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**Complicated Times, Complex Organizing: The Black Radical Congress at 10  
By Dr. Rose Brewer, PhD  
BlackCommentator.com Editorial Board**

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June 20-22, 2008 will mark the 10th anniversary of the founding of the Black Radical Congress. Surely the St. Louis, Missouri event will be a time of sober reflection and celebration, as well as one of vision and strategy. It has been a tough ten years. Yet, the organization survives, while facing formidable challenges. As movement-building energies emerge globally and within the U.S., the BRC must take a hard look at its analytical and organizing strategies, as well as new possibilities. As a decade of BRC struggle attests: the hopes might be high but social transformation is neither simple nor easy.

On the eve of the 10th anniversary, as a founding member of the BRC, I know that the political terrain we face is messy and difficult. Even more daunting, I know these things to be true:

1. This is a moment of rapacious transnational capital, of intense privatization and the global exploitation of human and material resources. The Black worlds of the U.S., Africa and the African Diaspora are in the vortex of these realities, facing intense economic, political, and cultural vulnerability.
2. It is a moment in which wealth is extremely concentrated within the U.S. and globally. The rich, indeed, have gotten much richer. It is also a moment of complicated racial/ethnic realities and gender divides. The immigration issue looms large in the context of the need to build alliances.

3. It is also a moment of talk-speak, act up, youth in resistance- youth and not so young taking to the streets: Atlanta, GA for the first ever USSF, fighting for Katrina survivors and the right to return, confronting the murder of Sean Bell and the police face of state terrorism, facing new images of nooses. Indeed, tens of thousands demand redress, accountability. How to make common cause with the newly mobilized yet participate in deeper level movement building must be on the BRC radar.

4. It is a gendered moment - with Black women and women all over the world too often exploited and impoverished - the U.S. no exception. These global realities have different gendered consequences for men and women. Nonetheless if we lift up women, women are taking charge, claiming leadership and organizing for social change. We represent a tidal wave of movement building possibilities. Thus the next decade of the BRC demands nothing less than a reaffirmation of our radical Black feminist roots, actually building radical Black feminist sensibilities within our communities. This is an imperative but unfinished agenda.

Concrete and immediate issues that need to be addressed within the BRC include:

1. Reassessing leadership within the organization and taking seriously the push for decentralized models (popular in youth organizing) that have not sought to invest a lot of leadership responsibility in a few key individuals is key.
2. Strengthening the on-line innovations the BRC pioneered with internet organizing, but stepping up even more to the use of the internet to inform, publicize, mobilize, and analyze, to complement but not replace face to face organizing is required.
3. Building a new commitment to the arts and creative action as well as popular and political education are in order. These have been missing pieces in the work of the BRC during the past decade.
4. Giving visibility to the environment in our political work must be considered. Indeed, a new generation of younger Black activists has introduced important discourses and actions on the environment and the consequences of environmental racism for our people. Van Jones and the work of the Ella Baker Center in Oakland come to mind as does Majora Carter's work with Sustainable South Bronx in N.Y. This environmental issue was never fully vetted in the formation of the BRC. The next 10 years will demand it.

These are only a few of the concerns core to the strategies and visions to be reflected upon in ST. Louis, June 20-22. Come and give your voices and energies to shaping the next decade of the Black Radical Congress.

**BlackCommentator.com** Editorial Board Member, Dr. Rose Brewer, PhD, is a professor of African American & African Studies at the University of Minnesota - Twin Cities. She is also a founding member and leader of the Black Radical Congress. Her most recent book is the co-authored, [The Color of Wealth: The Story Behind the U.S.](#)


[Racial Wealth Divide](#), *The New Press*, 2006. Click [here](#) to contact Dr. Brewer.

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