

Is Black Cross Alliance the New KKK?

✖ Over the past few weeks, black crosses have appeared in various locations around the country, including coalmines and energy meetings. Even the White House became a target. After a march from Freedom Plaza and a rally at Lafayette Park, more than 100 people staged a sit-in in front of the White House to demand President Obama end mountaintop mining. Approximately 100 people from the group, called The Black Cross Alliance, were arrested when they refused orders from U.S. Park Police to vacate the sidewalk.

Why all the hubbub? These people have displayed a negative symbol of a black cross around the nation, including our national capitol. In some ways they remind me of the cross burnings of the South. Cross burners sought to uphold their own twisted brand of justice, while abusing the rights of thousands of blacks. The same group of people who were victimized by the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) are the victims in the energy debates of our day – poor blacks. The Black Cross Alliance shackles people's hopes and living standards. They make it harder for people to heat and cool their homes, pay their rent and mortgage, afford a car or medical treatment.

The issue is the radical green community's insistence on raising the cost of energy for everyone in order to force conservation. Further, they ignore the economic war that radical environmentalists are waging on the finances of the poorest of the poor in our culture by dramatically raising their energy costs. In fact, this is tantamount to levying a regressive tax on the poor.

Let's start with the dirtiest of fuels. Coal has been mined in the United States for centuries. Our economy and way of life has been supported directly by coal without protest from any

group. Only 10 percent of America's coal supply is mined from the tops of mountains. Let's then look at oil. We are currently still dependent upon foreign oil when there is plenty of oil within the United States if we chose to drill for it. It has saddened me to see how the Gulf Coast has been jeopardized environmentally, economically and socially because of current off-shore drilling regulations and approaches. Washington needs to make better decisions about how we transition to cleaner energy sources.

The Black Cross Alliance placed their crosses against an industry that is an important source of jobs and a primary source of energy. They wrongly attempt to portray the coal, oil and even natural gas industries as a consortium of greedy killers instead of responsible energy suppliers who serve and employ millions around the world. This group has sought to specifically attack coal, but they are among the most radical green activists, who fail to acknowledge that it will take at least a decade or more to smoothly transition to a cleaner weighted average of energy sources that will continue to fuel home and commercial enterprises without traumatizing the poorest of the poor or bankrupting other American manufacturing entities. For this reason the High Impact Leadership Coalition and the Congress on Racial Equality have helped create the Affordable Power Alliance (which I co-chair) to stand up for the needs of the poor.

Yes, America needs to burn coal more cleanly and efficiently. Thanks to tougher laws, changed attitudes and improved technologies, power plant emissions are way below where they were in 1970, and they continue to decrease. Yet, America needs coal. Half of our nation's electricity is generated with coal. Moreover, as National Black Chamber of Commerce President Harry Alford has recently pointed out, 86 percent of all African-Americans live within 700 miles of Nashville, Tenn. – many of them in states that get half to nearly all their electricity from coal. In fact West Virginia gets 98

percent of its energy from coal.

So, what do people think about energy alternatives? A September 2010 Ipsos Public Affairs poll found that half of all Americans are unwilling to pay even \$5 more per month in total energy costs, even to create “green” jobs, build wind and solar projects, or prevent “global climate disruption.” A third opposes paying even a dime more than they do already. Are Americans callous to going green, or is it that they realize that many current solutions are going to take yet another chunk out of their hard-earned money?

Further, The Green Jobs Revolution that is supposed to be created by our renewable energy efforts is not truly providing plausible work opportunities for Americans. The Green Jobs Revolution instead creates jobs for China and India. The United States is paying billions in subsidies for these energy programs; but the mining, manufacturing, and thus job creation are increasingly taking place overseas, where labor and energy costs are lower, and environmental regulations are far less stringent than in the U.S.

This radical chic energy/economic policy may be fashionable in the elite university parlors of Berkeley and Cambridge, but it is economic euthanasia for millions of struggling, working-class Americans. In a recession, we must focus on survival instead of ideological, impractical solutions.

Anti-coal campaigns equate to many people in America and other countries going without lights or refrigeration. The abundant, dependable, affordable energy of coal or natural gas power generation can bring relief to the world’s poorest countries, communities and families. For them the Black Cross movement equals a real black death. Despite the highly publicized incidents of mine accidents, the events represent a very small percentage of the industry’s operation. Working in a mine is probably less statistically dangerous than driving around the D.C. beltway at rush hour for a year.

What do black crosses really commemorate? They stand as an opposition to jobs, decent living standards, and progress here in America. They stand in opposition to life-enhancing, life-saving electricity for billions who have yet to enjoy any of the basic necessities and comforts that electricity brings. These crosses signify the perpetuation of poverty, misery, disease and death in far too many communities all over our planet.

Harry R. Jackson Jr. is senior pastor of 3,000-member Hope Christian Church in the nation's capital. Jackson, who earned an MBA from Harvard, is a best-selling author and popular conference speaker. He leads the High-Impact Leadership Coalition.