



"Challenging People to Shape a Better Future Now"

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Who's Watching the Supercommittee?

When President Obama signed the Budget Control Act of 2011, he committed our nation to a budget-cutting process that may well be cumbersome. The "Supercommittee", or the Joint Select Committee on Budget Reduction, has a hard timeline of Nov. 23 to propose some \$1.5 trillion in cuts. If Congress does not pass the Supercommittee proposals, then an automatic trigger will cut the budget across the board by about nine percent.

I suppose the thinking behind creating the Supercommittee, composed of six Democrats and six Republicans, is that 12 minds are better than 535. The size of the committee may also make it easier for lobbyists: According to Politico, more than 200 lobbyists are pressuring Supercommittee members to protect their interests. Who will protect the interests of young people, especially those who attend HBCUs? Already, students have been hard hit by budget machinations. Beginning July 1, 2012, students will no longer receive an interest subsidy on their undergraduate and graduate student loans. Before now, while studying, student loans were interest-free, with interest kicking in only when they began repayment. No more. That will save about \$18 billion in the next decade, but at what cost? It is ironic that on



BENNETT COLLEGE

Julianne Malveaux

one hand, President Obama wants our nation to again lead the world in the percentage of people who are college graduates, and at the

students who do not have the resources of the health care industry, legal associations, and those other 200 crowding Capital Hill. To be sure, many of the Supercommittee members are committed to education. Congressman James Clyburn (D-SC), for example, is the only Congressional Black Caucus member on the Supercommittee. He is likely to find allies among other Democrats on the Supercommittee. However, will

month several UNCF presidents met with members of the Congressional Black Caucus to talk about ways that Title III money can be protected. Those who care about HBCUs must lobby not only CBC members and Congressional Representatives in areas where HBCUs are located, but also any and every voter, especially those on the Supercommittee.

When you scour the headlines, you won't find much written about the Supercommittee, even though they are in the throes of meetings and negotiations. We can expect Democrats to protect entitlements and Republicans to resist tax increases, and these are sure ingredients for an impasse. When the Supercommittee was formed critics from both the left and the right talked about the possibility of it deadlocking, as in order to attain a simple majority, somebody will have to cross party lines.

The Supercommittee may well be out of the news, but it should not be off our radar screen. The dozen members are making decisions that will have long-term consequences.

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It is ironic that on one hand, President Obama wants our nation to again lead the world in the percentage of people who are college graduates, and at the same time, yet another hurdle is being imposed on those who want to go to college

same time, yet another hurdle is being imposed on those who want to go to college.

For now, it appears that the Pell Grant of \$5,500 for low-income students remains intact. However, the Supercommittee is looking for places to cut, and they are looking everywhere. Absent lobbyists, we will all have to lobby to protect the

they be able to withstand both the Republican zeal to reduce the size of government or the automatic triggers that will take place if the Supercommittee can't find compromise?

It is also likely that Title III funding, which is specifically targeted to HBCUs, will be on the chopping block. Earlier this

Land Loss Increasing Through Foreclosures

An old African proverb is "A people without their land will be a people without a future." Way before the current housing mortgage crisis that disproportionately has negatively impacted Black Americans, there had been a 20-year steady pace of land loss in the majority of Black communities across the United States. Now today with the additional persistence of high unemployment for African Americans, there is a corresponding destabilizing increase in the daily rate of Black land loss throughout the nation.

No one seems to know the exact statistics on this issue, but in nearly all reliable reports, in particular from states where African Americans are over 30 percent of the population, more than 10,000 acres of land per day are now being lost. The reason why I am raising this phenomenon is because too often when we face a challenge for a long period of time, the sheer magnitude of the problem becomes understated and misunderstood. During the last 20 years, dialogue about this continued crisis has moved from awareness to reaction to cynicism and now even an emerging sense of hopelessness.

I do not believe Black people in the United States, in the Caribbean, South America, or in Africa can afford to be casual or hopeless on the global issue of land loss by Black people. No one seems to remember years ago that the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) helped to initially destabilize Zimbabwe because they dis-

EDUCATION SERVICES

Benjamin F. Chavis Jr.



agreed with President Robert Mugabe giving native Africans millions of acres of their land back

of the real value because family members for various reasons decided to let the family property become the ward of the state or county.

But beyond the sheer monetary value of Black-owned land across America are the tremendous potential health-related and self-determination benefits for the use of this land. So many of the diseases and serious health problems

land loss? Whether you live in a big city or a small town, the questions about land ownership and the economic development of the Black community are most urgent and important. The Black church and other institutions that serve our communities should put a special emphasis on this issue. The establishment of local "land banks" and other cooperative efforts to pool the resource potential of our communities should be given a priority. The latest U.S. consumer spending reports Black American spending continues to increase annually. According to recent research by the Nielsen Company, Black American buying power by the year 2015 will reach in excess of \$1.1 trillion. Wow, we are becoming trillion dollar spenders, yet losing more and more land. We will not be able to create more wealth for generations to come, if we do not change our spending habits.

What are we spending more on? Appreciating assets or depreciating assets? If properly done, land purchases can be a wise appreciating investment. We owe it to our ancestors not to lose all that they worked and suffered so much for in the past. Let's turn our land losses into gains by reversing this awful trend. Stop Black land loss now! Let's build for a better future.

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In nearly all reliable reports, in particular from states where African Americans are over 30 percent of the population, more than 10,000 acres of land per day are now being lost

that had been stolen by Rhodesian farmers and businessmen. All human life is valuable. We live in a world that too often seeks to triage the value of Black life. But, we should never engage in self-destruction or self-devaluation! Black owned land is of no less value.

Thus, we hope that after you read these words, you will survey the land that your family now owns and make sure that the taxes are paid because thousands of acres of are lost daily because abandonment or tax delinquency. It is unfortunate that some of us do not even know the value of the land we live on or have inherited from our fore parents. It is so sad to go to most county courthouses to see the long list of properties that are sold for less than one-tenth

that African Americans face today are a direct result of not eating healthy food properly. When the majority of Black people in the past lived on our own farms or in communities where there was a multitude of organic gardens, the overall health condition of our people was much better. The fundamental striving for self-determination and freedom is to be able to feed yourself, shelter yourself, and empower yourself economically from the bounty and produce of your own land and labor. Freedom is inconsistent with being dependent on others to do for you what God wants you to do for yourself.

Today there is a gradual reverse migration of Black Americans from the northeast and midwest back to the southeast. Will this trend lead to a reverse in Black