

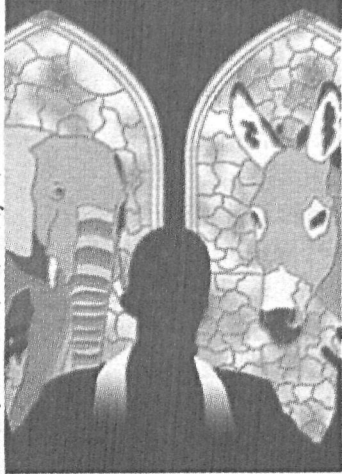
# The Paper

Medium For People Of African Descent Vol. 126 No. 3 Nov - Dec 2008

"So We Stand Here On The Edge Of Hell In Harlem And Look Out On The World And Wonder What We're Gonna Do In The Face Of What We Remember"  
-Langston Hughes

## Religion, Politics and America

By W. Okumu Owuor



By mere observation, one can easily draw a deep line of disparity between religion and politics. But an engaged glance at the recent elections tell otherwise. While the two social institutions appear opposite in many ways, to think that they are totally parallel is absolute ignorance. Both wield power, larger than gravity and their effects are enormous if they converge as it happened in Election 2008 and others before. Politics and religion are both games of numbers. This odd marriage between politics and religion did not miss the discussion tables during this year's presidential election. It frequented all the media and forums, sowing seeds of discord and distrust, which were further watered by political bigotry and insinuation.

A major issue is the way Islam was portrayed in the election process. Let's face it: The mainstream of America has been out of favor with Islam since 9/11. While that may be an obvious psychological tendency, it doesn't excuse the more present brutal and unfair characterization of Islam and Muslims in general.

Continued on page 14

## Obama's Win: What Would D.W. Griffith Think?

By Naeema J. Muhammad



This year's presidential election was a historical win; Barack Obama, an Illinois Senator born and raised in Hawaii, was named the 44th president of the United States, becoming the first person of color to be elected.

The streets of New York City, especially Harlem, cheered in celebration of the news and partied as if it were New Years. Countries all over the world that had been keeping tabs of the bid for the white house commemorated what could mean change for everyone.

For people of African descent in this country, Obama's win is the result of the hard work of people like Martin Luther King, Bayard Rustin, Malcolm X, Rosa Parks, and many others because now, not only can a person of color use the same bathroom as anyone else, but he can finally hold office with Americans of all racial backgrounds standing behind him. The spirits of those who struggled and never thought this day would come, are now dancing beyond the grave with joy. One spirit that is likely not rejoicing is that of

Continued on page 15

## Transition

By Herb Boyd

One of the world's most popular politicians and one of the least came together Monday afternoon, on November 10<sup>th</sup> when President-elect Barack Obama and President George Bush met at the White House. It was Obama's first visit to the Oval Office, where the two men chatted while Laura Bush guided Michelle Obama about the house they have occupied for eight years.

The visit came in the midst of an outcry over some startling

statements by some European elected officials. Because despite the global jubilation for Obama's victory, there has been a spate of recent racist remarks from European political leaders, including Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi of Italy. During a visit to Moscow, Berlusconi, who is no stranger to controversy, reportedly said he was praising Obama when he commented that he "was young, handsome and even suntanned." A Polish lawmaker, speaking from Parliament, said that Obama's triumph was "the end of the white man's civilization." And a noted Austrian journalist said on camera that he "wouldn't want the Western World to be directed by a Black man."

Continued on page 3

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

*Can I Have 600 Dollars*  
page 3

*The Cythina McKinney  
Question*  
page 4

*Brian Chip to Aid  
Paralyzed*  
page 5

*Voting for Michelle  
Obama*  
page 5

*Beauty Shop Talks: Election*  
page 7

*From the Shelf: Book Review*  
page 9

*Expressions*  
page 10

*125th Street on Election Night*  
page 12

*Place the Product  
Closer to the 22's*  
page 14

# Reflection

By Lindsie Augustin

We have reached a pivotal moment of change in this country. November 4<sup>th</sup> is a day that will resonate in the lives and the minds of individuals all over the world. That was the day we all stood together and made our voices heard. That was the day Senator Barack Hussein Obama learned he would become the 44<sup>th</sup> President of the United States. And that was the day America made another historic change.

Now to assume when President-elect Obama takes office in January, all issues that plague all individuals of African descent will somehow instantaneously be eradicated, is not only foolish but extremely juvenile. I think it is imperative to take a real look around your surroundings, and truly witness what happens when we as society become complacent on the success of a small group of individuals, whilst never trying to add anything to it. The fight for change has just begun. He is one man, but we are a full force of



A spectator raises her fist in celebration seconds after the announcement that Barack Obama will be the 44th President of the United States at Ebenezer Baptist Church, Tuesday, Nov. 4, 2008

people. It is only when we truly work as one, can ever make true change in this country. So I am asking everyone, not to put all the pressure on this one man,

who is just like everyone, but to stand behind him and stand together to make sure things really happen the way we want them to.

This was first time in my lifetime that I witnessed first hand what it is like when we stand together as one; and look at what we accomplished. The first African American male is on his way to the Oval Office. I do fear the momentum that put President-elect Obama in the White House has begun to die out; however I hope I am wrong. It would be ashamed for all young adults, who were so actively involved in the election race to disband, now that it is over. I hope that never happens. There is much work to be done; and as we saw on the faithful November night, much can be accomplished when we work as a powerful force of people.

## Letter to the Editors

*Like always we welcome letters from the student body to The Paper; and this time around we recieved one student's reaction to election night... Enjoy!*

Yes We Did!  
By Shannon Ayala

For the first time, I considered myself extremely lucky that I get out of work after midnight at 112th and Broadway and then have go down 125th street in Harlem to get home to Yonkers. There had been massive, consistent cheers in the Upper West Side for the past hour at least. When I was finally relieved from work I figured I had enough time to walk through Columbia University and down 125th street.

First I saw little kids skipping down the street (after midnight) cheering and ripping posters off telephone poles. "Stop tearing down posters" their mothers said. Then I squeezed through a group of students in front of Columbia so tight, I wondered if Barack Obama was there. I'm pretty sure I saw a reporter camera there. Then I squished through out of the crowd and poured out through

the gate. People were throwing a football on the lawn of the campus. A girl walking by said, "I'm sure I'll get an extension on my paper because of this." Then I realized there was no specific location for the cheering. People were cheering all over the campus. I heard one person say, "Beer bath!"

When I got to Amsterdam I felt that the fun ended quite suddenly. Then I realized if Columbia was a party, what would Harlem be like?

As soon as I hit 125th street I saw people dancing. It seemed as if white residents of downtown were heading home. Black residents of the Morning Side apartments were talking to them on the way. Farther down the street a man described it justly, "It's every one here. Black people, white people, everyone." I kept remembering that it was after midnight. Usually the street is pretty deserted but there were hundreds of people in site. Across the whole trip I saw two brass band performances. The bigger performance was at the epicenter of the celebration on Adam Clayton Powell Blvd where there had was a large T.V. to show Obama's acceptance speech. People cheered together, "Yes we did! Yes we did!" Everybody I saw was at least smiling but I could hardly believe how much cheering went on through the entire trip.

### Important Announcements:

If you have not registered for the Spring 2009 semester, do so immediately

There will be no late registration for the Spring 2009 semester

Looking to boost up your GPA? In need of extra credits? The Winter 2009 course listing is available for your review.

Take look at what's being offered.

The list for Finals is currently posted on the main page of the CCNY website

Do yourself a favor and check it out.

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*The Paper*

Wants to Hear from YOU!!

Articles and letters to the Editor are welcomed and can be submitted to *The Paper* for consideration. All submissions should be between 300-500 words. We look forward to reading what you have to say!

## OUR MISSION

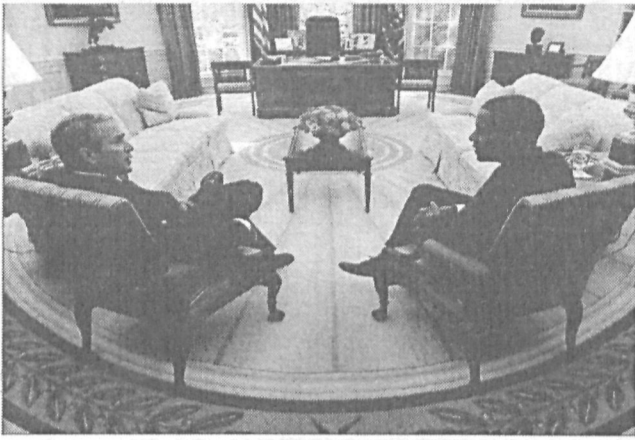
For over thirty years *The Paper* has served as a medium through which students, faculty and members of the local community can communicate. As a publication for people of African descent, *The Paper* focuses on pertinent issues facing the Black and Latino community as well as issues that are of relevance to people of all races and ethnicities. In addition, this publication is a valuable resource for CCNY students and faculty for information on everything from scholarships to job opportunities. With increased membership and support from the student body, *The Paper* will continue to serve CCNY and the surrounding community.

Continued from front page

## Transition

the president," Obama told reporters at an earlier news conference.

"It's clear that we need to stabilize the economy, to deal with the financial meltdown that's now spreading across the rest of the economy. The auto industry is really, really back on its heels," said John Podesta, one of several members of the Obama transition team.



Eric Draper Photo

For the most part, this brief session with Bush will be the extent to which Obama will have any access to the pending dialogue on the current economic crisis. On more than one occasion, he has made it clear that there is only "one president."

"I'm sure each of them will have a list of issues to go down," said Josh Bolten, Bush's chief of staff. "But I think that's something very personal to both of them. I know the president will want to convey to President-elect Obama his sense of how to deal with some of the most important issues of the day. But exactly how he does that, I don't know, and I don't think anybody will know."

From a distance, judging by their body language, they greeted each other cordially, and Obama appeared to be quite animated in his remarks. Throughout his campaign, Obama stressed again and again the difference between his planned policies and those that have been carried out under Bush.

After the meeting, it was reported, the Obamas were scheduled to return immediately to Chicago, where the President-elect would resume working on assembling his administration team, which already includes Rahm Emanuel, the former Representative from Illinois, as his designated chief of staff. Robert Gibbs is all but confirmed as his press secretary.

According to sources familiar with Obama's plans, he will not announce any more appointments this week, though clearly, the moves and discussions will continue as he seeks to be ready to lead the nation from day one.

There are rumors that Obama will act immediately to reverse some of Bush's decisions, including those such as his restrictions on stem-cell research and on oil and gas drilling.

Emanuel, known for his aggressiveness, announced that the government needs to speed up the process of providing relief to the troubled auto industry to the tune of \$25 billion in low-interest loans that have already been approved by Congress.

"They are an essential part of our economy and our industrial base," Emanuel told CBS' "Face the Nation." "There are existing authorities within the government today that the administration should tap to help the auto industry."

As soon as Obama is sworn in, there are indications he will exercise his power of issuing executive orders to bring about quick changes.

"As a candidate, Sen. Obama said that he wanted all the Bush executive orders reviewed and to decide which ones should be kept and which ones should be repealed and which ones should be amended, and that process is going on. It's been undertaken," Podesta told reporters.

Meanwhile, tickets for the Jan. 20 inauguration are being hawked by brokers, some requesting more than \$20,000.

Buyers are told to beware, since there's no guarantee the tickets are legit and will be honored at the occasion. To date, the government has printed 250,000 tickets and if you're interested in getting one, we recommend you go to <http://inaugural.senate.gov>. Additional information about coming events related to the Obama administration can be found on a new website.

Originally Published in The Amsterdam News on Thursday, November 13, 2008

## CAN I HAVE SIX HUNDRED DOLLARS?

By Taqiyya Haden

I may need an additional \$300.00 to pay my tuition in Spring 09. By Fall 09 I may need twice that. Governor Paterson and the good ole city of N.Y. are considering raising the tuition at all CUNY/SUNY schools in stages.

At a recent meeting around this plan Governor Paterson was left without full legislative support, however none of those reasons had anything to do with students interests. As N.Y. continues to face this budget crisis we need to let them know that students cannot and will not take on an added monetary burden. There is ongoing talk of raising MTA fares by \$1.00. If I am forced to pay \$3 per ride and billed \$300- \$600 more a semester how am I supposed to pay my endlessly increasing rent? Please contact our Governor to ask him and to share any of your budget concerns or ideas!

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## The Cynthia McKinney Question...

By Eric Jackson

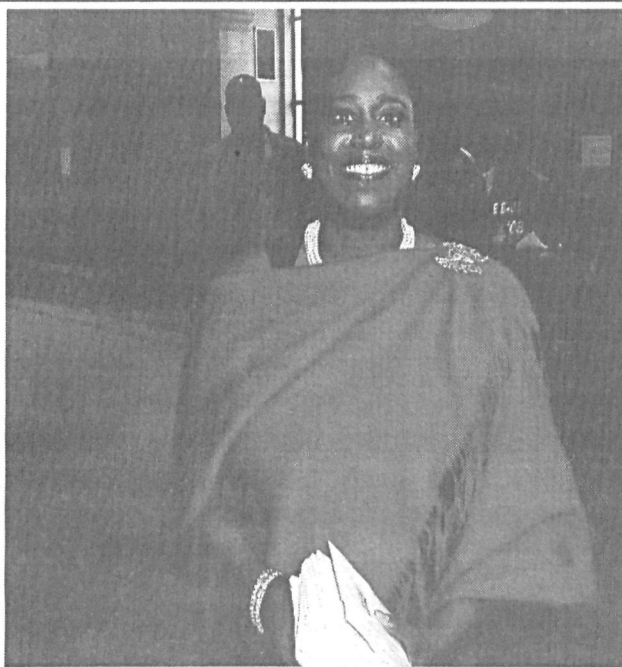
If you ask voters how many Black candidates participated in the 2008 Presidential election the response would be "one, President-elect Barack Obama." Many do not know anything about Cynthia McKinney who ran on the Green party ballot. Media conglomerates across America paid little to no attention to the Presidential campaign for Cynthia McKinney. Cynthia McKinney is a former member of the House of Representatives and the first Black female member from Georgia. She has maintained a solid allegiance to the community by being a true representative for Black people not only in Georgia, but across the whole country. She has kept important issues on the public agenda such as the call for a thorough investigation into the death of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Tupac Shakur. She has been a commissioner for the 9/11 commission and introduced articles of impeachment against President George W. Bush with House Resolution 1106. Cynthia McKinney has been a powerful and articulate voice of dissent in contemporary American politics.

Community organizer and Hip-Hop activist Rosa Clemente was the running mate of Cynthia McKinney. Responsible for organizing the first ever national Hip-Hop Political Convention she helped to create a political agenda for the generation of today. She possesses the same Eurocentric education as any Presidential or Vice-Presidential candidate having received her Masters degree from Cornell University.

This Presidential election was a cry for change and a shift in the political and economic trends of this country. McKinney-Clemente exemplified change possibly more so than our current President-elect Barack Obama. McKinney-Clemente ran a campaign that dealt with some of the real issues that effect minorities and the working class in America like poverty, the sub-prime mortgage crisis, the abolition of the death penalty and improving voter technology, just to name a few.

The McKinney-Clemente campaign received little support from the mainstream political establishment. Their support predominately came from the Hip-Hop industry's politically conscious rappers, some other celebrities, labor organizations and critic of American foreign policy Noam Chomsky.

The lack of support and attention from mainstream politicians was detrimental to the McKinney-Clemente campaign along with other key problems. One set back being the risky choice to run under the Green Party ticket. The Green



Party has historically had serious problems with solidarity. Locally there is fragmented support due to their approach of pushing their agenda nationally without real efforts implemented locally from a more grassroots approach. Part of what made Obama so successful was his grassroots approach to the campaign and garnering local support before taking it to a national level.

Also, third party candidates in American Politics have not had much success because the framework of the American political system is biased against multiple parties. McKinney-Clemente's "radical" politics along with running on the ticket of a disorganized political party, during an election where Democrats and most moderate/liberal leaning voters were not trying to make the mistake of having a divided party made it nearly impossible for McKinney-Clemente to receive the support due to them. However, if they had gotten attention there would be the question of a possible repeat of what happened in 2000 with Ralph Nader. He swayed some of the Democratic votes to him and some say gave Conservatives and Republicans a boost.

President elect Obama's moderate political stance, support from one of the big party machines, heavy campaign financing, and his ability to identify with the establishment were all that he needed to take 2008. The political and economic establishment of America has a sworn duty to protect their interests, maintain their wealth and to keep the current order functioning "as-is". Those like McKinney-Clemente who vocally do not identify with this are usually cast aside. We should not let this discourage us, but rather use it as a source of strength and know that the real battle for change is not over. It has just begun and eventually if we try hard enough change *really* will come.

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## Scientific Corner:

## Brain Chip to Aid Paralyzed

By Sara Morsi

Scientists are developing a microchip that will enable victims of paralysis to move their limbs using their brains. Initially, this would only be found in science fiction but until a few years ago, it had become reality. Matt Nagle, 28, was paralyzed from head to toe after a knife incident seven years ago. He was the first person to have a chip implanted into his brain to control an artificial limb.

Nagle was able to get involved in the project after hearing about John Donoghue, a professor of neuroscience at Brown University, whose company Cyberkinetics developed a microchip called BrainGate. First, Nagle was given a general anesthetic. Second, they implanted BrainGate, which required a cut of a size roughly equivalent to a half dollar coin from his skull. After the cut, a tiny array of 96 hair thin electrodes, approximately a millimeter long, was pressed onto the surface of his brain, just above a region of the sensory motor cortex which controls the arm and hand movement. Scientists then connected a tiny wire which is attached to a metal plate the size of a quarter on Nagle's head to the electrodes. Donoghue's researchers attached an amplifier to the metallic plate so that it they can run a cable to the computer. When connected the tiny voltages of the neurons beneath the electrodes produced a series of brainwaves that appear on the computer screen.

The future of this technology however relies on being able to interpret the electrical activity within Nagle's brain and turn it into a functional action. Before this experiment Nagle was unable to move any of his limbs for approximately four years. Would this possibly affect the way the brain signals control movement? Would the brain signals fade away similar to muscle decay when one is strapped in a wheelchair? But Donoghue's researchers were able to differentiate brain signals from one another i.e. if the brain wanted to move the hand to the right, some cells would fire a hasten series of impulses and if the brain wanted to move the hand to the left, cells fired a different number of impulses.

This experiment was conducted several years ago and scientists are still debating whether long term implants will have side effects on the human brain or how the wiring will deal with the tasks that it's been programmed to do. In due course, Donoghue says there should be no need to connect cables to peoples' heads to read their minds. With the increasing advances in technology, it would be possible to shrink the devices so that it can be powered through unpierced skin and transmit wireless signals from the brain to a processor that is placed on the wearer's belt.

Miguel Nicoleis at Duke University conducted similar research but on monkeys; his team showed that when monkeys had their brains connected to the robotic arms, they incorporated the arm, successfully making it their own. He says, "We want to see if these patients can control a robotic arm that can reach and grab objects, and how well their brains get used to it." His goal is to use this technology to allow the disabled to walk again.

For Donoghue however even the smallest advancement in this experiment is worthy. He remarks, "One fellow said to me, 'I just want to be able to scratch my nose' It's easy to forget the kinds of extraordinary things people can't accomplish. If you can do something that lets them reach out to the world even a little, it can make a huge difference."

## Commentary

## Voting for Michelle Obama

By Jodie Alexander

*I'm voting for Michelle. I'm always telling people I'm voting for Michelle to get into the White House and Obama is just going to follow her lead. She is smart and committed, and I just love her."*

Upon hearing this statement from Jada Pinkett-Smith, speaking about her adoration for Michelle Obama on the set of her upcoming movie, "The Women," I instantly said to myself, *Here we go again with the, "I am woman hear me roar" statement, except now for African American women it has gotten a bit more personalized branching off into, "Here I am, strong black woman and whether or not you hear me, I am roaring."*

I must admit that I am thoroughly enjoying this moment. The moment in where the African American woman, rising as a strong leader is being held in high regard as opposed to the contrary, being seen as overbearing and somewhat domineering. Time and time again African American women have been seen in different facets of life; these women are doctors, lawyers, activists, teachers, and homemakers just to name a few positions. African American women have become accustomed to playing dual roles, for we wear many hats. Many of us are the breadwinners for the family while being both mothers and fathers to our children. We have accepted that "strength" needs to be one of our key characteristics in order to fully function in today's society and be at the "top of our game."

So I am curious to see what Michelle Obama's role will be as the first African American First Lady of United States. She exemplifies what it means to be a strong black woman. She has not taken the sideline approach in her career and she is one who seems very comfortable in the woman that she is and the woman that she wants to become. I believe that her role will be important. It is a role that will be looked upon for years to come, seeing that throughout history African American women have been classified by society as aggressive manipulators who latch



on to their men. As Michelle Obama stated, "people aren't used to a strong woman." Michelle Obama's role may be looked upon as a symbol of how the African American woman conducts herself, although this may not be entirely fair to her, it the burden one often has to bear when one is "the first" of anything. Will Michelle Obama blaze a new trail for the perception of the African American woman? Or will society rise up and come to realization that because of the way in which the African American man is treated, we as women have to then step up to the plate with a resounding strength while exuding power in order to hold our families together?

Michelle Obama has stated that her role would be "mom-in-chief" to her two beautiful daughters and that she would also take on women and family issues. This role is rather important but I cannot help but think of her role with regard to her husband, President-elect Barack Obama. I believe her role as he is concerned will be as counselor, the one who will keep our President grounded and ever hopeful. As stated by President-elect Obama, she is his rock. Despite society's depictions, there are many positives to being a strong African American woman. As stated by Toni Morrison, we "invented ourselves." We are confident, bold, powerful, clever and persistent and because of this the African American women have been endowed with the ability and precession to rise just as Maya Angelou gave us permission to do so. Dr. Angela Neil-Barnett, author of *Soothe Your Nerves: The Black Woman Guide to Understanding, and Overcoming Anxiety, Panic and Fear* said it best, a "weak black woman simply does not exist."

# African Indigenous Spirituality: A Closer Look

By Easter Z. Wood

There was a lot of positive response to the article *African Indigenous Spirituality: It's Not a Thing of the Past!*, which appeared in the last issue of *The Paper*. As many readers raised questions about precisely what African Indigenous Spiritual traditions entail and what the beliefs therein are, let's take a closer look.

The first thing that should be said is that most of the world's religious and spiritual traditions are more similar than they are different. Most every one includes teachings on the importance of honesty, charity, and other positive and honorable characteristics. African Indigenous Spiritual traditions do this also, focusing heavily on the ideas of good character, humility and the importance of family and community. The way in which these ideas are introduced, however, points to one of the differences between the African Indigenous Spiritual worldview and the worldviews presented by some other religious traditions.

It is said that the "revealed" religions – Judaism, Christianity and Islam, so called because of their reliance on texts revealed by God to revered prophets – "come from up and look down", whereas indigenous traditions of all kinds "come from down and look up." What this means is that while the revealed texts, the Torah, the Bible and the Qur'an, tell practitioners of those faiths about who and what God is based on information revealed to them from above, practitioners of indigenous traditions have traditionally ascertained who and what God is and drawn conclusions about the nature of God from their experiences on earth and sent them upwards towards God. Of course, there is overlap between these categories, as those who practice the revealed religions may also experience God and make inferences, but their main source of information is the texts and it is the information given in these texts that tell practitioners of these faiths who God is, what to call Him and how they should relate to Him.

African Indigenous Spiritual traditions have corpuses of knowledge as well, but many of them have not been written down until recent years as they were mainly passed orally from generation to generation. Focusing on the Yoruba tradition as an example, the corpus of knowledge is called the *odù Ifá* and is more similar in concept to the Artharvaveda corpus of the Hindu faith than to any of the revealed texts mentioned above. The *odùs* contain verses (*ese*), related stories, medicines and other information that practitioners of the Yoruba tradition use in their every day lives; there are a total of 256 *odùs* that are said to reference any situation or circumstance that a human being could find him or herself in. In order to find out which *odùs* specifically relate to them and their lives, practitioners – and sometimes people who are not necessarily practitioners but believe in the wisdom purported by the *odùs* – will visit a high priest, known as a *Babalawo*, in order

to receive *Ifá* divination. During a divination session, particular *odùs* will be revealed and the *Babalawo* will recite some of the *ese* and stories associated with the *odùs*, interpret them and help the person receiving the divination to understand how those *odùs* relate to his or her life. The *Babalawo* will give the person advice based on this information, which may include the prescription of a sacrifice of some sort that the person has to perform.

The practice of divination – defined as attempting to discover hidden knowledge, which may include knowledge of future events – is one of the major points of departure between African Indigenous Spiritual traditions and the revealed religions. While divination is an integral part of most all African Indigenous Spiritual traditions, and indeed many indigenous traditions the world over, it is explicitly prohibited in the Jewish and Christian faiths by verses in the books of Leviticus (19:26) and Deuteronomy (18:10), among other verses. Whereas practitioners of African Indigenous Spiritual traditions feel it imperative to use divination at various points in their lives – particularly after birth and at other major life turning points – the revealed religions consider the use of divination to be an "abomination." Despite the seeming contradiction, many Africans, both on the continent and in the Diaspora who have adopted Christianity or Islam will still seek out the traditional priests at certain times in their lives and many see no issue with this despite the condemnation of the practice in the revealed texts. This fact indicates the retention of some traditional practices even amongst those who no longer consider themselves traditional practitioners.

Another key divergence between African Indigenous Spiritual practices and the revealed religions, and perhaps the most misunderstood aspect of traditional religion, is the concept of sacrifice. The only thing that some people know about African Indigenous traditions is that they involve the sacrifice of animals, and this is because animal sacrifice is an aspect of traditional religion that is generally misconstrued and sensationalized by the media. The first thing that must be understood with regard to traditional religion is that not all sacrifices involve animals: a sacrifice could be cooking a certain food, giving up a certain vice or performing a good deed for someone, among other actions. Another, and perhaps the more important, point is that any time an animal gives its life for someone to eat – that's a sacrifice. Judaism and Islam adhere to this principle, which is why there are certain prescriptions on how animals must be slaughtered – including certain prayers said over them – in order for their meat to be considered kosher or *halal* and, thus, fit to eat. Animals are killed en masse for human consumption – and arbitrarily for things like leather and fur which aren't explicitly "necessary" – every day, so why is the concept of an animal sacrifice for a religious purpose so foreign and intimidating?

One factor, at least with regard to Christianity, is that Christians believe that the

death and resurrection of Jesus Christ made animal sacrifices unnecessary, as he being the "lamb of God" was sacrificed for the salvation of all those who believe. While this may be a part of the issue for some, it seems that for many, much of the discomfort around the idea of animal sacrifice has to do with the fact that people are generally quite removed from the death of the animals they use or consume. A package of meat in a store is unrecognizable as a goat or a pig, a pair of boots is unrecognizable as a cow and a fur coat is unrecognizable as a group of minks or rabbits. People are comfortable with this lack of recognition and are quite uncomfortable with being up close and personal with death, feeling the energy of an animal vacate its body and understanding and being thankful for the cycle of life. By contrast, these feelings and understandings are sacred and integral concepts in African Indigenous Spiritual practices.

Another central concept in African Indigenous Spiritual traditions, and one that indicates a significant dissimilarity with the revealed religions, is that of direct contact with and access to spirits, sometimes taking the form of spirit possession. This is another oft-sensationalized and misunderstood aspect of traditional religious practice. Practitioners of African Indigenous Spiritual traditions are taught to see God in all things and have a reverence and respect for the forces of nature and the environment. Spirits, who are known as the *Oriša* in the Yoruba tradition, the *Loa* in Vodoun and other names in other traditions, inhabit the waters, the wind, the trees, animals and everything that exists in nature and at times, they possess the bodies of the human beings who worship them. As there are prohibitions in the Torah and the Bible against cavorting with "familiar spirits," possession is generally seen as a negative thing and mention of possession brings thoughts of "evil spirits" that need to be exorcised and conjures images of films like *The Exorcist*. For those inside the African Indigenous Spiritual community, however, spirit possession is generally seen as a beautiful and effective means of communicating with the spirit world and it is an integral aspect of certain traditional ceremonies.

Like the revealed religions and other spiritual traditions of the world, African Indigenous Spiritual traditions are rich, complex and diverse – one could not hope to exhaust the many aspects of worship and belief in several volumes, let alone an article. If this brief introduction to some of the basic concepts and beliefs sparks interest, readers are urged to seek literature about the traditions and – of even more vital importance – practitioners with whom to discuss the traditions and gain further insight. People often have fear and disdain for those things that they don't understand; in order to combat this reality, all are encouraged to, as the adage goes, *seek first to understand* so that any negative sentiments might be replaced with the positive postures of respect and appreciation.

# Beauty Shop Talk



With Taqiyya Haden

**O**BAMA!" That's my new greeting! Unfortunately I'm not sure of the meaning. It is rumored to mean 'crooked, not a straight line' and if so it is still appropriate considering the turns we took to get our first Black President. Or we could just start greeting each other with "44!" Whatever sounds and feels right in the moment.

All the ladies of Ebony Design including myself maintained confidence that he would win. Even so I almost broke down crying seeing the Beautiful Black First Family walk out. This is the first presidential election in my short 30 something years of life that I was passionate about, stood in the cold for and debated about almost daily. We watched everything related to his campaign and continue to stay on top of the news put out about the transition.

The day after Obama was elected Porsche showed a clip in the salon knowing it would "piss me off." It was a youtube clip of Ralph Nader being interviewed about the following comment.

*"To put it very simply, he is our first African-American president... But his choice, basically, is whether he's going to be Uncle Sam for the people of this country, or Uncle Tom for the giant corporations."*

Ralph Nader completely refused to recant or even rephrase the statement when given the opportunity.

(Aside from laughing at the reporter, this being the first time a Fox news reporter

made sense, I initially had an unusually quiet response. I was taking self evaluation because my main issue with what was said is the fact that Ralph Nader was white.)

Porsche concurred that his being white was the issue for her as well. She likened it to someone talking negatively about your mama even if they have heard you say the same things.

An Afro Asian male friend of Porsche's also felt that Nader had no license to call any black person an Uncle Tom or to frame the question in those terms. He expressed a feeling that "Blacks" are kind of abstract in Nader's worldview and so he used this verbiage to call attention to his self proclaimed more enlightened status as the Liberated White Guy deeply aligned with Blacks.

Yes Nader did bring to surface a sentiment many voters share. The question of how differently Barack Obama will perform as a President is valid for anyone especially those willing to continue participation in our murky political processes. With full knowledge of Uncle Tom's historical context, the question we have for Ralph Nader is why be so incendiary?

The hope at Ebony Design is that we all keep in tune with the political world and stay energized, excited and maintain a belief in our political power that we have so often ignored or felt so defeated unwilling to try. Our fear is some that voted will rely too heavily on Barack Obama and go back to being ignorant and lazy now that he has won.

I believe if we are willing to see this as a win for all of us we may be more willing to hold ourselves accountable for change. It did not end last night, this is only the beginning. To my specific community of Africans and African Americans in Harlem we must stay involved and I ask that we think globally but act locally.

And finally all the ladies agree that this is the most brilliant and attractive family to move into that house!

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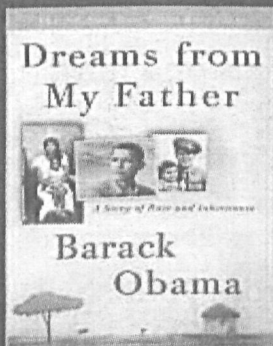
DESIGN BY RICARDO PARIDES  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY MICHAEL GOODMAN



## From The Shelf...

By Eric Jackson

*Coming off one of the most climatic, triumphant, and most relevant Presidential elections in all of the history of the (yet to be) United States of America there is no way we can let this month slip by without a recommended reading list about President-elect Barack Hussein Obama.*

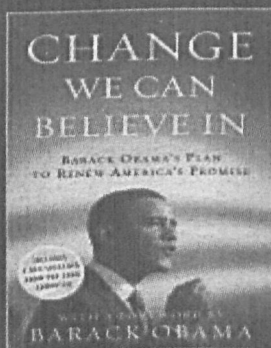
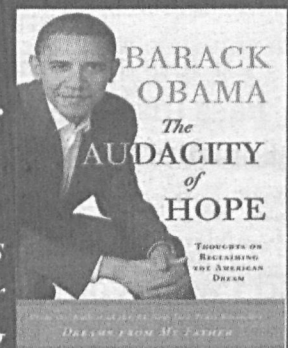


**Barack Obama, *Dreams From My Father: A Story of Inheritance and Race*, (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2004), 480 pages.**

*Dreams from my Father is a magnificently painted portrait about the early life and origins of President Obama. Penned from his own hand this gripping story tells of a man born to a white mother and a Kenyan father in 1961 who struggled to understand his Blackness in a white world.*

**Barack Obama, *Audacity of Hope: Thoughts on Reclaiming the American Dream*, (New York: Crown, 2006), 384 pages**

*Audacity of Hope, unlike his previous work is a manifesto of sorts that shows President Obama's views on American Politics and prospects for policy change. He talks about everything from our tax system, to health care issues, teen pregnancy and more. This is a must read for those wishing to understand the things that can possibly happen in Washington and in our country over the next four (and hopefully) eight years under the Obama White House*

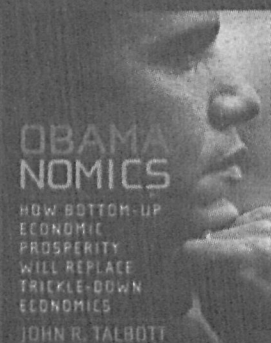


**Barack Obama, *Change We Can Believe in: Barack Obama's Plan to Renew America's Promise*, (New York: Three Rivers, 2008), 288 pages.**

*This is President Obama's third book, which goes a little more in depth about his ideas for policy. Written during his presidential campaign. The strength of his third installment is questionable. But, under the pressure of being one of the most important races in all the history of mankind we can have understanding to the lackluster writing that is contained in these pages. However, it does its job of illustrating Mr. Obama's policy ideas, and what he intends on doing as President of this country.*

**John R. Talbott, *Obamanomics: How Bottom-Up Economic Prosperity will Replace Trickle-Down Economics*, (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2008), 256 pages.**

*Talbott is a former investment banker for Goldman Sachs who argues that Obama's vision can unite both the government and the people to press towards one goal of justice and cooperation. Also, to undo the disasters of Neo-Conservative approach to trickle-down economics. Although it's apparent that Talbott approaches economics from a Keynesian perspective it is still a good addition to the mainstream conversation about Obama -this time from an economic perspective.*



## Expressions

### BESTloveFRIEND

bestLOVEfriend

Have you ever had a bestLOVEfriend?

A Love that became a best friend

And every now and then

You take each other out of the friend zone

That dead end zone

A woman and man

like cousins that sleep Head to Foot

But instead, Head to Head or

On some nights head to chest

But if when you both have others lovers

Its like losing another

Extended part of yourself.

Or lets say, one is single and they tease you

Pass that line and ask "does she please you?"

At start we knew we couldn't, even if you wanted  
me

Nights questioning our love, haunted me

Did I want you? Or did I just like you wanting me?

I didn't do shit, but my feelings could never leave  
my lips.

Days you Cried, Nights I asked "what did he do to  
you?"

Too much is never enough for what I can do for  
you?

Here we go, playing mind games, it was fun at  
first.

But Best LOVE Friendships like this hurt.

So that restricts me from loving you

The way how I sometimes wanted to

No Bullet Proof Vest, I had to build a whole new  
fence.

Ya Know...I did get that call, text, and message  
sent.

But just to be true to me.

You said "Nothing last Forever", so that's what I'll  
truly be

"Nothing!"

I refuse to Lie on a Life this Tall

At this height love won't break my fall

Because to break a limb is to break you too

You're my bestLOVEfriend... what am I to you?

Forget it though...

That's a Secret I choose not to know

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### The Real Me

I am the ink that trumpets your opinions to the  
world,

Then leaks out and ruins your shirt.

I am the heart that swells with the surging of a new  
love,

Then shatters with the heartbreak and hurt.

I am the story you tell to free your mind,  
But which betrays the secrets of your heart.

I am the friend who pulls you from your shell,  
Then wants to spend time apart.

I am the music that sets you dancing to a new  
groove,  
Then sets you apart as a freak.

I am the words that make you seem intelligent,  
Then gets you labeled as a geek.

I am the road that takes you to your dreams,  
Then leaves you stranded far from home.

I am the lover who promises you everything,  
Then walks away and leaves you alone.

I am the sunlight that colors your suntan,  
Then leaves the wrinkles on your skin.

I am the priest who offers pardon,  
Then makes you pay penance for your sin.

I am the medicine that dulls your symptoms,  
Then robs you of the ability to feel.

I am the lies that make your life easier,  
Then confuses what is real.

I am the day that gives you hope,  
Then leaves you wondering where time flew.

I am the child who exuded promise,  
But who never became you.

- Karen Wright

## Aaron Douglas

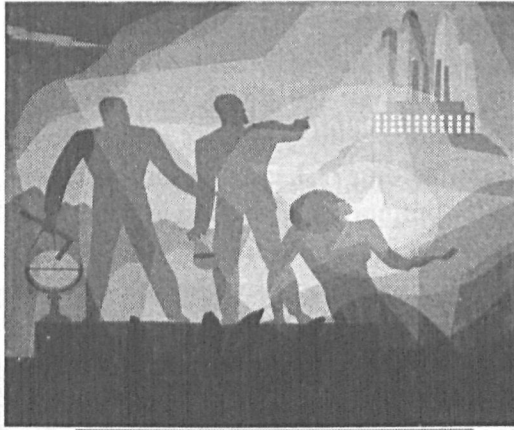
### Exhibit at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture

By Maurice Selby

If Aaron Douglas had witnessed the momentous events of November 4<sup>th</sup>, "The Founding of Chicago" might have included a silhouetted male figure standing triumphantly at the crest of the city's skyline with broad shoulders, smooth dark skin, and a bald eagle steadily perched on his right shoulder. Or maybe he would've focused on the jubilant people of Harlem, parading and dancing in the streets with musical notes from African drums and marimbas raining on them from above. The truth is, there is no telling what he might have created because as a versatile and highly skilled painter, his joy and passion could have been visually expressed in myriad ways. Aaron Douglas is regarded by many as being the father of African American art as he was a prolific contributor to the "new negro movement" of the Harlem Renaissance. From now until November 30<sup>th</sup>, the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture is having an exhibition on the work of Aaron Douglas.

Curated by the Spencer Museum of Art/The University of Kansas, this is the first national tour celebrating Douglas's work. The exhibition presents works from four murals painted by Douglas from the Arts and Artifacts Division of the Schomburg museum. The museum is open Monday through Saturday from 10:00am to 6:00pm and on Sundays from 1:00pm to 5:00pm.

Aaron Douglas was born on May 26 1899 in Topeka Kansas. Douglas' talent for visually expressing himself was displayed early on in his childhood and upon graduating from Topeka High School in 1917, he



From Top to Bottom: "Aspiration"  
"The Founding of Chicago"

enrolled at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln where he would obtain his B.A. degree in 1922. Douglas then worked for some years as a art teacher. He then met an artist from Germany by the name of Winold Reiss, who pointed to African Art as a source for inspiration. After being recruited by W.E.B Dubois and Alain Locke and hearing of the major black cultural movement taking place in Harlem, Douglas moved to New York City where he almost immediately began working on the cover art for *The Crisis* and *Opportunity*, two very important black publications during that time. Douglas stayed in Harlem for several years and was a big contributor to the profound work produced during the Harlem Renaissance.

During the 1930s, Aaron Douglas produced his famous and highly regarded murals for Fisk University, where he eventually founded an art department and taught for 29 years. Douglas passed away in 1979 due to a pulmonary embolism. His work is very powerful and engaging and he was often regarded as the most talented artist of his time. At a state convention in Texas in the 1930's where some of his work was featured, many white viewers doubted that it was a black man that painted them because they were too sophisticated and brilliant.

The exhibition at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture of Aaron Douglas' ends November 30, 2008. The Schomburg Center is located 515 Malcolm X Boulevard, New York, NY 10037-1801

**Hours: Monday through Saturday 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Sunday 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.**  
**For Tours, please call (212) 491-2207.**

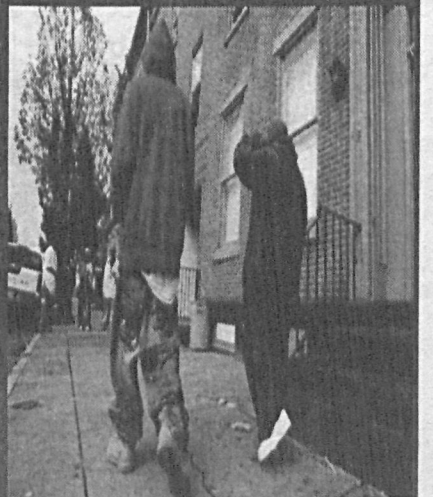
## "BAGGY PANTS LAW" - WHAT'S NEXT?

By Yashelime Moise

The United States suffered from outrageous laws that have passed throughout the years. Recently in Louisiana, known as the Pelican State, three towns and parishes passed a "Baggy Pants Law." The basic premise is any individual wearing clothing that reveals their underwear or dressing in a manner "not becoming to his or her sex" (quoted from foxnews.com) may be subject to prosecution. The bill itself states "it shall be unlawful for any person to appear in public wearing pants below his waist and thereby exposing his skin or intimate clothing." I believe having this bill pass will make society itself worse than it is now. Some towns ask for 3-8 hours day of community service and up to a fine of \$175, and other towns like Opelousas in Louisiana consider baggy pants a misdemeanor and carries a maximum penalty of a \$500 fine and up to 6 months in prison, which I feel is uncalled for and basically trying to diminish the black population we have left in the United States. Seeing pants under the waist, or females baring their underwear does not bother me or the people I surround myself with. It seems to me Freedom of expression bypasses the government and we Americans should just obey what is given to us without any say. Can we tell what the government should do or cannot do regarding our economic issue? No, we cannot, the government runs us Americans and throws out what he or she wants for us to do. I've asked a few individuals about this outrageous law, and they replied,

"I'm not fond of seeing men showcase their underwear in that manner. In some states, there are fines for such dress. Most of our elders feel that it is a poor display and puts a negative cloud over the heritage of those who partake as such." The problem is not solely located in the

opinion of said dress but the spiral of changes that may come with telling people how or how not to wear their clothing. Ones dress is an expression of oneself. People infer so much off of this "choice". One chooses to buy Gucci, as one chooses to wear red. These choices give light to who we are. When people start to mandate expression, there lies bondage. People directly control what they say and what they wear. If you tell someone they can't wear their clothing a certain way, you shackle a form of self expression. Granted, many consider it lewd and improper but the individual is still, nonetheless, clothed. It is not the same as bare skin, or "just" showcasing underwear outside. Although I may not partake in it, I don't see a way to mandate change unless it no longer hits the style high point. Clothing goes to extremes from the biggest, oversized clothes to the pants so tight there is no place for underwear at all. It can range from label aficionados to those that "post no bills." The only way to change this fad {since clothing is based on trends} is for it changes by popular demand, not by government hand. Alex Carter states "I believe this law should be banned...this is a country of free rights." Christopher Waite also states "In my point of view, this law is unnecessary and will not make life better for us. We already see police officers giving ticket for no apparent reason. Of course they are doing their job but some feel some sort of authority and power seeing them take their time to write down a ticket." Is this a fair way to make an environment improve? We'll see how far this law expands.



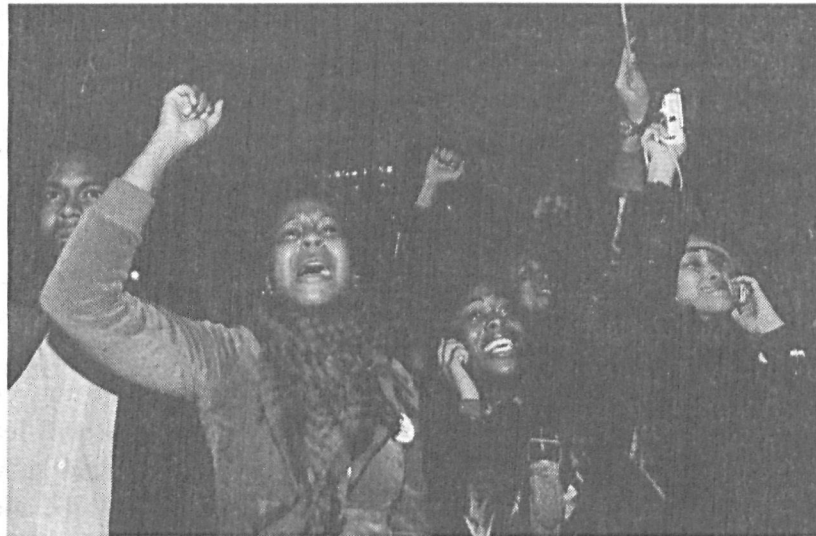
## 125th Street on Election Night

By Adele Scott

Election night was one of the most incredible nights that I have ever experienced! I had spent several hours in tense apprehension to see the outcome of the elections on CNN and was rejoicing with a number of friends when finally the desired candidate was elected. I don't think that anyone who experienced that night will ever forget the sweep of crazed excitement that shot through them when they heard that name: A name of hope and a name long awaited by thousands upon thousands of New Yorkers. At that split second, a tremendous surge of cheering, shrieking and rejoicing was heard from 125<sup>th</sup> street. It was a rejoicing that sounded out victory, youthful enthusiasm and inspiration for miles. I do not think that I will ever experience again such a historic moment.

Most people do not feel safe wandering the city alone at night and on any other occasion, shrieks and cheers from 125<sup>th</sup> street would have sent shivers up my spine. But this night was different. There was a certain peace amongst all the thronging waves of high-spirited young people. I honestly did not feel any fear though the swarms of people were packed against me and I had to wade through the deafening roars of "Obama, Obama," and "Yes we did!" Caught up in the excitement, I found myself cheering with them. All these months and months of anticipation, rallying, hoping, and finally a people were united in their common hopes for freedom and change. Dorothy Bush, a local elementary teacher and school nurse describes her feelings of the historic night: "Everyone you met exchanged 'hi-5' hand-slap greetings,

sometimes having to use both hands at the same time to keep up any forward movement. The crowds were overflowing the sidewalks onto the street, but the traffic was all part of the celebration, with windows open, people leaning out holding 'Change we can believe in' signs and continuous horn-blowing. Young & old, black, white, Hispanic, hoodies & suits; elderly African-Americans with tears streaming down their faces saying 'Thank God!' and 'I



Individuals celebrating Barack Obama's win on Election Night in front of the Adam Clayton Powell State Office Building

never thought I'd live to see this day' ... All the divisions and labels were suddenly irrelevant and we were just all fellow human beings overwhelmed with joy and the meeting of eyes shining with hope."

Kellie Letersky, a sophomore at City College said "... That was just totally unforgettable... I think the whole city should have been there. It just felt like...well...It's hard to describe...somehow every one who was there felt like a huge family or something. We were all cheering and stuff, I don't know, I'm just never ever gonna forget it."

Many young students are inspired by the outcomes of the elections. Derek Zimmerman, a freshman at CUNY Hunter College says: "The election of our country's first black President is a truly remarkable event, and symbolizes the realization of a dream that started hundreds of years ago, and was incrementally made possible through the efforts of Lincoln with the 13th and 14th Amendments, and continued to Lyndon Johnson and the 1965 Voting Rights Act. The ramifications on the greater Harlem community are equally great, given that it was the City College neighborhood that elected New York's first black Congressman, Adam Clayton Powell Jr. in 1945, and helped elect the city's first black mayor, David Dinkins in 1990."

125<sup>th</sup> street spread a new vision around the city. You could feel the expectation and the hope in people's eyes and expressions. This is the time for youth to get inspired and take action. If everyone could have been on that street on that unforgettable night, they would have caught the waves of change

that floated through the crowds, change that all Americans should believe in. Students! We can take action! We have a president who is willing to create change but the inspiration must come from youth who are strong enough to see it through with him. We are all young and our future can only be determined by what we set our minds to. Keep fighting for change and encourage your fellow classmates to keep up their enthusiasm. We can make it happen. We only have to believe in what we are doing and keep telling ourselves that "Yes We Can!"

## The Election Critics of The First Lady's Dress

By Yashelime Moise

The Obama family took the stage in Chicago, on the night of Tuesday November 4th, in color-coordinated outfits, all with touches of red or black. For Michelle Obama, no stuffy suits or reserved pastels here, instead she wore a striking red-and-black dress designed by well regarded, but not so mainstream, Narciso Rodriguez. A sleeveless, scoop-neck adaptation of a more revealing design for spring, that Rodriguez showed on a New York runway this September, sparked instant debate among viewers. Some called it "an eye catching statement" and others, "an eyesore." *New York Times* Fashion section critic, Jessica Bettencourt, stated that "I voted for Obama, but I didn't vote for that dress." Karla Wright, a lawyer in Chicago said, "I don't know what was worse, that stupid criss-cross band around the middle or that black

sort of border coming up from the hem." I however do not agree with these impulsive critics bashing Michelle Obama's beauty and style.

Seeing the future first lady and her family, walk on stage gave me a feeling of amazing grace. I view the fashionista in her. She doesn't just do the old guard, she represents the new. The straight from the runway Narciso Rodriguez design highlighted both her attractive figure and her savvy sense of style. It's clear that Michelle Obama is exceptionally independent when it comes to the fashion she chooses to wear; never once letting the fashion wear her.



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## Commentary

# Post Election Hot Topics Discussed

By Taqiyya Haden

Following the days after the historic win of Barack Obama in the 2008 Election there was an array of issues on many people's minds, that I felt compelled to discuss. Some hot topics around the election included the cover of *The New York Times* on November 5, 2008 which read; "Obama! Racial Barrier falls in Decisive Victory." People need to realize and spread the word that the election of one man does not equal the end to race problems. There were subtle things going on before, during and after Election Day that have yet gone away since Obama was named President-elect.

One example is the mass amounts of text messages and emails I and others got that speak to our current racial dynamic. One email was titled "November 5th Etiquette" that included rules like:

"No crying, hugging or shouting "Thank you Lord" - at least not in public."

"No high-fives - at least not unless the area is clear and there are no witnesses."

This may be some individuals' way of making fun of the ongoing subtle oppression Blacks will continue to face in light of and even because of the election of an African American man; but I for one do not agree.

A mass text message sent around on Election Day warned that there would be a lot of "salty crackers" post election. Views of collective victory over the system are often felt as potentially intimidating to an entire race. Similar feelings surfaced after the acquittals of O.J. Simpson and Michael Jackson. Another text informed us that "all whites were to report to the plantation for orientation." These expressions of humor can easily be defined by some as "racist" and by others "biased." However these messages are defined; this type of communication is heavily influenced by the contradictory histories of Blacks and Whites in America.

Another post election race scenario was reported by a white woman. She shared that in one certain neighborhood Obama's victory was celebrated with gun shots and hate shouts of "F\*\*k the white man" and "It's our turn now." This was not the dominant experience I heard elsewhere and living in an area of Harlem that is still mostly segregated, I heard nothing in that tone when the election results came through. This is not to infer that it didn't happen but to highlight the varied experiences.

*The New York Times* headline has been viewed as media strengthening the myth of a post

racial America. The idea of any Black person working his or her way to the top of the political pole lends itself to the belief that *anyone* can achieve anything in The United States with hard work and diligence. Of course there is an element of truth in that statement especially if using a world view comparison. The qualities of a hard working and diligent individual certainly apply to the character of President elect Barack Obama but let us not delude ourselves that this is the last piece of evidence proving a post racial society in America and feel free to become or remain complacent.

America most of us and President elect Obama face the same challenges. We undeniably have a collective history.

My argument is that an African American is a person of African decent that is an American citizen or even living and planning to stay in America. Does he fit this description? What about you? It wouldn't take much social science to see where his and my own experiences in America parallel. In my mind and heart he is a "real" African American. His personal journey has made him less intimidating to America than for example First Lady Michelle Obama could be.

Personally I believe in promoting self identity for unity, so he is the self described African American "mutt" and definitely a product of our unique culture. It is very typical of African Americans to have mixed heritage by force and later by choice and nature. Unfortunately many sharing that "mixed" heritage easily become divisive and love to claim or disclaim Blacks when convenient. So many of us don't want people to be "just" or "really" African American which I find ludicrous when "real" African Americans literally built this country and made a way for all to share it.

My fire around this subject is fueled by concern about the infighting that continues within our community. Most of the time it is out of ignorance and not malice that we divide ourselves into convenient categories and take in the celebrity or politician that we want on our team.

An elder in the Harlem community pointed out the label transitions the Black American has made; nigger, colored, Negro, Black, Afro American and then African American. Having lived through all those names and then witnessing our regression back to nigga, she questions our ability to be named simply American at any point.

I am content to say Black American or African American and only stress that it would benefit us to become more united in name and practice. I am tired of hearing about all the ways in which President elect Obama is "different" from African Americans especially considering our history in this country and the impact our vote had on his election. I would personally like to see our community grow to be more respected in this country and globally.

Look forward to *The Paper* printing cross cultural dialogue between self named African Americans from these United States and abroad.

What if we said to each other "My brother/sister from the continent what is life there for our people?" And you responded sharing your experience and asking me "My sister stolen daughter of Africa, what is life here for our people?" What I see us doing now is relabeling, alienating and silencing each other. I implore us to acknowledge, respect and share our experiences.



Children celebrating Barack Obama's win at his old school in Jakarta Indonesia; Barack's step-grandmother Sarah Obama in Kogelo Kenya; The Obama's appearance after Barack was announced the 44th President of the United States; Barack Obama looking into the eyes of a future Presidential Candidate.

It has been noted that President elect Obama has intentionally made race a non issue. Most are aware of the speech he gave on race, but was that enough? Many voters and even campaign workers openly admit that he couldn't and still can't bring it up. Does anyone care about how this is affecting him and his family personally?

What about the millions of other Americans that cannot have a race conversation openly except among our own ethnic group? Many would have disagreed with my contention that we do not talk race in this country and I just wonder where all this race talk is going on. I notice Asians, Africans, Hispanics/ Latinas, Native Americans and Whites generally keeping the conversation ethnically exclusive. If we are not having the conversation cross racially what does it matter and what will it change?

Another post election hot topic that easily gets me heated up is around Barack Obama not being a "real" African American. Well many of us at *The Paper* are "real" African Americans or consider ourselves as such. We have decided that whether from the continent directly, an island, or

## PLACE THE PRODUCT CLOSER TO THE 22's

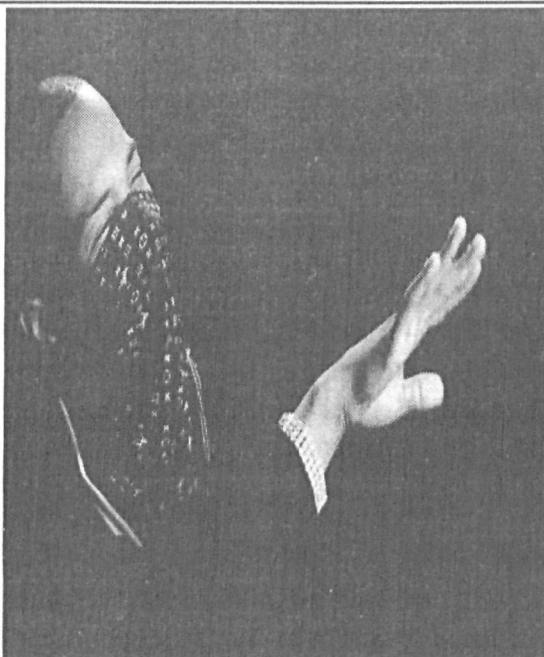
By Jeff Delices

The rap genre is commonly known for referencing high-class cars, champagne and clothing companies. In 2006, rapper T.I. wore a Louis Vuitton scarf across his face and in his back jean pocket in his video for "What You Know" and thus a new trend began; and moved to include rival company Gucci. The scarves generally worn by the Hollywood elite now became a regular item to rappers from the east to the south. Two years, later, T.I. took his love for Louis Vuitton and created "Swing Ya Rag"—a song from his album "Paper Trail"—which encourages people to take their expensive Louis or Gucci "rag" and "wave it 'round in the air".

After two-years of promotion by T. I. who freely endorse their merchandise without ever having a contractual agreement, Louis Vuitton and Gucci no longer wanted T.I.'s co-sign and decided to revoke the free endorsement. The two companies prohibited the video "Swing Ya Rag" from being released, citing copyright infringement. Moreover, T.I. paid for a video, which will never make a music video countdown, or bring, according to fashionphile.com, "the influence of Gucci and Louis Vuitton to the hood." T.I. failed to realize that many companies do not relate, respect or understand the rap genre.

Hip Hop trendsetter Jay-Z created Rocawear Clothing after a failed meeting to secure an endorsement deal with clothing company, Iceberg. At the time the company, did not believe the impact rap had on fashion and passed on the deal. Later, the Jay-Z, boasted "Roc-a-wear, eighty mill like, eighteen months" on a protégé's single. The success of the clothing company proved rappers do influence, not only fashion, but also, pop culture. While Jay-Z began wearing his own brand Rocawear, he did however continued rhyming about "Cris" or Cristal.

Weekly newsmagazine, *The Economist* questioned managing director of Louis Roederer the company that produces Cristal—about its association with rappers; Frederic Rouzaud said, "We can't forbid people from buying it. I'm sure Dom Perignon or Krug would be delighted to have their business". Soon after, rappers began boycotting the "racist" company, which they freely endorsed for 10 years beginning when Diddy was still



Rapper TI on the set of his music video for "Swing your Rag"

Puff Daddy. However, the incident with Cristal did not stop rappers from shouting out brand names.

Harlem Diplomat Jimmy Jones released "Splash"—a braggadocios music video featuring Jones and his Byrd Gang group flashing their expensive Gucci and LV; scarves, hats, jackets, et cetera. The video was shot using the letterbox effect, with red and green colors outlining the box—the colors of Gucci. The video appears to be a 4-minute ad for expensive cars, clothes and liquor. The video was shot and released before LV and Gucci prohibited T.I. from releasing "Swing Ya Rag." Similar to T.I., Jones is not affiliated with either brand.

In the past, companies have supplied or paid to have their products appear in a Hip-Hop music video—however, not in the fashion of Jim Jones or T.I.P. According to Urbonics Media, a Hip-Hop blog, Apple paid to have its "U2 Edition Ipod" placed in The Game's video for "How We Do" in 2005. In addition, The Game's rival and former boss 50 Cent was famously seen listening to an Apple Ipod, in his 2003 video for the "P.I.M.P. (Remix)".

The placement of products in music has been around for decades and the labels and the artist were paid—the only victims were the fans. It's understandable that artists have to recoup and having a phone, sneaker, or mp3 player will help earn back money. However, nowadays when artist dedicate entire songs to a bottle of tequila or clothes for free or profit—the artist not only put his or her credibility at risk, but also rips the fans off, by giving a 45-minute album of commercials and dope beats.

Continued from front page

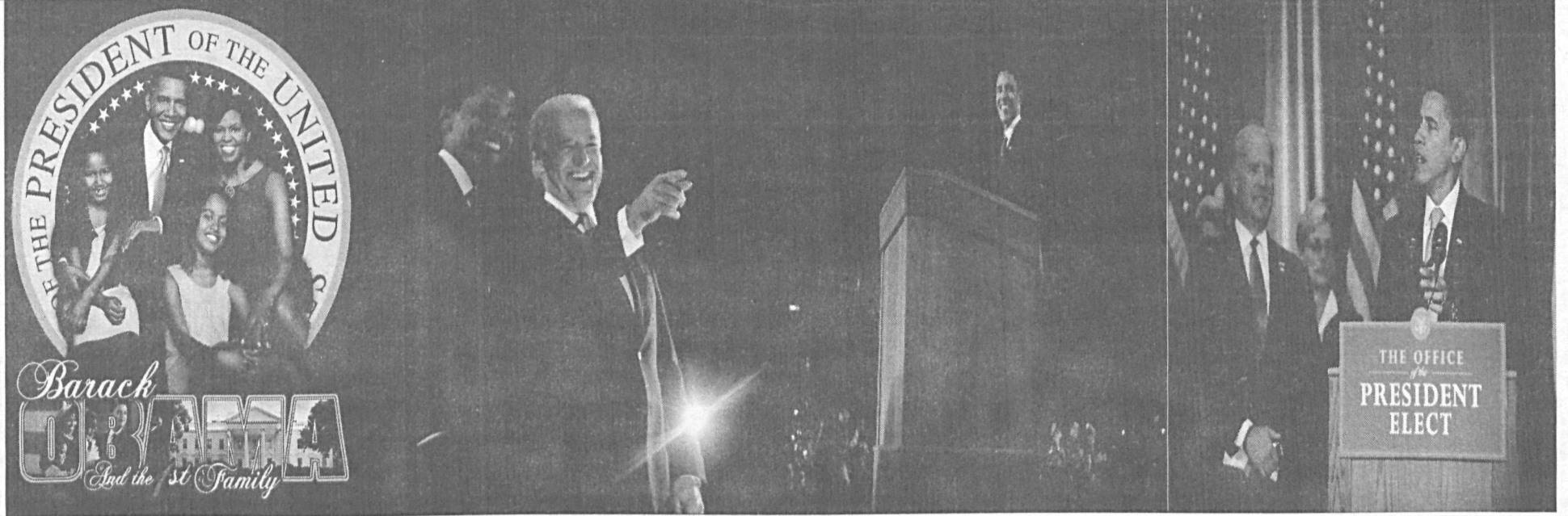
## Religion, Politics and America

More surprising is the fact that this is happening in a country which is supposedly a beacon of hope and freedom and that strongly believes in *E Pluribus Unum*, albeit on dollar bills. The whole incident also uncovers the power and the cruelty of religion: that it can force even the most rational of the world do abandon the counsel of their intellect and base their reasoning on blank unprogressive rubrics. America has as a result, suddenly dropped from a nation accommodative to any success-minded individuals to one where your religious affiliation can be a handicap to success.

Making fuss of how the election campaign might have been conducted may not be of much assistance either. Nonetheless, I think that there are some instances in the just completed election that should not be left untold lest we run into them again in the near future. In the past elections, Republicans have always used religion to cement what they call their base. That had not been bad since they geared themselves to uniting themselves and augmenting the values they strongly believed in. However, in the last election, the same believers of core Christian ethos strayed from their much emphasized norms and used religion to brew controversies leading to polarization of the whole country.

It all began with the start of the campaigns two years ago and was fostered at the dawn of every morning by naysayers who are never comfortable with anything good. First there were the innuendos raising unreasonable doubts on some of the presidential candidates' religious identities. After that, an open crusade emerged against particular candidates. Revisiting that nasty part of our recent history is horrendous and I don't want to do that. I'm only troubled by the unfair characterization of Islam and the constricted views that most Americans hold against the religion. While trying to actualize the false claim that Obama was a Muslim, most of the propagandists went out of the way to imply that there was something wrong with Islam. Many people may euphemistically say that this kind of characterization of Islam is a result of the bumpy relationship that the US has had with the Middle East, but this superficial reasoning lacks thoughtful analysis. These propagandists fail to tell the difference between the characters of a clique of Muslim leaders and the real core virtues preached by the Islamic faith. The same rumor mongers frequently substitute Arabs for Muslims thereby failing to realize that Islam, like other religions is prevalent all over the world.

Most recently, when the elections were on the homestretch, a lady at one of McCain's campaigns suggested that Obama was an Arab. Of course that is false and unworthy of debate. In reply, McCain said that Obama was not an Arab but a "decent family man." The answer, although seemingly gracious, unearthed the underlying perception that Americans have regarding Muslims or Arabs. Does it mean that Arabs or Muslims can't be decent family men? I don't believe so. McCain might have made a simple mishap in giving that answer but it's clearly a warning that we need to change our mentality towards Muslims and Islam in general. I could give thousands of examples, but that will only make the situation look grimmer. On our part, we should not give a picture that Muslims are somehow second class citizens lest we negate the core values that are supposed to define this country. Like racism, 'religionism' has to be fought at all costs so that at long last, everybody is really judged by the content of their character. We may be unhappy with what happened in New York seven years ago but surely we have to appreciate the efforts of one Dr. Hassan who crawled to ground zero to rescue the survivors of 9/11. Why give a negative branding to a humble community of people just because of one errant member?



Continued from front page

## Obama's Win: What Would D.W. Griffith Think?

filmmaker D.W. Griffith (David Wark Griffith, 1875-1948); he's most likely rolling over in agony at the thought of a black man in office. His ideas of what black leadership would do to America is explicit in his highly regarded silent film, *The Birth of a Nation* (1915), where he justifies the existence of the terrorist organization, the Ku Klux Klan.

The film follows two white families from the North and South who try to regain stability during the days of the American Civil War and Reconstruction. Although the theme deals with historic events, the narrative is constructed based on the "Southern Legend," which glorifies the antebellum south. According to this legend, the dynamics of the country, particularly the South, had been stable for the simple fact that whites and blacks knew their place. Whites were obviously superior in terms of dress, mannerisms, and morals while blacks were jolly, cotton-picking slaves happy with their status and desired nothing more than what they had. The threat and destabilization of the Northern Stoneman family, the Southern Cameron family, and essentially the whole of the United States occurs when the slaves are freed. The freed blacks demand to take part in things that whites have always had control over like voting and government.

According to Griffith and other whites who shared his sentiments, blacks taking part in these sort of things would only mean disaster for the country. As the newly freed slaves are holding a meeting, they are shown to be in total disarray; some are chugging down drinks as they laugh, some snooze while their feet dangle off the desks, and others are not wearing shoes at all. In this meeting, their main agenda is to have the right to marry white women – showing that they don't know what is important to the country other than their lustful desires. These marriages would produce "mulattos" who are deemed a serious danger to the white community because they would have the smarts of the so-called superior race but the inept morals of the "Negroid" thus making them a lot harder to control.

Griffith portrays the Mulattos in the film, particularly the politician Silas Lynch as

a scheming individual who is building some sort of army of freedmen to take over the south while leaving whites to live in fear as they continue to breed with their women. Now, the families must struggle to preserve their culture that seems to be helplessly under attack at the hands of the inferior race.

Congressman Stoneman, who oversees blacks coming into power including his protégé Silas Lynch, realizes what a mistake he made by advocating the abolishment of slavery when Lynch holds his daughter hostage intending to force her into marriage with him. The youngest daughter of the Cameron family throws herself off a cliff to her death rather than accept the marriage proposal a black man named Gus – who is really a white actor in blackface – prompting her older brother Ben, a former confederate soldier, to find a way to "save" his people by creating the KKK, a group that would re-establish order and salvage white racial integrity from the blacks who have taken over. With his band of men in white sheets, he scares all the blacks away and saves Stoneman's daughter, which sends the message for the unity of the white race: no matter what their differences are they must come together as a race to keep the blacks down.

During Obama's campaign for presidency and even after his ultimate win, opponents seem to echo Griffith's sentiments. People used his "un-American" name—Barack Hussein Obama—to scare the pants off white conservatives from voting for him. They took jabs at his associations with the outspoken Reverend Wright and 1970s radical Bill Ayers, blatantly telling America to be afraid of this man.

After the landslide victory over Senator John McCain, an elderly woman from Astoria Queens claimed that she was afraid that with Obama as president, blacks would get preferential treatment, a concept Griffith even used in his film. It used to be that when blacks and whites were walking on the same street, the black person would have to walk in the gutter. There was a scene where freedmen were walking on the sidewalk with whites and shove the white people walking out of the way, because the new laws of reconstruction seemed to put blacks on a pedestal while whites were

terrified below.

So with all that Griffith projected in his film, how would he respond to the fact that after January 20, 2009, Obama will be running this country? Well, the fact that Obama is half white is what Griffith would consider a death sentence for this country. Because of his mixed heritage, he has the smarts but lacks the proper codes of behavior. He might be able to run the country well, but his policies would be questionable. Maybe he would hand out reparations to people of color? Maybe being of African parentage, he would give financial aid to Kenya more than any other nation? At least Griffith wouldn't have to worry about Obama desiring white women because his wife Michelle is black and he has two black daughters.

Back when the film was released, the telling of historical events proposed by Griffith, who based his film on Reverend Thomas Dixon's novels *The Clansmen* and *The Leopard Spots*, was widely accepted. Then president, Woodrow Wilson, actually endorsed the film and *The Birth of a Nation* became the first movie screened in the White House. In fact, Griffith did not even think his film projected racist images of blacks, he felt it was accurate as to what happened during the civil war and reconstruction periods. Of course the film was heavily protested by the NAACP and even by some progressive whites. However, the film was still seen by over three million people in the U.S. and was used until 1970, as a recruitment film for the KKK.

Although not everyone is on board with the president-elect, the significance of his election should not be dismissed. In a country where racial relations are so complex it left some to wonder whether the issues would ever get resolved. While there are some who harbor racists ideas and it most certainly should not be thought that this election means that everything has been cleared overnight, it is important to note that there were different kinds of people who put their racial prejudices aside to elect someone they felt could run the country better than John McCain. We can believe that many people today who view this film know that a so-called threat to the stability in America is not a reality in the sense Griffith portrayed it; the way America voted was evidence of that. Here's to you, D.W. Griffith, letting you know that you were dead wrong.

# EVENTS @CITY

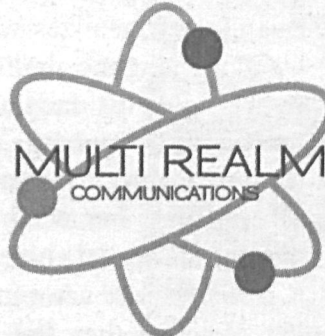
**EVENT** HARLEM 350  
**DATE** Mon, Oct 20—Fri, Jan 16  
**TIME** 2:00pm - 5:00pm  
**ADDRESS** 160 Convent Ave/ NAC Building/ Cohen Library Atrium  
**PHONE** 212-650-7609  
**DESCRIPTION** "Harlem 350" an exhibition saluting the founding of the village of Harlem in the 17th century highlights its history and architecture. Using photographs, maps, and prints, the exhibition documents as well as illustrating Harlem's social and architectural history.  
**ADMISSION** Free  
**URL** www1.cuny.cuny.edu/library

**EVENT** TYLER PERRY'S MEET THE BROWNS  
**DATE** Wed, Dec 3  
**TIME** 6:00pm - 8:00pm  
**ADDRESS** 160 Convent Ave/ NAC Building/ Hoffman Student Lounge  
**PHONE** 212- 650 - 5002  
**DESCRIPTION** Brenda (Angela Bassett) suddenly loses her job, then she receives news that the father she never met is dead. With nothing to lose, she gathers her brood and heads to Georgia.  
**ADMISSION** Free

**EVENT** THE GREAT DEBATERS  
**DATE** Wed, Dec 10  
**TIME** 6:00pm - 8:00pm  
**ADDRESS** 138 Street Convent Ave/ NAC Building/ Hoffman Student Lounge  
**PHONE** 212-650-5002  
**DESCRIPTION** Come see a movie with us!  
**ADMISSION** Free

**EVENT** RELAXATION SPA  
**DATE** Thu, Dec 11  
**TIME** 11:00pm - 3:00pm  
**ADDRESS** 138 Street Convent Ave/ NAC Building/ Hoffman Student Lounge  
**PHONE** 212-650-5002  
**DESCRIPTION** Right before finals week everyone is stressed. Finley Center presents a great way to ease your stress level with a massage.  
**ADMISSION** Free

**EVENT** EUTOPIA NOW!  
**DATE** Mon, Dec 15  
**TIME** 6:00pm  
**ADDRESS** 25 Broadway, 7th Floor  
**PHONE** 212-925-6625  
**DESCRIPTION** Presented by Michael Sorkin, University Distinguished Professor of Architecture and the Director of the Graduate Urban Design Program at CCNY.  
**ADMISSION** Free  
**URL** ccny.cuny.edu/cwe



\*\*\*\* MEDIA ALERT \*\*\*\*

WHAT: CCNY event will kick off campaign to promote financial consciousness among college students through games and giveaways.

WHO: A team of seniors from the CCNY Media Communication Arts Workshop, sponsored by Capital One Bank.

WHERE: Hoffman Lounge located near the bookstore in the North Academic Center, also known as the NAC building.

WHEN: Wednesday, December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2008, from 12:00pm to 2:00pm.

CONTACT: Esmeralda Cabrera, Multi Realm Communications  
 347.968.1675 or esienyc@gmail.com

# SPORTS

**Upcoming Games**  
 (All dates are subject to change)

- Women's Basketball**
- 11/29 Women's Basketball St. Joseph's LI 2:00pm
  - 12/1 Women's Basketball Polytechnic 7:00pm
  - 12/5 Women's Basketball Hunter College 5:00pm
  - 12/8 Women's Basketball Mitchell College 5:00pm
  - 12/2 Women's Basketball Gallaudet University 1:00pm
  - 12/31 Women's Basketball USMMA-Kings Point 1:00pm
  - 1/4 Women's Basketball Lehman College 1:00pm
  - 1/7 Women's Basketball John Jay College 5:00pm
  - 1/9 Women's Basketball City Tech 5:00pm
  - 1/11 Women's Basketball St Joseph's Conn 1:00pm
  - 1/14 Women's Basketball Baruch College 5:00pm

- Men's Basketball**
- 11/29 Men's Basketball St. Joseph's LI 12:00pm
  - 12/2 Men's Basketball Lehman College 5:00pm
  - 12/5 Men's Basketball Hunter College 7:00pm
  - 12/8 Men's Basketball Mitchell College 7:00pm
  - 12/13 Men's Basketball SUNY Purchase 1:00pm
  - 12/29 Men's Basketball Gallaudet University 3:00pm
  - 12/30 Men's Basketball William Patterson 1:00pm
  - 1/2 Men's Basketball Williams Tournament 8:00pm
  - 1/3 Men's Basketball Williams Tournament TBD
  - 1/7 Men's Basketball John Jay College 7:00pm
  - 1/9 Men's Basketball City Tech 7:00pm
  - 1/14 Men's Basketball Baruch College 7:00pm

- Women's Fencing**
- 12/7 Women's Fencing NIWFA Invitational TBA
  - 1/18 Women's Fencing West Point Invitational TBA
  - 1/21 Women's Fencing Hunter College 6:00pm
  - 1/21 Women's Fencing Yeshiva University TBA
  - 1/30 Women's Fencing USMA 7:00pm

## ATTENTION STUDENTS!

Come Join

# The Paper

All Positions Available

Contact us @  
 thepaper@ccny.cuny.edu or Visit NAC/118