



“Challenging People to Shape a Better Future Now”

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## Being Treated as Less than Human

Like many, if not most of you, I was assuming that the Grand Jury would not indict Officer Wilson. I was hoping that they would at least find something to charge him with, but I did not really expect it to happen. I figured that I would be ready for the Grand Jury's decision.

But I was not. I listened as the explanations were offered and I suddenly realized that tears were slowly coming down the side of my face.

I have not had faith in the US judicial system during my adult life, but I still found the decision more than I was prepared to take.

In these cases of police lynching, as my wife noted this evening, no one ever seems to explain how it is that an individual who is trained to deal with harrowing circumstances, finds it necessary to fire their weapon twelve times against an unarmed, alleged assailant.

But there is something else that probably needs to be openly discussed. I thought about this when



**TRANS AFRICA**

Bill Fletcher Jr.

I was in the occupied Palestinian territories and witnessed the manner in which the Palestinians are treated like dogs by the Israeli

occupiers. There is a deep anger and resentment that emerges among the oppressed that frequently evolves into rage (sometimes open; other times less than open). In those moments one can find one's self saying or doing something unexpected because one is simply tired—in a bone deep way—of being treated as less than human. In the short time that I was in occupied Palestine I, personally, was filled with rage, a rage so deep that there were times that I wanted to challenge the Israelis...scream at them for their inhumanity...only to remember the countless “Michael Browns” in the USA who have lost their

lives at the hands of the authorities, almost always demonized and caricatured; almost always with

their death explained away as justifiable. I don't know what happened on that summer day in Ferguson. I do know that a young, unarmed black man was robbed of his future. Could he have been argumentative? Quite possibly. Could he have gotten into an altercation with the officer? Certainly. But are we supposed to believe that even under those circumstances that an unarmed, sane person would decide to charge someone with a fully loaded weapon? Over an argument of some sort? And we are supposed to believe that a police officer has no training to prepare for such a possibility and can only respond with deadly force?

I am sick to my stomach about the decision and the numerous similar such decisions in these cases of extra-judicial killings of youth of color. I am sick of the terror that it inspires in communities of color across the USA.

The lynchings must stop!

I listened as the explanations were offered and I suddenly realized that tears were slowly coming down the side of my face

## Will Larger CBC Translate to More Clout?

Even though the next Congress, which starts on January 6, will feature 48 African Americans, the largest number in history, the question is: Can they get anything done in a Congress that's been gridlocked for four straight years?

But since most Black members will serve as members of the minority party in the House, most of their power to control federal policy and billions of dollars will be decided by compromise as they serve on major committees. Though members of the Congressional Black Caucus will not control the policy agenda, they will still play a key role in those decisions.

For the first time in history, seven members of the Congressional Black Caucus will serve as Ranking Members of major House Committees for the upcoming 114th Congress. Why does this matter? Because even a member in the minority in the hyper-partisan House, which has been controlled by Republicans since 2010, is going to have a seat at the table.

Much of what is done behind the scene goes unreported by press corps fixated on the political cat fight of the moment. And in the case of the CBC, the Black Press is the only place where their work is likely to be covered.

November 19, was one of the biggest days for the Caucus since four Black Committee Chairmen were christened in January 2009.

Seven Black members of the House – Reps. John Conyers (D-Mich.), Maxine Waters (D-Calif.), Corrine Brown (D-Fla.), Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-Texas), Bobby Scott (D-Va.), Bennie Thompson (D-Miss.), and Elijah Cummings (D-Md.) will have a seat at the legislative table next year as ranking committee members.

Additionally, two of the



**NNPA COLUMNIST**

Lauren Victoria Burke

most powerful members of the Black Caucus, Reps. Sanford Bishop (D-Ga.) and Chaka Fattah

can control.

Even with the well-publicized gridlock over the last four years, Rep. Fattah was able to get the Urban Jobs Act through the House after a compromise was reached with House Republicans. The bill's passage, which was a rare example of bipartisanship, received almost no press.

The gridlock strategy was employed by House Republicans in hopes of preventing President Obama from getting anything

done. But going into the 2016 presidential campaign, Republicans are expected to show they can produce actual legislative results in what would be a huge strategic change.

for African Americans. Some are succeeding, but the vast majority of African Americans are not succeeding. It's our job as legislators to try and enact policies that will move the needle – whether it's with a coalition of Democrats or Republicans,” Butterfield told *The Root*.

The new chairman will inherit the largest Congressional Black Caucus in history at a time when presidential politics will play a big role in the narrative. Whether he and the Black Caucus can navigate the games of gridlock will depend on how afraid Republicans are of being tagged as the “party of no” as their presidential candidates tour the country.

Chances are those politics will be the real reason the GOP will suddenly be interested in moving legislation during President Obama's last two years in office.

*Lauren Victoria Burke is freelance writer and creator of the blog Crewof42.com, which covers African American members of Congress. She Burke appears reg-*

The last two years witnessed the least productive U.S. House in history in terms of bills passed, all under Republican control

(D-Penn.), are ranking members on subcommittees on the most powerful committee in the House: Appropriations. From those positions they will have a say in doling out several hundred billion dollars every fiscal year.

“Politics is about who gets what when and how and being at the table is essential to determining that those resources get where they need to be,” Rep. Bishop told *The Root* in an interview.

“It is my hope that we are able to use the appropriations process and the policy making process here in Congress in a bipartisan way that will benefit all the American people,” Bishop said in the interview.

In an effort to show they can actually govern, Republicans in the 114th Congress are expected to pass legislation rather than repeat another four years of their core strategy: Gridlock. The last two years witnessed the least productive U.S. House in history in terms of bills passed, all under Republi-

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As part of its normal process, the Congressional Black Caucus elected a new Chairman yesterday, Rep. G.K. Butterfield (D-N.C.). Though he plans to outline a detailed strategy for the Caucus in January, he spoke in general terms about the policy focus he'll have next Congress.

“The economy is not working

ularly on “*NewsOneNow with Roland Martin*” and on *WHUR FM, 900 AM WURD*. She worked previously at *USA Today* and *ABC News*. She can be reached through her website, [laurenvictoriaburke.com](http://laurenvictoriaburke.com), or Twitter @Crewof42 or by e-mail at [LBurke007@gmail.com](mailto:LBurke007@gmail.com).