



SOLIDARITY

In The Sunshine

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This November, Ignore Black and White and **VOTE GREEN!**



“Forget about white and black. Forget about skin color. Just remember that the color “GREEN” determines your standard of living” – Bill Londrigan, President Kentucky State AFL-CIO.

So far this election season there has much said about the historic implications of the first African-American nominee from either of the two major parties appearing on the November ballot. While some are celebrating the opportunity to elect Barack Obama as the first black President of the United States of America, others are fearful of the prospect of this monumental change. Few admit it openly but let's be honest, there are those among us who, through our past experiences and upbringing are hearing a nagging voice in the back of our minds that is causing great concern over labor's endorsed candidate. This nagging little voice can take many forms; “I heard he was a Muslim” or “He's not even a citizen” or “He has attended an anti-white church.” All of these are of course untrue but that fact notwithstanding, the root of these voices are the same; fear of the unknown and the prospect that the next leader of our great nation will not be a white man.

While many of us often try to ignore politics, politics does not ignore us. The choices we make at the ballot box impact everything in our lives. They impact our jobs and our ability to provide for our families. They dictate what the opportunities for our children and grandchildren will be. They impact what type of home we are able to build, the strength of our communities, whether or not we will have access to health care and the future security of our great nation, not only from threats abroad but from the very real threats here at home; loss of jobs, poverty, crumbling schools, disease and the loss of hope. **That is why in this election it is vital that we ignore the colors of black and white and focus on the real color that matters for our families' future...green, the color of money, and the ability for our citizens to secure enough of it to provide for themselves and their families. When it comes to the color green, the differences between the candidates are even starker than the color of their skin.** John McCain, a man who is living a life of luxury is determined to maintain the status-quo which has allowed the super-rich to become astronomically wealthy, the rich to become the new super-rich and the middle class, who have long been the backbone of this nation to dwindle. Barack Obama, a person who began his career organizing poor communities has put forward an agenda of real change and is trying to chart a course for the future where everyone once again has the opportunity to work hard and find the American dream...it's just that simple. What working American would vote to continue their own downward slide and loss of opportunity simply based on fear and skin color? Unfortunately, too many. In the next few pages we provide a brief glimpse at some of the facets of America's crumbling economy. These problems have been directly caused by unfair free trade deals, huge tax cuts for the rich that never get invested back into the working economy and unchecked corporate dominance over our political system. John McCain believes the economy is working under the George Bush/corporate agenda because it is...for him. **Barack Obama knows working families are struggling and is pushing a plan to reverse course and rebuild America's once powerful middle class for our children and grandchildren.**

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Consider the following stark statistics of life in America under the status-quo John McCain Wants to Protect

- ◆ Incomes for the nation's top .1% (that's 1/10th of 1%) has risen 353% and incomes for the nation's top .01% (that's 1/100th of 1%) has risen 513%! Incomes for the nation's middle 20% have only increased 23% during the same time period.
- ◆ In 1980, the average CEO's take home pay was 42 times that of the blue collar worker. In 2006, that number had skyrocketed to over 364 times the average worker's pay.
- ◆ Worker productivity has risen a whopping 300%, while wages for the work we do have remained largely stagnant since about 1970.
- ◆ The United States has shed nearly **3 million manufacturing jobs since George Bush took office.**
- ◆ Since 2001, the Trade Deficit with China has increased from \$84 billion to \$262 billion and 366,000 good paying jobs were lost to China last year alone. Estimates indicate that the current trade policies with China have **pushed down average wages \$1,400 last year.**
- ◆ **47 million Americans have no health coverage**, including 8.7 million children. That number is expected to increase to 56 million if nothing is changed by 2013.
- ◆ **Premiums for health care are rising 300% faster than wages.** Premiums for family coverage are expected to reach \$24,000 per year by 2016. The **profits for the insurance industry have increased 1,084%** over the past five years.
- ◆ Every 30 seconds, someone files for bankruptcy due to medical costs and now a large percentage of those are denied bankruptcy protection.
- ◆ Many historians agree that the rise of the American Labor Movement was instrumental in building the working class, but Labor's bargaining power is decreasing at alarming rates. In 1964, 29% of the workforce was represented by unions, in 2004 that number had dwindled to 13%. Increased worker bargaining power is critical to reversing America's economic decline and over 50% of the workforce has said they would join a union if given the chance. The corporate controlled National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) has taken that chance away from them. The Employee Free Choice Act, which passed the House this year will reverse this trend.

John McSame = George Bush's 3rd Term

- ◆ **Has promised to veto the Employee Free Choice Act, keeping the same corporate NLRB policies in place that deny workers' rights to form unions.**
- ◆ Supports the expansion of free trade with no protections for labor, keeping U.S. workers at a competitive disadvantage, securing billions in profits for the big corporations while costing American workers their jobs.
- ◆ **Wants to privatize social security and recently called the program "disgraceful" for taxing younger workers to pay for seniors' retirement, the entire point of the program.**
- ◆ Supports vouchers and wants to greatly increase voucher funding so that public dollars are taken from our public schools.
- ◆ **Has a health care plan that actually taxes workers' employer sponsored benefits to pay for those without health care. All workers who have employer sponsored health care will pay more in taxes.**
- ◆ Wants to make the Bush tax cuts for the nation's wealthiest permanent and has no plan to provide targeted tax cuts for the struggling middle class.
- ◆ **Has said that homeowners hard hit by the mortgage crisis can "get a second job" and "skip vacations" until the crisis is over. His number one economic advisor, Phil Graham led the push for the deregulation of the mortgage industry which has created the current disaster.**

In short, John McCain is in no way the "Maverick" he claims to be and has promised to keep the Bush model for the nation's economy in place were he to win the Presidency.

Sources: www.johnmccain.com; www.aflcio.org; The Wall Street Journal; Huffington Post.com

Barack Obama = A Real Change for America's Workers

- ◆ A co-sponsor of the Employee Free Choice Act, he has promised to sign it into law.
- ◆ Wants to re-negotiate NAFTA and other trade agreements to add labor and environmental protections to help level the playing field for U.S. workers and save American jobs.
- ◆ Supports Social Security and is opposed to privatizing the program. He understands that the program is secure and solvent.
- ◆ Wants more funding for teacher pay and increased support for inner city and rural schools
- ◆ Has a plan to provide quality health care for everyone using government subsidies and the private insurance market to ensure people can pick their own plans.
- ◆ Will repeal the Bush tax cuts for the wealthiest 1% and extend tax cuts for all workers earning less than \$250,000 per year.
- ◆ Has pledged to create a new mortgage tax credit and set up \$10 billion in aid for struggling homeowners to stop foreclosures.

sources: www.barackobama.com; www.aflcio.org; CNN; The New York Times



The Great Constitutional Heist of 2008: Part II

Amendment 2 Puts Retirees and Collective Bargaining Agreements at Risk

The supporters of Amendment 2 have labeled it the “Marriage Protection Amendment.” Sounds great right? Who wouldn't want to protect marriage? What's the Florida AFL-CIO have against marriage? **Well, as with many of the other amendments that are part of the Great Constitutional Heist of 2008, the title is grossly misleading and as with most things in public policy, the devil is in the details.** Supporters say this is really about gay marriage but the Florida AFL-CIO doesn't take positions on these types of social issues. We do however, along with the rest of the Labor Movement, strongly oppose any form of discrimination against people in the workplace, regardless of their sexual orientation (and even have a great constituency group, PRIDE at Work to work on those issues) but that's not even what this amendment is about. **Our opposition to this amendment is based on the following:**

- ◆ **Same-sex marriage is already illegal in Florida in four different statutes!** Same sex marriage is banned in F.S. 741.212 (1), 741.212 (2), 741.212 (3), and 741.04 (1). This amendment is not on the ballot because there is any threat to the idea of “one man and one woman marriage” but because the Republicans who funded it hope to use it to drive up their voter turnout as they did successfully in other states in 2004 and 2006.
- ◆ Many seniors in Florida cohabitate without getting married because of pension plan restrictions and other issues. These seniors currently enjoy some very basic rights such as visitations in hospitals, the ability to enter into contracts together etc. **This amendment will threaten those arrangements putting thousands of seniors at risk.**
- ◆ There are over 500 major companies that have collectively bargained agreements that provide benefits to thousands of straight couples who are unmarried domestic partners. **This amendment will negate those agreements and leave thousands of workers' partners without the benefits they deserve under contract.**
- ◆ Many universities and municipal governments provide benefits to unmarried domestic partners, straight and gay. This amendment would make those benefit agreements illegal and will greatly erode local control of governments and the contracts they have with their workers.
- ◆ Good, bad, right or wrong, millions of people live together unmarried. Some legal experts have warned that if this amendment were to pass, people living together without being married would be barred from filing abuse charges under Florida's domestic violence laws.

Amendment 2 is not about “protecting marriage.” It is a shameful political stunt designed to win an election, one that has been pursued without any regard of the unintended consequences it could have on the people of Florida.



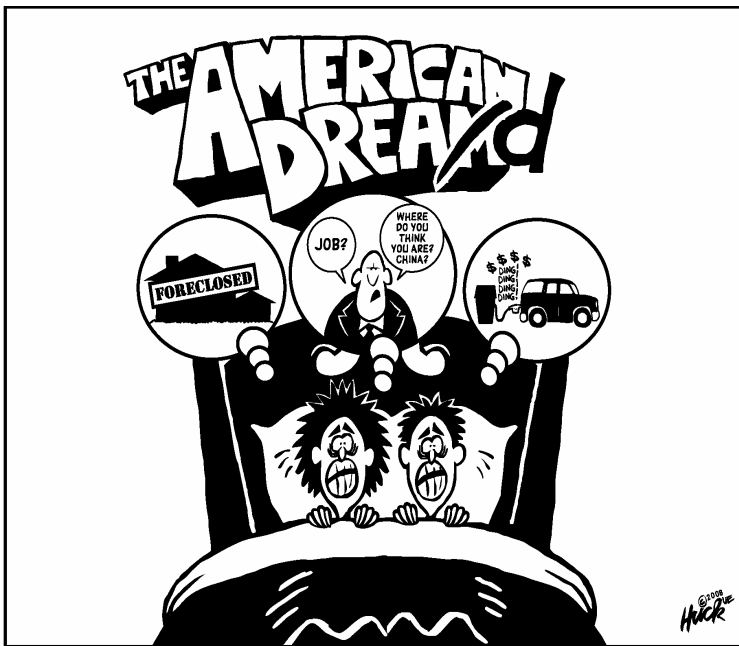
TIME TO GO TO THE MOVIES

(on your computer)

Robert Greenwald, the award winning documentary filmmaker and activist (director of the acclaimed "Wal-Mart: The High Cost of Low Prices") has just completed his latest in a series of online film shorts about the Presidential race and other issues. The film highlights John McCain's callous attitudes about the housing crisis and his many mansions. There are two great online spots where you can see his films and others on John McCain and other issues. Grab the popcorn and check them out!

www.realMcCain.org and www.Bravenewfilms.org

Don't forget to check out the online video of Richard Trumka talking about race and the 2008 elections. A link can be found on our own You Tube Channel at <http://www.youtube.com/user/FloridaAFLCIO> in the favorites section at the bottom.



In spite of all the challenges we face during this critical election year let's not forget to celebrate OUR day!

For a complete listing of Labor Day events around Florida, visit our website at

www.flafclcio.org



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