

“It is easy to sing when one sits upon a perch of privilege unlike those who are drowning within a sea of neglect” Al Pina

FMCRC Chair Al Pina Retracts Scheduled Retirement

To my fellow Florida community organizers and community developers:

Over a year ago I had notified many supporters that at the end of 2008 that I would be retiring from my work in community economic civil rights and seek a new path in business back in California where I came from prior to arriving to Florida four years ago.

The reasons and emotion behind this decision was like so many others, I had lost hope and no longer felt that I could make a difference. Not only was there lack of compassion and understanding of our communities plight with the leadership in Washington D.C., but the leadership of Florida is driven by the extreme philosophies of a privileged few. A philosophy that lacks both compassion and inclusion.

But now there is hope again. This has nothing to do with political parties. This hope is driven by an increased sense of individual responsibility by most Americans that is forging a new sense of leadership in Washington D.C. that mandates accountability. For we have witnessed a complete lack of accountability that has resulted in an economic melt down that is now being felt in every household. The voices of America have spoken that a new path of accountability must now be front and center.

With a renewed sense of accountability coming back to our nation’s capital, I began to feel that there was now a chance to make a difference for the under-served. With this being said I retract my retirement and have recommitted myself to the under-served communities of Florida.

Fellow Florida community organizers and community developers, it is now time to bring change to Florida. It is now time to become a voice and not just an echo.

The economic distress of minority communities is one of the most pressing issues not only facing Florida. The lack of businesses and jobs fuels not only a crushing cycle of increasing poverty but also crippling social problems, such as drug abuse and crime in our communities. The establishment of a sustainable economic base together with employment opportunities, wealth creation, role models, and improved local infrastructure is critical to the future well-being of minority communities in the State of Florida.

I have learned first hand what the result is if we do not address these issues with the murder of my brother. To see a mother weep for her son is an experience that changed me forever. But it also taught me that we must address the true problems and just not the symptoms, as we so often do in our country. Show me one child who was born to murder, steal or hurt. You will not find such a child. Then where does it come from? This rage and anger. It comes from the greatest terrorist in the history of mankind:

Loss of Hope. That is what murdered my brother, not the hand of a man. This hand that murdered my brother was the symptom, the source and problem is the loss of hope that took root in this man's heart and soul.

The source to battle loss of hope is economic.

The Global economy will forever change the face of this nation. Minorities are the future economic soldiers who will serve to continue to ensure that the values of our great country are multiplied and that we as a country remain strong and the global economic leader for centuries to come. With this being said, minority communities hold the key to not only future job creation, but the development of our country. Research conclusively concludes that the economic well being of all major metropolitan cities is directly linked to the economic health of inner cities. Our future is main streets future.

Now is the time for both business and political leaders to find a vision together and become a united voice for our communities that will create a collective vision to enable us to thrive in this global economy.

But I offer a word of caution....

It is very easy for business and political leaders to get out of tract...and the results is that it brings oppressions more and more onto people till the boney shoulders of poverty can only take it so long and as Charles Dickens said in his novel **The tale of two cities**: Humanity long oppressed grew up into that distorted monstrosity called the Guillotine. **Righteousness and Justice must be the foundation of this vision.**

Why must business and political leaders find a collective vision and voice that truly represents the people and not just the privileged few?

I believe that I found the answer in what is considered one of the greatest novels ever written. In Edward Gibbon's novel **The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire** he gave these reasons for the destruction of the Roman Empire. (The longest standing democracy in the history of mankind)

- 1) The Empire collapsed because of the undermining of dignity and sanctity of family as the basis of human society.

- 2) Second description by Gibbon, higher and higher public expenditure of free bread and entertainment for the masses.
- 3) Third; the mad craze for pleasure and sports that grew increasingly sadistic,
- 4) fourth; the building of great armaments when the real enemy was within and the decay of individual responsibility,
- 5) Fifth; the decay of religion as faith faded into mere formality.

Does any of this sound familiar?

Time has indeed come for change not only across our country, but in particular Florida

Florida is in dire need of leaders with not only an inclusive vision, but the courage to see it through. The ability to hear the cries of the people and **just not the privileged few**. I came from California and am a disciple of the late great Cesar Chavez philosophy. At the heart of this philosophy are the following principles:

- 1) **Justice and Righteousness** shall be the foundation of our country's throne
- 2) Rich or Poor, we are all equal
- 3) Communities of color are the future of our country but need to be heard and respected

Question: If our communities are the future, are we prepared to lead?

The answer has yet to be revealed but we as community and business leaders must lead the way. Fellow Florida community organizers and community developers, I am here to be a servant leader for our communities of color and to work with you to find this voice. We must rise with a vision of one so we can become a voice of the many and not just an echo.

You are the leaders of our community and the foundation of our voice that will carry forward a collective vision.

I pray that you will have the courage for it to be heard across Florida.

God Bless you

In words of Cesar...Si Se Puede

Al Pina

Fellow Florida Community Organizer