

## Proposal Brief

### “Developing a Long-Term Strategic Plan for Black (African) Americans”

#### Introduction

Black (African) Americans do not have a long-term strategic plan. As an easily identifiable group of over 40 million people--a nation within a nation--Black Americans would be well served to develop a long-term strategic plan. Such a perspective ignores the argument that Black Americans should simply blend into the melting pot that is America. The latter argument, however, defies America's reality. Part of America's greatness is her ability to accommodate diversity without crushing it. Nevertheless, it is imperative that ethnic groups rent seek in order to achieve their goals and objectives in America because the political scene is characterized by competition. The first order of business, however, is to identify those goals and objectives.

Before discussing goals and objectives, it is critical that Black Americans be convinced of the need for, and motivated to pursue development of, a long-term strategic plan. James Brown said, “Say it Loud, I'm Black and I'm Proud.” Stated more simply and in the form of a question, “Who wouldn't be a proud people who could claim the history of capture, transport, slavery, freedom, civil rights, and excellent achievement that Black Americans have to their credit?” In the main, we produced our achievements without major contributions from other human groups. In the Black American tradition, we are left to say, “He helped us through and He made a way.” Now, we are expected to use our intellects to take ownership of the road ahead and to plan our journey carefully.

It is passé for nations to have long-term strategic plans that extend 75-to-100 years into the future. Why should Black Americans not have such a plan? A long-term strategic plan for Black Americans would facilitate better decision making. Once developed, each important decision could be made within the context of the plan. In this way, Black Americans would not have to continually reinvent the wheel when it comes to making decisions about critical issues; we could simply refer to previous decisions that were made within the long-term strategic plan framework. Such a plan and system for decision making would help produce forward progress—not a continuous recycling and rehashing of old issues.

In our view, a long-term strategic plan should reflect at least three key components: (1) A conceptual framework; (2) an operational plan; and (3) an evaluation plan. As the term implies, the conceptual framework would delineate the contexts, definitions, and scopes of the plan. The operational plan would provide road maps (cookbook-type objective elements) with sign posts and timetables for executing the plan. Finally, the evaluation plan would serve as a tool for tracking progress and for updating the plan periodically.

Each component of the plan must account for the fact that we are engaged in a set of strategic games. Sometimes the games are non-zero-sum; sometimes they are zero-sum games. We cannot forget that successful goal achievement is contingent upon the perceptions and reactions of other groups. We must always remember that it is insufficient to describe our current states and to delineate our goals; it is imperative that we explain the how and why of it all. In this way, we will provide motivation for ourselves and for generations to come to continue on the path toward goal achievement because we and they will have full comprehension of the reasons for the efforts.

As a point of departure, it seems reasonable that a long-term strategic plan for Black Americans would include, at a minimum, the following components:

- 1. A plan for delineating our history in America accurately.**
- 2. A plan for developing strong and effective families.**
- 3. A plan for defining and preserving our culture, language, and religion – our modes of expression.**
- 4. A plan for producing and preserving our health.**
- 5. A plan for ensuring that we obtain a high-quality, effective, and useful education.**
- 6. A plan for developing and growing Black American businesses and our overall economy.**
- 7. A plan for formulating and executing effective politics for Black Americans.**
- 8. Plans for other components that are yet to be determined.**

Given this introductory framework, Black Americans need a mechanism for drafting, vetting, finalizing, maintaining, reviewing and updating their long-term strategic plan. It is insufficient for a few minds to decide with finality the nature of all of these requirements. Therefore, it appears appropriate to initiate an open discourse that would set the wheels in motion to fulfill these requirements. This proposal outlines how these wheels might be set in motion and how they might carry us along a route to the completion of a long-term strategic plan for Black Americans.

It is important to recognize that a long-term strategic plan for Black Americans should not be constructed in a vacuum. Rather, sufficient research should be performed concerning America's long-term plan so that it can be accounted for appropriately in Black America's long-term strategic plan.

### **Sponsor**

We propose that an organization be selected or developed that can initiate a process that will produce a first sketch/draft of a long-term strategic plan, which would be produced through a series of Internet Webcast forums.

### Project underwriting

We suggest that the selected or developed organization identify a financial sponsor for the project. Financial support for the project could be obtained from a donor(s) or through a grant proposal process—including a grant proposal to the National Science Foundation (NSF).

### Methodology

We volunteer our services to assist in this effort. The first step is for the selected or developed organization to reach concurrence on the key components of the Black American long-term strategic plan—using the components that are recommended above as a starting point.

Once the list of components are determined, at least one expert for each component would be identified and invited to participate separately in a series of audio Internet Webcast forums that would be open to a national audience. These forums would facilitate a discussion of the detailed subcomponents that should be included in the major components of the long-term strategic plan. Selected audience members would be permitted to participate in the live forum; others could participate in writing electronically. All of this input would be gathered and assembled into a first draft of a long-term strategic plan for Black Americans.

Through advertising and using addresses collected through the national forum process, Black and other Americans would be permitted to comment on the draft strategic plan. These comments would be incorporated as required and a final plan developed. A vote of approval could be permitted on the final plan.

The national forum process could also be used to select a “caretaker” for the long-term strategic plan for Black Americans. The caretaker could be an existing organization or an organization could be created to manage the plan. In either case, Black Americans would be expected to support the maintenance, management, execution, review and updating of the plan through their donations.

It is, therefore, suggested that the selected or developed organization be used up to and through the national forum process as a springboard to complete a first draft of the strategic plan. However, unless the selected or developed organization is selected as the caretaker of the plan, then its role in the plan would cease after the initial draft of the plan is completed.

### Timetable

We propose to collaborate with a representative of the selected or developed organization to determine the feasibility of implementing this proposal. If the selected or developed organization is willing to undertake the project, then this proposal could be refined, improved and completed—including the development of a realistic budget.

If a decision is made to move forward with the project, then we propose that efforts be made to organize the national forums for the late winter of 2008 to early spring of 2009. This is not to say that related pre-forums could not be held in the fall of 2008.

### Comments

We have written about the development of a long-term strategic plan for Black Americans in several National Center for Public Policy Research, Project 21, "New Vision Commentaries"; <http://www.nationalcenter.org/P21Index.html>. We have also written about this idea in a working paper entitled, "Coming to Africa: Should Black Americans Emigrate?" The paper is located on the following Internet Web page; <http://www.blackeconomics.org/page5.html>. For books on plans for Black Americans, you are invited to read Tavis Smiley's *The Covenant with Black America* (2006), and the following books, which were written by Dr. Richard America of Georgetown University: *Developing the Afro American Economy* (1976); *Paying the Social Debt* (1993); and *Philanthropy and Economic Development* (1995). As we have written elsewhere, Smiley's book fails to provide a long-term strategy, and much of America's work needs to be updated and enhanced/augmented because it has mainly an economic focus. Drs. Bill Cosby and Alvin Poussaint's current popular book, *Come On People: On the Path from Victims to Victors* is mainly about family and social issues. Notably, the two most widely known Black American organizations, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the Urban League, do not reflect long-term plans for Black Americans on their Internet Web sites.

Clearly, then, there is a need for a comprehensive long-term (75-to-100 years) strategic plan for Black (African) Americans which reflects a sound conceptual framework, future needs, and an executable operational plan that can be monitored for progress and reviewed and updated as required into the future.