then we will look at infrastructure and opportunity. Can we learn from Japan, or will we simply

offer the compassion that we offer to so many others? Learning means doing something different. Is that within the realm of our possibility?

Julianne Malveaux is president of Bennett College for Women in Greensboro, N.C., and author of “Surviving and Thriving: 365 Facts in Black Economic History.”

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cities? Is this something that we have even thought about?

At a time when we must be prepared to do much more, it appears that we are prepared to do much less. In other words, we are in the middle of an economic meltdown, and people are talking about spending less money. Doesn’t Japan suggest we should spend more to shore up our infrastructure?

The fact is that we in the United States have chosen not to invest in infrastructure for more than a generation. We drive over potholes, look at detours in roads, and send children to school in dilapidated buildings, and we think it’s

need to invest fully in education. We’ve not done so. Why do we have crumbling schools and state of the art prisons?

The United States leads the world in having educated people who are 55-64. Nearly 40 percent of us have AA or BA degrees. We have not improved our ability to deliver educational services in 30 years, so that nearly 40 percent of those 25 to 34 have AA and BA degrees. We lead in the education of seasoned people, but we rank 10th in the education of younger people. That speaks poorly to our possibilities for the future.

What must we do? We must spend the dollars that we need to

Week on the Web

Soul and Disco Singer Loleatta Holloway has died after a brief illness. She was 64 years old. ... in “Music Reviews”



Chronic divorcee and actor Elizabeth Taylor is dead at 79 ... in “Latest News”

The trial for baseball homerun great Barry Bonds got underway Tuesday, with Bonds’ longtime trainer again refusing to testify and a childhood friend telling the court that he often saw bonds’ coach with needles ... in “Latest News”

President Obama says a land invasion into Libya isn’t on the planning book. It’s now up to the ragtag team of rebels to take down Gadhafi ... in “National News”

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