

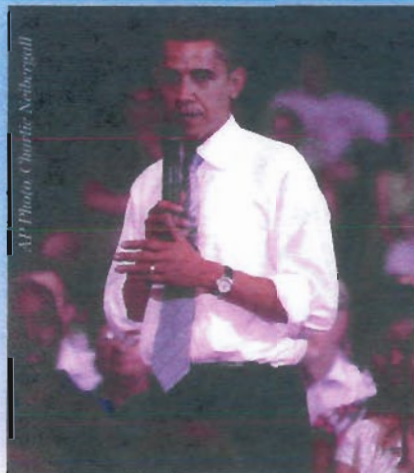
WHY BLACKS SHOULD GO GREEN

By Marti Parham
JET MAGAZINE

It's becoming more and more difficult to pick up a newspaper or turn on a television without being urged to do your part to go green. The concept is one that is not often seen promoted by Blacks, but with presidential hopeful Sen. Barack Obama stepping to the forefront, all of that is about to change. He recently introduced legislation while on the campaign trail that would not only improve the air of the nation, but also the world.

By establishing a National Low-Carbon Fuel Standard (NLCFS), Obama (D-IL) and Sen. Tom Harkin (D-IA), who helped introduce the proposal, hope to reduce America's dependency on foreign oil, embrace the use of renewable fuels and combat global warming.

His actions are applauded by California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, who introduced the state's Low Carbon Fuel Standard in January to reduce the greenhouse gas content of transportation fuels. According to Obama's office, if the recent bill is passed, by the year 2020 national greenhouse gas emissions would be reduced by over 250 million tons, the



▲ Sen. Obama addresses a town hall meeting in Indianola, IA. He introduced green initiatives while he campaigned in the state.

equivalent of taking about 32 million cars off the road.

Both Obama and Schwarzenegger's efforts to go green are part of the growing global movement to sustain the Earth. To help explain the basics of going green and how consumers can help improve their surroundings, JET spoke with a few environmental advocates.

WHAT DOES "GOING GREEN" MEAN?

"Going green is one of those terms that we use to describe how to protect



the environment," explains Dr. Godfrey Uzochukwu, director of Waste Management Institutes at North Carolina A&T State University. "The population is in-

Godfrey Uzochukwu

creasing and this is putting pressure on our resources. There's a need to do everything possible to continue to protect the environment."

Uzochukwu adds that in an unprotected environment we inhale polluted air and drink contaminated water, which puts our physical well being at stake. Therefore, "Going green is personal for everyone because it affects our overall health."

The going-green lifestyle is also about making wise decisions and wise purchases. By buying environmentally friendly cleaning products and home appliances that carry the Energy Star label, you are helping to conserve energy and curb the release of harmful chemicals into the Earth.

WHY SHOULD YOU CARE?

Many scientists believe that greenhouse gases, which include carbon dioxide methane and nitrous oxide, are trapping heat in the Earth's atmosphere, which in turn can alter weather patterns and raise sea levels.

"Carbon dioxide keeps the heat on the Earth. It's critical to keep the amount of carbon low," notes Uzochukwu. "If a lot of heat is produced, the vegetation begins to die, water will dry out, diseases begin to thrive and species begin to go into extinction."

According to reports, this past year was the hottest on record. As the heat continues to rise, environmental prob-

What part can you play in improving the environment?

Whether the contribution is big or small, everyone can do his or her part to slow down global warming. These are just a few ways you can help:

Know Your Area: Both Uzochukwu and Carter suggest that Blacks find out more about the facilities that surround their neighborhood and be vocal to city council members and government officials about air and water pollution in their area.

Rest Your Ride: Automobiles are considered one of the largest contributors to the world's pollution problem. If you can't afford a hybrid vehicle, make the world an eco-friendly place by carpooling with a friend, taking public transportation, riding a bike or walking to where you need to go.

Change Your Bulbs: Replace regular incandescent light bulbs with a compact fluorescent bulb. Fluorescents use less energy and last 10 times longer.

Shop & Save: Make your home more energy efficient by purchasing new appliances with the Energy Star label. Families can save up to one third on energy bills.

Pass On Paper: Trees absorb carbon. Save them by cutting back on your use of paper products. Help by paying bills online, e-mailing work documents rather than printing them, and the next time you go grocery shopping, say "no" to plastic and "yes" to cloth bags or recycled bags.

Find out more ways to combat global warming by visiting



lems will inevitably worsen.

High heat also means higher electric and gas bills, which means less money in your pockets.

WHY SHOULD BLACKS CARE MORE?

According to Majora Carter, founder of Sustainable South Bronx, Black communities in particular are at greater risk of toxins because of America's existing environmental injustice.

"What environmental injustice means is that no community should have to bear the brunt of a disproportionate amount of environmental burdens and not enjoy the environmental benefits," states Carter, who was named a 2005 MacArthur Fellow for her work on improving the



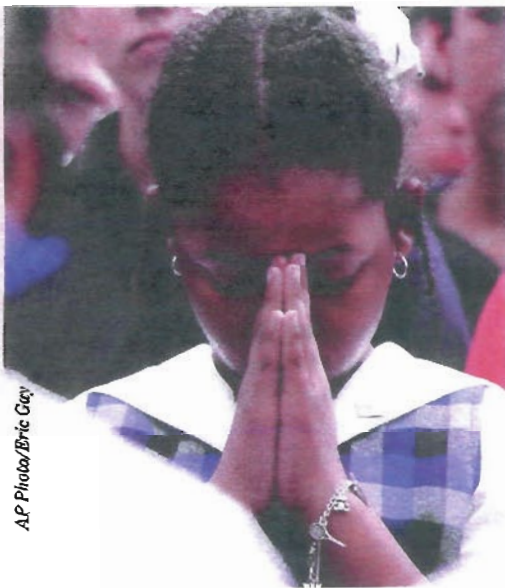
Majora Carter

environment for New York residents in the South Bronx (JET, Oct. 10, 2005).

Carter believes that race and class have everything to do with where nice parks with lush trees are located and where waste facilities and power plants are built. Places occupied by poor people of color are usually plagued by poor surroundings and infrastructures. For instance, residents in the low-lying areas of New Orleans bore the brunt of an environmental disaster during Hurricane Katrina.

"As far as I'm concerned," says Carter, who encourages Blacks to take a stand against these sorts of living conditions, "the environmental justice movement is the Civil Rights Movement of the 21st Century." □

■ **CHILD IN PRAYER:** Joining thousands of citizens across America who observed National Prayer Day, 8-year-old Alexandria McPherson prays during a gathering at City Hall in San Antonio. The day is designated by Congress as an opportunity for all Americans, regardless of their religious beliefs, to come together in prayer. It is observed the first Thursday in May. This year's theme was "America, Unite In Prayer."

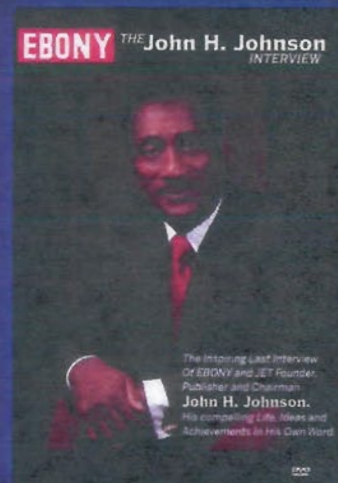


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