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[Contents of Issue Menu](#)

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The BRC's 10th Anniversary: A Time to Reflect and Rebuild
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The Black Radical Congress is celebrating its 10th Anniversary.

For some, it's been a longer journey. I'm not saying this in a pejorative manner; it's objectively true. The seed for the concept germinated some two years before the historic founding in Chicago, IL. Then came a year of continuation meetings around the country to create, struggle over and build consensus around the Freedom Agenda and the Principles of Unity before we convened in 1998.

The Black Radical Congress (BRC) was born into a movement of both cynicism and hope. From the very beginning, the naysayers threw their proverbial rocks from the sidelines. There were also the recurrent debates about who was the blackest, the most radical, the truest feminist, etc. There was the question of control, i.e. who had hegemony in the group. To this day, I still hear that the BRC is dominated by academicians even though for the last several years, only one person from the academy has served on the leadership body.

When the dust settled, the hopeful forces prevailed. Those members went on to build Local Organizing Committees in more than a dozen major cities, popularized the Education not Incarceration campaign and engaged in local organizing around issues affecting the African-American community. Thanks to some tech-savvy members, the BRC was one of the first black national groups to utilize the internet as an organizing tool and we were among some of the original black voices to speak out against the invasion of Iraq.

However, the road was far from smooth. Divisive issues such as accepting Ford Foundation monies and being critical of Mozambique President Robert Mugabe threatened not just the unity of the BRC but its existence. It was during times like these when we entertained the question as to whether to continue, whether the BRC was the organizational form and forum for building black left unity. Each time, the response was the same: that the need for building a movement of black progressives around a strategic agenda was critical. So, we kept moving forward.

As someone who has been involved in political organizations since I was fourteen, my commitment to building the Black Liberation Movement is enduring. My understanding of the need for the black left to be organized to lead the BLM and to influence the other social movements is unwavering. What is up for debate is the organizational form/s that is/are best equipped to build the objective black united front. If it is *not* the BRC, what should it be? I am open to dialog with others who are seriously trying to build organizations that build power for people not individuals. As much blood, sweat and tears that have been put into building the BRC, there would be no hesitation or regrets to close the chapter on this entity to embrace another with more potential.

What I know from my organizing experiences is that you ain't gonna talk your way into building such an organization, let alone a movement. At some point, you have to do some work. You have to build relationships, you have to build programs to address the needs of our communities, you have to organize our people in ways that empower and develop them. The political and economic climate perpetrated by the Bush administration created harsh conditions which the BRC and other groups faced as they implemented their campaigns and projects.

The life of the BRC has been no crystal stairs. Yet, here we are - still standing but knowing that there are some critical questions we will have to grapple with at this stage of our development. Key issues, in addition to assessing the period that we are in and critiquing the BRC, are how do we fund and sustain an effective organization, what does the BRC need to look like in order to respond to the current crises of our people, how do we hold one another accountable in our movement, can we draw lessons from the Obama campaign, etc. These and other questions will have central stage at the upcoming conference on June 20-22 in St. Louis.

I encourage you to be a part of re-shaping the BRC so that it is more relevant, more impactful and more inclusive for the next ten years. The deteriorating conditions of our people demand it.

For more information on the BRC's 10th Anniversary, visit the website at www.blackradicalcongress.org. It is not too late to add you or your organization to The Call endorsement list or to take out an ad in the souvenir ad book.

BlackCommentator.com Editorial Board member, Jamala Rogers, is the leader of the [Organization for Black Struggle](#) in St. Louis and the [Black Radical Congress](#) National Organizer. Click [here](#) to contact Ms. Rogers.

[Contents of Issue Menu](#)
Click Here

[Home](#)

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