

## Labor Unions and Workplace Favoritism

I have many discussions with people who claim that they do not need the help of a labor union in their workplace. These individuals will even go so far as to suggest that they can get ahead on their own and that a union will get in their way.

It is difficult to argue with someone who is intent on believing a myth. It is sort of like those people who continue to believe that the world is flat or that the Iraqis had weapons of mass destruction at the time of the 2003 U.S. invasion. No matter what sort of proof you put up, they have an "answer."

But for the rest of us, it is worth considering a common workplace problem: favoritism. If we are honest, we all know that if someone is personally close to a supervisor or manager they can frequently count on better treatment. Most of us expect that to happen and take it for granted. Still, that does not make it right. In fact, favoritism in the workplace is a major source of demoralization for the workers. You



**TRANS AFRICA**

**Bill Fletcher Jr.**

work hard and expect to be rewarded, only to find out that someone else who just happens to be friendly with management is being treated better than you.

Perhaps you are lucky and there is a human resources department at your workplace. Maybe it is just one person, but in any case, you can go and speak with them. If you do, I am sure that they will offer you coffee or tea, and an opportunity to share your pain. At the end of the discussion, however, nothing has changed.

Absent a labor union, a work-

place has only the rules that are demanded by government or created by management. The thing about management's rules – and this is the kicker – is that they do not have to go by them. That's right. They can set up a "personnel policy" that says that promotions are based on the best qualified person and, presto, the best friend of the manager gets the promotion and there is not one

Another, and very ironic side to all of this, is that someone who was playing footsy with a supervisor could find themselves in a very different situation if a new supervisor appears on the scene. The conditions that supervisor X set up can be changed by the new supervisor Y. The person who was the recipient of favoritism, in other words, can find that they are on the "outs" with no explanation or

objected to legislation to create health and safety protections for workers. The owners simply did not want to be accountable to anyone.

The most consistent answer to such lawlessness, then, ends up being a labor union. A union can negotiate a contract/collective bargaining agreement with an employer that emphasizes fairness in personnel decisions, including promotions. None of this is onerous. It is just ensuring that workers are treated with respect. This is what always makes it so odd when you hear politicians attacking unions. Why are they afraid of workplace fairness?

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thing that you can do about it unless you can show that there was some sort of discrimination based on race, sex, religion, national origin or disability.

apology.

In the U.S.A., many if not most owners of companies do not want to be obligated to follow any rules. This is why so many companies

## Obama Needs to Project More than 'Hope'

The primary goal of the Democratic National Convention in Charlotte, N.C. this week is to highlight the sharp contrast between the policies of President Barack Obama and Mitt Romney, his Republican opponent.

In the past, political conventions were used to count delegates to determine each party's respective presidential nominee. That has changed in recent years, with the ballot outcome already determined by the time thousands of delegates roll into a city for the convention. Today, the speeches are directed at millions watching on television, the Internet or a mobile device, not the people sitting in the convention hall.

Republicans concluded their

**THE CURRY REPORT**

**George E. Curry**



who couldn't carry his own precinct in his bid for governor, Team Romney made a major appeal to its base. And the selection of Paul Ryan as his running mate served to underscore that point.

The problem for Republicans is that the election will largely be decided by undecided independ-

in 2008. By comparison, George W. Bush captured 11 percent of the Black vote in 2004.

Both Obama and Bill Clinton were elected president without receiving a majority of the White vote. And Obama can do it again this year.

Look at how this plays out in the battleground state of North Carolina, which Obama carried by only 4,177 votes – or 0.3 percent – in 2008.

Blacks make up 22 percent of North Carolina's population. Over the past decade, 1.5 million people

migrated to North Carolina – 61.9 percent of them non-White. According to demographers quoted by the Charlotte Observer, Obama can carry the state by winning just 36 percent to 37 percent of the White vote.

Obama's larger problem is that after campaigning four years ago on a theme of hope and change, there is not much of either today. His severest critics note that after promising change – that's about all they have left in their pockets after nearly four years of his leadership.

The test this week for Obama is to demonstrate that he isn't the same naïve former U.S. Senator he was four years ago in Denver. With Republicans hell-bent on not seeing Obama return to the White House, he needs to show that he has more than just the audacity of hope.

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national convention in Tampa and for the first time in 60 years, the GOP nominee didn't make the argument that his party will do a better job in foreign affairs. President Obama took that issue away from Republicans by ending U.S. involvement in the war in Iran, bringing troops back from Afghanistan and approving a mission that resulted in the death of Osama bin Laden.

With shifting U.S. demographics, the Tampa gathering may be the last national political convention that Republicans or any other party can make a race-based appeal to White voters. Despite token appearances by former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Artur Davis, a former Democratic congressman from Alabama

ent voters. And Romney, a Massachusetts moderate-turned-conservative, can't afford to appeal directly to that group without alienating ardent conservatives already suspicious of him.

Except for a speech to the NAACP annual convention in Houston, Romney has done little to appeal to African-American voters. Not that it would do him much good. A recent NBC News/Wall Street Journal poll showed Romney getting zero percent of the Black vote. Of course, that does not mean no Black person in America will vote for him. Instead, the zero was in a poll with a margin of error of 3.1 percent. That means that Romney probably will not match John McCain's unimpressive 4 percent

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