

National Black Peoples Unity Convention

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National Black Peoples Unity Convention to Convene In Gary, Indiana, March 9-12

Washington, DC -- After more than three decades, and the election of over 16,000 new Black elected officials, the call for activists in every city, town and hamlet -- to return to Gary, Indiana to strategize on a strong long term economic empowerment plan for Black Americans of all income levels and political persuasions.

In 1972, thirty-four years ago, more than 4,000 Black activists gathered in Gary to proclaim and embrace a national strategy for political empowerment. At that time, only 16 African Americans were members of the U. S. Congress, less than 900 were state and city officials - and there was no national strategy for gaining further political empowerment.

Today there are more than 16,000 Black elected officials, holding office at every level, in almost every one of the 50 states and the District of Columbia. In those 34 years, we have seen one Black elected as Governor of Virginia; two Blacks - one as Lt. Governor of Colorado and another as Lt. Governor of California; two elected to the U. S. Senate; 47 newly elected members to the U. S. House of Representatives - and a huge host of big city Mayors, state legislative leaders, county and regional officials and other important elective offices.

Now, in less than a month (March 9 - 12), a new group of activists will convene in Gary, Indiana. They will come together as "participants," ready to formulate a strategy around not just a political plan, but around the more important agenda of a long term Black economic empowerment strategy.

One of the three Convention Co-chairs, George L. Brown, former Lt. Governor of Colorado expressed his feelings, when he said, "It is true that we have amassed extraordinary Black political leadership, but if we are to decisively break the cycle of misery that traps many of our families - then we must use our political leverage to build stronger economic relationships that can sustain us at the community level."

Confirmed conference participants include political activists such as: Harry Belafonte, Dick Gregory, former U.S. Labor Secretary Alexis Herman, the Reverend Jesse Jackson of Operation PUSH, former Southern Christian Leadership Conference

(SCLC) leader the Reverend Joseph Lowery, the President & CEO of the National Action Network, the Reverend Al Sharpton, SCLC President Charles Steele and the Honorable Mary Francis Berry, former Chair of the U. S. Commission on Civil Rights. From the business community, General Motors Vice President Roderick Gillum, and Chris Gardner of the firm Garner & Rich are confirmed.

Also confirmed as participants are organization leaders such as: New national NAACP President & CEO Bruce Gordon, Joseph Leonard, Executive Director of the National Black Leadership Forum, the Honorable Mary Coleman, Chair of the National Black Caucus of State legislators, Reginald Weaver, President of the National Education Association, Lezli Baskerville, President of the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education (NAFEO), Dr. Major Jemison of the Progressive Baptist Convention, Ted Shaw of the NAACK Legal Defense Fund, and Dr. Ronald Walters, Director of the African American Leadership Institute at the University of Maryland.

Dr. Dorothy Height, President Emeritus of the National Council of Negro Women, will serve as the Convention's Honorary Chair.

Former Gary Mayor Richard Hatcher, who co-chaired the 1972 Gary Convention and is one of the three co-chairs for this year's meeting, said, "This meeting presents a rare opportunity for us to talk among ourselves. The shocking disaster of Hurricane Katrina is a sobering reminder that poverty and racism still takes a deadly toll on our communities."

Once again, the convention site will be the West Side High School in Gary, just as it was 34 years ago. The 2006 theme is "***POLICIES FOR EMPOWERMENT: A Struggle for a New Economic Order.***"

Convention Co-Chair William Lucy, President of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists (CBTU) and International Secretary-Treasurer of the American Federation of State, County & Municipal Employees (AFSCME), summed up the mission of this convention: "The broad aim of this convention is to bring together the collective wisdom, creativity and resources in our community, to map out a bold economic agenda that will unite us in communities of color across the nation."

Members of the convention's founding executive committee include: Paul Brock, of News & Information Management Systems (NIMS); Clayola Brown, President of the A. Phillips Randolph Institute and Vice President of the UNITE - HERE labor organization; the Honorable David Cunningham, Los Angeles businessman and former LA City Councilman; the Honorable Harold Ford, Sr., from Tennessee; Ernest Green, a Managing Director of Lehman Brothers and a one of the "Little Rock Nine"; Tony Harrison, a Washington, DC consultant; Virtual Murrell, a Principal of The Pegasus Group; Miriam Poe of the United Auto Workers; and Dr. Ronald Walters of the University of Maryland.

The national office of the National Black Peoples Unity Convention is in Washington, DC, and the national telephone is (202) 955-5000. The Gary, Indiana headquarters telephone number is 866-890-5700.