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December 4, 2008

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232, US Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Madam Speaker:

More than 80 years ago, labor organizer and civil rights activist, A. Philip Randolph understood something that all of us take for granted today. He knew that if African-Americans were going to win justice, if they were going to win equality, it would happen not just in the courts and Congress, not only in the streets and at the ballot box, but it would also have to happen in the paycheck and the wallet.

African-Americans, as all Americans, need good jobs with good wages. The sharp decline in the auto manufacturing sector in the last 20 years has hit hard, but the abysmal financial policies of the past eight years has plunged the country into an economic crisis that threatens to cripple the middle class and obliterate the working men and women of this nation.

Just as the railroad industry provided a middle-class lifestyle for African Americans during Randolph's day, since the end of World War II, manufacturing jobs, particularly unionized jobs in the auto industry, have been an important source of well-paid employment for minority workers.

Humble workers and their families should not be forced to bear the blame for poor financial planning by supercilious corporate heads.

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A fix to the crisis in the auto industry is urgent—the industry supports at least one in 10 jobs in this country. If this industry is allowed to fail, the impact would be devastating to America’s infrastructure. This situation can only be resolved by creating new jobs and preserving existing industrial and manufacturing jobs, particularly in the auto industry.

We strongly urge Congress and the incoming Administration to make every effort to provide support to this industry central to America’s economy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Clayola Brown". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized initial "C" and "B".

Clayola Brown, National President
A Philip Randolph Institute