

# Welcome

to our 7th annual State of the Black Union!

What a difference a year makes! Since our last discussion, our lives have been tremendously affected by a number of events—some personal, some political, some considered natural disasters, and some considered of man's own making.

The list includes:

- The confirmation of two new conservative Supreme Court justices
- The devastation of the Gulf Coast areas and subsequent disintegration of our government's response to Hurricane Katrina
- The death of civil rights legends Rosa Parks and Coretta Scott King
- The perpetuation of the "war on terrorism" in Iraq and Afghanistan
- The proliferation of the nuclear capacities of Iran and North Korea
- The ongoing revelations of corporate corruption, legislative ethics violations, and money laundering scandals
- The authorization of secret surveillance of citizens in the name of "national security"

While this list "makes us want to holler and throw up our hands," I believe it helps reinforce why today's conversation is more critical than ever. Now is the time for each of us to work for change. I know that hope lies within each of us here today, and within the millions watching our conversation at home. We are responsible for the actions of our nation and must hold each other accountable for those actions.

We gather here today to discuss *Economic Empowerment* and to continue last year's conversation on *Defining the African American Agenda*. Our morning panel examines ways individuals, families, communities, and businesses can build, grow, and leverage wealth to ensure economic security and financial prosperity for generations to come. The two afternoon panels discuss implementation of the *Covenant with Black America*, a national plan of action to address the primary concerns of African Americans today.

As you listen to today's conversation, consider simple ways you, your family, and your community can build and grow wealth and how you can implement *The Covenant* in your own sphere of influence. Talk to your neighbors about the issues in your community—whether petitioning for more police foot patrols to make streets safer for your children or demanding more centers of commerce be built. Contact your civic leaders, state and federal legislators to protect your civil liberties and human rights.

Only collectively can we bring about progress and positive change that will resonate worldwide. When we make Black America better, we make all of America better.

Keep the Faith!

