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The State of Black America

Last week, the nation's leading historic civil rights organization, the National Urban League, came together with the nation's leading historic Black university, Howard University, to hold the first ever State of Black America town hall meeting focusing on the jobs crisis in urban America. The Town Hall, hosted by Howard President, Sidney Ribeau, culminated two days of meetings with Congressmen and Senators on Capitol Hill where Urban Leaguers from across the country made the case: There can be no complete economic recovery as long as already too high unemployment for African Americans continues to go up even as the overall unemployment rate gradually ticks down.

Yes, we were pleased to learn last week that the unemployment rate has fallen to 8.8 percent, the lowest level in two years. And, we applaud the actions by the Obama Administration – the Stimulus bill, Health Care Reform and Bank Reform – that have kept the mighty titanic of the American economy from sinking to the bottom of the sea. But, this is no time for a victory party. As the National Urban League's 2011 Equality Index reveals, there remain large and widening gaps between the status of African

TO BE EQUAL

Marc Morial



Americans and Whites in this country, particularly in the areas of economics and children's health. For Hispanics there are big gaps too, especially in the area of college enrollment. And, with Black

ties of color.

As we stated at the Town Hall, we must not let other major concerns, including war and partisan fights about deficit reduction, distract us from the number one issue facing the American people – jobs, jobs, jobs. The National Urban League's nearly 100 affiliates across the country haven't lost that focus. We remain economic first responders for millions of Americans desperately seeking to rebuild their lives, families, and communities in the wake of the

Solutions, Inc. has been able to win new contracts and double his workforce with the help of the Entrepreneurship Center of the Urban League of Cincinnati. The Urban League of Philadelphia helped David Simms, owner of Eatible Delights Catering, develop new branding and marketing tools that have boosted his business. And Donna Hodge Harper of Newark, an unemployed casualty of the great recession, said that were it not for the job training and job placement assistance she received from the Urban League of Essex County, she doesn't know where she would be today.

Lonnie, David, and Donna show us how to dig urban America out of the great recession: Training for 21st century jobs. Putting investments in people over the politics of deficit reduction. Summer jobs for teens. All of these solutions are part of the National Urban League's 12-points jobs plan. Washington, are you listening?

To view the town hall webcast and find out how you can obtain a copy of the 2011 State of Black America Report log on to www.nul.org

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

“Welcome to America in the second decade of the 21st century. An army of long-term unemployed workers is spread across the land, the human fallout from the Great Recession and long years of misguided economic policies.”

Bob Herbert's final column for the New York Times

unemployment now at 15.5 percent and Hispanic unemployment at 11.3 percent, clearly, it is time to declare war on inequality and unemployment in urban communi-

worst economic downturn since the Great Depression. We highlighted three outstanding examples at our Town Hall.

Lonnie Grayson, President of Environmental & Safety

Economy Improves But Not for Blacks

More than 200,000 jobs were created last month, 216,000 to be exact. Coming after the February lift of more than 200,000 jobs, there are those who are saying that economic recovery is around the corner. I don't know what corner they are standing on, but the African American corner took a hit in March, and the Black unemployment rate rose from 15.3 to 15.5 percent. No other racial/ethnic group saw unemployment rates rise. Some will say the slight increase is statistically insignificant. Try telling that to the African Americans who don't have jobs, or to those who are not in the labor force. Indeed, while the number of Whites who had dropped out of the labor force went down, the number of African Americans out of the labor force went up.

The government is on the brink of closing down, with obstructionist Tea Party members determined to shrink the size of government no matter what. They have focused on government workers, but too many of these workers are African American, Latino, and female. Yes, an attack on government workers is an attack on equality, because those who work for governments are more likely to find a fair deal, have a good job, and be paid equitably. The government is on the brink of closing down, but on their way to down time, they have not found time to introduce one piece of legislation that speaks to job creation. Given the numbers that we see this month, this really means they have been unwilling and unable to deal with the jobs crisis in the African

BENNETT COLLEGE

Julianne Malveaux



American community, as the situation in other communities is getting better.

While the number of Whites who had dropped out of the labor force went down, the number of African Americans out of the labor force went up

Better does not mean acceptable. There are 13.5 million officially unemployed people in our nation, and the number that have not worked for half a year has risen from 43.9 percent to 45.5

severe measure of unemployment, the measure that accounts for those who work part time when they want full time work or are only “marginally attached” to the labor market, a whopping 15.7 percent. This means, in real terms, that nearly one in six of us is unemployed.

It gets worse, of course, for African Americans. The employment population ratio for adult Black men, at 57.2 percent, is

acceptable for the employment situation in an entire community can be imperiled? Why is it that nobody really cares?

There is joy in some quarters about the fact that significant employment has been created two months in a row. But, there is a cliché that says it takes more than a swallow to bring spring. In other words, we first of all know that at the rate we are going, it will take until 2018, seven years from now, for us to get back to the number of jobs we had in 2007. With populating growth, even then we won't reach the unemployment rate of 5 percent that we experienced in December of 2007. Secondly, pessimistic economists, like former Labor Secretary Robert Reich, are suggesting that there is the possibility of a “double dip” recession, and that numbers could turn back down in a few months if more money is not pumped into the economy. Bankers are keeping their bailout money, having failed to address the foreclosure situation, or to lend small businesses money they need for inventory and revitalization. They are cautiously waiting for better times, but what if Congress had exercised their caution on them?

The bottom line is that while some data suggest economic recovery, the African American community is still riding on the back of the bus. It will take targeted job creation programs to improve on the new unemployment numbers. Is there anyone in Congress who will step up to say that these unacceptably high unemployment rates cannot continue?

The employment population ratio for adult Black men is nearly eleven points lower than the employment population ratio for adult White men

percent in the past month. Labor force participation is at an all time low of 64.2 percent which means that too many people have left the labor force because they think they can't find work, or they can't afford to look. This is the story for all Americans, with the most

the overall population from 8.8 percent to 15.7 percent, takes the African American population from 15.5 percent to 27.6 percent, a Depression-era level unemployment rate. Why is this okay? Why has it sparked no national discussion? What does it mean that it is