

## Heated CBC debate sidelines Edwards and emphasizes style over substance

Written by Hazel Trice Edney, NNPA Editor&#45;in&#45;Chief  
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Potential questions fell to the ground – or never got off the ground - amidst bitter squabbling between Sens. Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama during Monday night's Congressional Black Caucus-CNN Democratic Presidential Primary debate in South Carolina. "I wasn't satisfied with the lack of points to the questions that were being asked. They were still the same relatively widespread questions that you would ask in a debate," says University of Maryland political scientist Dr. Ron Walters. "They had an opportunity to go into things like mass incarceration rates and education and things like that that were very important. But, they didn't do it."

WASHINGTON (NNPA) - The number of Black men in America's prisons is 525 percent higher than the number of White men. What will you do about it? America's jobless rate is at 4 percent for Whites and 9 percent for Blacks. What will you do about it?

Hate groups in America have almost doubled since the year 2000 along with an increase in publicized hate crimes and hangman's noose incidents. What will you do about it?

Also, America's dilapidated, low performing schools are predominately attended by African-American and Hispanic children. What will you do about it? Publicized police shootings and misconduct in Black neighborhoods and unequal justice in the criminal justice system have skyrocketed over the past year. What will you do about it?

Finally, right here, where we are in the State of South Carolina, the Confederate battle flag still hangs over the Capitol. Do you agree or disagree with many Americans that it is a symbol of hate?

Those are just a few potential questions that fell to the ground – or never got off the ground - amidst bitter squabbling between Sens. Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama during Monday night's Congressional Black Caucus-CNN Democratic Presidential Primary debate in South Carolina.

"I wasn't satisfied with the lack of points to the questions that were being asked. They were still the same relatively widespread questions that you would ask in a debate," says University of Maryland political scientist Dr. Ron Walters. "They had an opportunity to go into things like mass incarceration rates and education and things like that that were very important. But, they didn't do it."

Granted, the three candidates - questioned by CNN's Wolf Blitzer, Joe Johns and Suzanne

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Malveaux – did discuss the issues of poverty, the housing mortgage crisis, the racially disparate sub-prime loans, whether the prospects of a Black person becoming president should influence American votes and whether President Bill Clinton should actually be considered America’s first Black president.

Yet, the glaring fact that the number of Black males in America’s prisons is 525 percent higher than the number of Whites and 141 percent higher than Hispanics never surfaced in the debate. But, there was little meat concerning America’s specific social ills that are starkly divided by race.

According to statistics reported by the Department of Justice’s Bureau of Justice statistics early last year: “At yearend 2006 there were 3,042 Black male sentenced prisoners per 100,000 Black males in the United States, compared to 1,261 Hispanic male sentenced prisoners per 100,000 Hispanic males and 487 white male sentenced prisoners per 100,000 white males.”

Yet, the glaring fact that the number of Black males in America’s prisons is 525 percent higher than the number of Whites and 141 percent higher than Hispanics never surfaced in the debate.

Still the much-anticipated South Carolina Democratic Primary this Saturday is viewed as a showdown between Clinton and Obama after the Iowa-New Hampshire tie and the Caucus that she won in Nevada. Polls show Clinton trailing Obama in South Carolina. Edwards is trailing both, although South Carolina is his native state. He represented North Carolina in the U. S. Senate.

Nearly half of the Democratic voters in South Carolina are Black and 30 percent of the Black voters are women, giving Black women much clout leading in to Saturday.

Whether outside endorsements will sway the undecided remains to be seen. Black America appears split between Clinton and Obama. Even civil rights icons Rep. John Lewis and the Rev. Joseph Lowery, both of Georgia, are on opposite sides.

Lewis is championing Clinton’s experie