

# Strategic National Black Consensus: An Interview with Larry Ukali Johnson-Redd

The following interview was conducted in April 2014 with *JPAS* senior editor Itibari M. Zulu based on a section *American Challenges in the Obama Era Part 1* (2012) by northern California poet, educator and community activist Larry Ukali Johnson-Redd. Larry is a graduate of the University of San Francisco (B.A.), Golden Gate University (M.P.A.), San Francisco State University (M.A), and the author of five books.

**IMZ:** First, thank you for this interview.

You have called for a Strategic National Black Consensus (SNBC) for African people around the world in your book *American Challenges in the Obama Era Part 1*. Can you explain what that may look like or be, and how you came to the conclusion that a consensus is needed?

**LUJR:** In this there would need to be a bottom up and top down analyses of the African-Americans in the USA by African Americans to understand the concept of a Strategic National Black Consensus. At that point, a confirmation process can be developed so that every segment of African American society from the homeless to the unemployed, to the youth, adults, workers, executives and political and spiritual leaders would individually and collectively confirm or endorse a Strategic National Black Consensus.

In terms of the international Black community, it would be a national question in every country because this consensus should not cause conflict, but instead, bring about more unity and harmony. This would also be applied to countries in the Caribbean, and in South America from Brazil to Guyana. In Africa where there is too much Black on Black killing in South Sudan and Central African Republic in addition to many other African countries, a Strategic National Black Consensus emphasis would begin and be directed by continental Africans. I personally would prefer a united Federal States of Africa, but there are other confidence building steps that could involve halting this Black on Black killing challenge in Africa.

**IMZ:** Why is a consensus among the Black people in the US and around the world needed?

**LUJR:** Amid the slaughter of African Americans by African Africans, the blood running in the streets of the Caribbean islands, the Black on Black killings going on all over Africa, the key to bringing this murder and mayhem to a halt lies in our hands and hearts to a certain extent. We have the power to conduct an analysis, and propose solutions among ourselves that match those out lined in the proposed Strategic National Black Consensus. In the Melanesian areas, they too are plagued with internal animosity in the need to unite to take all of the island of New Guinea away from non- Melanesians. So we also face the question of internal violence that dis-empowers us, so we must empower ourselves to deal with expanding progress among ourselves so we can take better care of each other. And this consensus doesn't necessarily cause problems among others, unless they do not mean us well. The consensus mostly causes us to look internally at each other and internationally and at the entire world differently. This new look is necessary to arrest this primary threat to our survival.

**IMZ:** In your announcement of a SNBC you suggest that more personal energy should be exercised to resolve pressing issues in the Black community like crime, high incarceration rates, and economic development. How can this energy be harvested considering a seemingly post-Civil Rights era increase in individualism in the Black community in the US?

**LUJR:** This can be done through a National Black Trust which I discussed in the book in describing the Strategic National Black Consensus. This would be our development arm, a non-profit in the USA that may take many benevolent forms around the world. This type of organization would encourage people to become their own development and change agents.

**IMZ:** In your Strategic National Black Consensus you also mention the plight of young Black men in education. Why do you think so many are not making it to a high school or college graduation day?

**LUJR:** Sadly, a significant portion of young African Americans have turned off to the education of the "White Man" and refer to book readers as book worms as though that is a negative aspect. Still the centralizing educational system has many castaways in the USA like in the California High School Exit wherein all California public school students must pass in addition to other state and local requirements in order to receive a high school diploma which students are failing, and many of these failures are our young people. Plus, we also have desperate economics and street economics pulling our youth out of school, nevertheless, we have to encourage all positive tendencies among us.

**IMZ:** Employment is a unit of the Strategic National Black Consensus. What areas of employment do you suggest folks should enter in 2014 and beyond?

**LUJR:** As hard as it is, we have to pursue our own economics and develop our own businesses with the help of the National Black Trust which must be local, state and national effort. The Trust must be financially supported by the well to do African American celebrities and business/government executives as well as the well to do. This Trust can fund African American youth start-up businesses. This Trust could also fund job training classes where studies show employment is likely to be for class graduates.

**IMZ:** Reparations is mentioned in the SNBC. Who should pay for the enslavement of Black folks around the globe, especially in the US, but also in the 'Caribbean'?

**LUJR:** It is hard for us to make a salient comprehensive case amid the murder and mayhem in our community. Once a majority of African Americans affirm their belief and participation in this consensus and we show ourselves how intelligent as well as organized we can be, we'll be in a position to make that type of call the majority of our people could support.

**IMZ:** In your SNBC you say that the manipulation of non-whites in the US only benefits white supremacy and thus harms everyone. Can you explain that a bit more and perhaps provide examples of the manipulation involved?

**LUJR:** The competition between African Americans and other national minorities as well as immigrants for scarce resources and jobs is manipulated by the top 1 per-cent as well as by the political and executive elite. When it is time to hire, other national minorities and immigrants are selected over African Americans- the most feared by 1 per-cent as a way to keep us in our current position. This competition also impacts how contracts are awarded.

**IMZ:** In your essay, you mention 'ethnic glue', what is the glue that will unite folks today in at least a fifty percent level?

**LUJR:** We see the lack of ethnic glue or self-love in the violence on the streets in our neighborhoods expressed in the increasing Black on Black murder/violence rate as well in the robberies and beat down assaults in our community. If we had more ethnic glue and self-love we may not eliminate these negative factors all the way, but we could drive down the increasing rates so our youth would stop dying of materialistic goods like a pair of tennis shoes.

**IMZ:** Creating a self-loving African is a goal of the Strategic National Black Consensus. How can that become a reality in your opinion?

**LUJR:** This simple and complex concept must be read and understood by well-meaning readers among us and these readers must bring the information to those who don't read or refuse to read so that we as a people can begin to have this conversation nationally in our communities, neighborhoods and households. We need to discuss how we are going to improve ourselves, and what this concept of a strategic Black national and international consensus could mean for our people. This must be a bottom up and top down discussion at the same time, a concept that is far better than what we have going on now.

**IMZ:** In the SNBC you call for an 'All African People's Congress' to empower the powerless around the world. How is this going to be organized and implemented worldwide?

**LUJR:** Once a majority of our people supports this concept in America/the Americas as well as in the Black world, when we realize its importance and necessity, then as a people, we will organize and finally support a worldwide All African People's Congress.

**IMZ:** Some may say a Strategic National Black Consensus is a dream or a 'pipe dream' not of reality, what is your answer to such critical thought?

**LUJR:** Ignoring this concept in face of all of the Black on Black violence/killing and powerlessness amid our growing need for Black peace and the constructive development of Black empowerment is not logical

**IMZ:** How can folks or organizations get in touch with you for more information?

**LUJR:** I can be contacted personally at ljredd52@aol.com, I can also be contacted on Facebook.com by searching for my name or ukalitheaffrican. I can be contacted at twitter-Ukali Johnson-Redd or Ukalitheaffrican. Also, my book *Journey to The Motherland* is available at Amazon.com/Kindle as an e-book along with *American Challenges in the Obama Era Part 1*, *Loving Black Women*, *History to Destiny through Afrocentric Poetry* and *Long Distance Love*. And of course, more information about the Strategic National Black Consensus is fully explained on pages 16-24 of *American Challenges in the Obama Era Part 1*.

**IMZ:** Thank you.