

# National Black Peoples Unity Convention

## MISSION STATEMENT

### GARY REVISTED: POLITICS AND POLICY

**T**hirty-three years ago, Black activists from across the political spectrum convened a historic conference in Gary, Indiana -- a conference that galvanized the resolve of Black political activism nationally, from small towns all across this nation, to counties, to states and particularly the rural South. The Gary Conference was and remains a catalyst to the upsurge in Black political strength and representation. Irrespective of where we stood then or stand now, the Gary vision sparked political activism that reshaped the American political landscape.

**B**lack political leadership occupies executive and legislative leadership at every level of political jurisdictions – school boards, city councils, county commissioners, board of supervisors, state legislators, U.S. Congress, mayors, county executives, statewide office holders. While political representatives were counted in the hundreds at a time of the Gary Conference, they now exceed ten thousand and continue to grow with every election. The political power and activism of a unified community has supported and empowered four major presidential campaigns by three major Black candidates, and others will surely follow. The Gary Conference of 1972 must not be seen as the Black political revolution, but rather phase one of the national Black empowerment process. At the local levels of government, we are not lacking in political power. We are lacking in economic power. The upcoming conference must approach this issue with new ideas and new concepts that will merge our political power with our economic needs.

**I**f we are to break the cycle of misery that besets our small towns, cities, urban communities and rural areas, the conference must fashion an agenda that address the economic realities of our communities large and small, urban and rural. We must fashion an approach to the major banking and financial institutions that currently participate in the economic life of our communities – the mortgage and investment houses; the insurance companies; development corporations; pension fund entities and investment fund managers, and fund trustees; major manufacturers of consumer products with substantial community market share existing or potential.

**W**e must explore new concepts which build partnerships between the religious community, the trade union community, and the investment community. A partnership focuses on economic development, construction of affordable housing and job development and training. Concrete plans must be developed to provide incentives to banking and mortgage institutions to participate in cooperative ventures to develop commercial areas, malls and retail outlets to meet consumer needs and provide job opportunities.

## Crime/Violence

Gary must provide direction on several key policy questions: how to attack crime and violence in our community in order for investment interests to recognize the economic potential within our communities.

## Universal Healthcare

Of the forty-five million Americans without affordable healthcare, many of whom are among the working poor; is there relief and access to healthcare if a universal program is pursued from the state level of government? What are the implications for jobs and careers in the healthcare and health delivery industry with such a program?

## Drug Abuse

Should we continue our policy of treating drug use and abuse as criminal activity or evaluate a policy of drug use and abuse as a health issue with treatment as an alternative to incarceration? What are the employment implications for our community with such a shift in policy? What are the local budget implications for our criminal justice system, i.e., police, courts, jails and prisons?

## Education

Can we have an honest discussion about how our education system can continue to prepare our young people for higher education and, at the same time, provide the fundamental skills necessary for the world of work? In spite of the existence of systemic racism and overt discrimination, how should our education system provide our young people with marketable skills and abilities so they are viewed as assets to be sought out by the private sector as opposed to potential liabilities to be avoided in the selection process?

## Public/Private Partnership for Youth Employment

What are the policy implications if we separate the employment security system between adults and young people and a concentrated effort is made to secure employment and training for youth commencing at their entry into high school?