

A post-election mobilization agenda

Written by Julianne Malveaux, NNPA Columnist
Tuesday, 13 November 2012 00:00

After we savor the feeling of sweet success that comes from President Barack Obama's election, there is work to do. Most of us got the outcome that we both worked and hoped for, but we have to resist the temptation to exhale and get on with our work. Before the president takes the oath of office for a second time, African Americans should mobilize around these issues:

1. **Sequestration.** Unless the Democrats and Republicans can cut a deal during the lame-duck session of Congress, our budget will be cut automatically. While House Speaker John Boehner has softened his tone just a bit and indicated his willingness to compromise, he still has to herd his Tea Party colleagues into also agreeing on ways to avoid sequestration. The notion of cutting expenditures at a time of slow economic growth makes no sense. Neither does sequestration, a desperate move to avoid a compromise. What do we need to address the deficit? A long-term plan that takes economic cycles into account.

2. **Poverty.** Tavis Smiley and Cornel West spent much of this fall on a poverty tour, rising up the 27 percent of African Americans who live in poverty. This contrasts with the Middle Class Tax Force that President Obama has asked Vice President Biden to lead. It would be great if the president would form a task force to reduce or eradicate poverty, and he might do so if he were urged to. Meanwhile, as the holidays approach, keep the poor in your community in mind, and find a local charity to sponsor.

3. **State and local elections.** Presidential elections seem to suck all of the air out of the political landscape, and rightly so. We elect a president only every four years, and his (maybe one day her) focus have long-term implications. But so do city council, school board and mayoral elections. Many are held in off years so that local candidates don't get swallowed in the national hype. It's a great time to get involved in these elections or even consider running yourself. Voting is literally the least you can do, not the most you can do. Failing to engage in full civic participation cedes your choices to others who are engaged.

4. **The housing crisis.** Despite action at the national level, many banks are dragging their feet rather than offering modifications for under water mortgages. Just a fraction of those who qualify for these mortgages have been offered them by their banks. Congress probably can't deal with this issue during a lame duck session, but it is certainly time for people to get together to reverse this trend. The problem: Too many of us are ashamed to talk about our financial status, thinking it's a personal problem instead of a structural problem. The solution: Consider involving a state legislator or local leader in developing a workshop for those who are under water. Get bankers there to explain why so many have not been offered loan mortifications. Take the results to your congressperson and ask them to act on it.

5. **Parent plus loans and other higher education issues.** While the federal government provides an opportunity for students to have parents borrow for their tuition, the federal government has tightened requirements on the loan to the point that nearly half of those who qualified last year do not qualify any more. The result? Thousands of student, especially at HBCUs have the choice to pay up or get out. Or, the other choice is for colleges to "carry" these students. This is a bad idea when regulators judge colleges, especially historically Black colleges, by fiscal stability. Speaking of education, this is a challenging time for HBCUs to experience cuts in Title III and other federally-sponsored programs. In a second Obama term,

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issues affecting HBCUs should be high on the list of things our president must pay attention to.

6. The African American community. African Americans have been President Obama's most loyal supporters. When will we get the attention we deserve? We can't meekly ask for it, we have to demand it. With high Black unemployment rates, challenged inner city employment possibilities, and high dropout rates, our community is in desperate need of attention. The location of one federally funded new state-of-the-art high school, with both honors programs and job-training programs, can make a real difference in inner cities.

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