

**EXCERPT FROM MEET THE PRESS, TRANSCRIPT, JANUARY 11, 2009**

**This morning, the Obama presidency and how it will confront the challenges in the black community. With us: Bill Cosby, Dr. Alvin Poussaint, D.C. mayor Fenty and Congresswoman Maxine Waters. It's an important discussion that's coming up next here on MEET THE PRESS. (Announcements) MR. GREGORY: The Obama presidency and its impact on black America, after this brief station break. (Announcements)**

**MR. GREGORY: And we're back, and joined by Dr. Alvin Poussaint, Bill Cosby, Mayor Adrian Fenty of Washington, and Representative Maxine Waters. Thank you all for being here to, to launch an important series on, on leadership tests that this president faces. Bill Cosby, you and Dr. Poussaint wrote this book, "Come On, People," in order to effectively say there is a crisis in the black community. It is educational, it is economic, it is social. We've just spent the last 20 minutes talking about the economic distress in this country, and in the African-American community it is felt even more strongly. Here are a couple of facts to bear that out. The unemployment rate by race: among whites, 6.6 percent in December; among African-Americans it's already in double digits, 11.9 percent, up three points. And there is this sobering assessment from the Economic Policy Institute from back in September: "The overall social well-being of African-American communities depends upon strong job growth. The historical evidence shows clearly that strong job and wage growth are the keys to reducing black poverty. Without reductions in child poverty, we can expect continued lower educational achievement, higher rates of teen pregnancy, and a higher than average rate of crime in black communities." These are discouraging facts. Bill Cosby, let's start with you. MR. COSBY: Well, I, I think Alvin, Alvin has something to say about--go ahead. DR. ALVIN POUSSAINT: Well, I think all the things that you mention are severely, like, aggravate all the things are happening--bad things happening in black community: the unemployment rate, the poverty rate. We know that the poverty and the unemployment distresses families. At the same time that you have this high unemployment rate you also have, with the downturn in the economy, a cutback in all kinds of services, particularly that poor people need, that children need. The schools get cut back, so the, the schools are also having a more difficult time in educating young people. So the crisis is very, very serious and may get worse, because the poverty rate certainly will go up because of the economic downturn. And it's likely that even more young people will not find any kind of, kind of work. I mean, the high school dropout rate in a lot of urban areas is, like, 50 percent among--particularly among African-American youth in the major cities. MR. GREGORY: Uh-huh. DR. POUSSAINT: And when they drop out of high school they've very likely--got a six out of 10 chance of ending up at some point in, in prison. So all of the things we talk about in the book--the high incarceration rate, the high high-school dropout rate, the violence in the black community--what are people going to do if they don't have any money? MR. GREGORY: Mm-hmm. DR. POUSSAINT: Is that going to increase crime? Very, very, very, very likely. MR. COSBY: But I also--I'm sorry. DR. POUSSAINT: Go ahead. MR. COSBY: I, I think we need to do some work with numbers. For instance, if in a city the--to educate a kid in public school it would cost \$8,000 per child, let's use that figure; to incarcerate, keep that person, is 41,000. MR. GREGORY: Mm-hmm.**

**MR. COSBY: All right. So if, if we know that the lack of education leads to a person's chances of committing crimes because they are not skilled at anything in particular, perhaps even illiterate or functionally illiterate, then why not try to educate all of our children, try to educate all of our children? So eight from 41,000 leaves you 33,000 left. I think we need to do the math on that and put more children**

in a position who are not doing well... MR. GREGORY: Mm-hmm. MR. COSBY: ...to help them do well, because these children are not--you--some of them may be different, they learn differently. So instead of just moving little Alvin along, let's educate Alvin to move along so he can catch up with Bill. MR. GREGORY: Congresswoman Waters, enter President-elect Barack Obama. How does the nation's first African-American president take on these problems? REP. MAXINE WATERS (D-CA): Well, let me just say that despite the economic crisis that we're in, President Barack Obama is talking about the biggest stimulus package that's ever been discussed in the history of this nation. And we're in a situation where, yes, people are hurting. You just told us what the unemployment numbers are. But you know, a rising tide lifts all boats, and so what you're going to have is an infusion of dollars in the community creating jobs. That's for everybody. You're going to have jobs that are in the construction industry, because we're talking about now infrastructure repair in ways that we have not talked about it before, the roads and the bridges, and these jobs are for the skilled and the unskilled. So I'm hopeful, very, very hopeful that many of these unemployed youth that are probably at about 28 percent unemployed will get jobs, and some of us are working very hard to target some of those jobs to the worst areas of our country. MR. GREGORY: And Mayor Fenty... MAYOR ADRIAN FENTY: Yes. MR. GREGORY: ...I mean, if there is going to be a bigger social safety net, you're going to need it here in the District. MAYOR FENTY: That's right. Yeah. And, and I think President-elect Obama is hitting the stimulus out of the park. I think he's doing exactly what's needed in the immediate term, and it's going to take us forward for a couple of years. But I point people also towards what I think will also be a signature issue for the Obama administration, and that's education. MR. GREGORY: Mm-hmm. MAYOR FENTY: His choice of Arne Duncan as secretary of education is a choice out of Chicago, out of the box, someone who is going to challenge status quo, traditional ways of doing things. And I think all these things--jobs, the crime, housing--are driven by this unbelievable statistic of how poorly African-Americans and Latinos are educated in the inner city and in rural parts of the country.

MR. GREGORY: Bill Cosby, I want to come back to you. I want to pull back for just a second. Will you tell me what it was like for you to go in and vote for Barack Obama? MR. COSBY: Well, I took my father's picture, I took my mother's picture and I took my brother James, he died when he was seven, I was eight. And I took the three of them into the voting booth in Shelburne Falls, Massachusetts, and I pulled the curtain and I took their pictures out and I said, "And now we're going to vote." And I--we only, I only voted once. But--and I did that and their pictures were out, and then I put them back into my pocket and I opened the curtain. And it, and it was wonderful. MR. GREGORY: And here you are on--have been on this journey in the course of your life and career, now you're on this journey to get people as angry as you are, as you've said in, in a speech. What do you expect of this new president, who happens to be our first black president? MR. COSBY: Change, challenge for all of us. I believe he's asking us to be honest. I, I, I believe he's, he's asking us to be honest. I believe he's asking us to look around and see in all honesty what we can do and what makes sense as opposed to what will go into our pockets or make us feel good or who we can punish according to our religion. I think it's time for all of us to, to do things in terms of community, to stop worrying about what other people think of us and, and just go right on in and begin to talk to our youngsters about correct choices, to not be afraid to, to challenge them and be honest with them and, and, and to not be afraid to just stand and, and work with him and think that we're working with him to make change and choices and challenge. MR. GREGORY: One of the things that really strikes me about this book, "Come On, People," is that as a parent with three young kids, I think it just has a transcendent message. MR. COSBY: Yes. MR. GREGORY: Which is that parenting matters. MR. COSBY: Yes. MR. GREGORY: That you got to be involved in your kids'

lives, you got to let, let them know that, that you love them. MR. COSBY: That's true. MR. GREGORY: The, the president-elect back in June, on Father's Day, spoke about some of these issues in a pretty blunt way. Let's listen. MAYOR FENTY: Sure. (Videotape, June 15, 2008) PRES.-ELECT OBAMA: If we're honest with ourselves, we'll admit that too many fathers are also missing. Too many fathers are MIA. Too many fathers are AWOL, missing from too many lives and too many homes. They've abandoned their responsibilities, they're acting like boys instead of men, and the foundations of our family have suffered because of it. You and I know this is true everywhere, but nowhere is it more true than in the African-American community. We know that more than half of all black children live in single-parent houses. Half. A number that's doubled since we were children. (End videotape) MR. GREGORY: The president-elect, his father wasn't around. He left when he was two years old. Raised by his mother and his grandparents in Hawaii. The idea of the president-elect as a role model, you write about that in the book, and this is what you say: "For many black males, chances for success seem slim in many fields because they lack role models. ... These kids see all the bad role models you can imagine--drug dealers, pimps, you name it. But positive role models do exist. We're talking about ordinary black men doing an honest day's work as cab drivers, counselors, bus drivers, doctors, lawyers, and businessmen." And now we add this, president of the United States, as we take a look at, at the first family. DR. POUSSAINT: Yeah. Well, I--yeah, I think what he's saying is, is very important, and I think parenting is very, very important and that needs to be emphasized. And the fact that the president is talking about that, I think we need to talk about it much more so that, you know, it's not just single parents or two-family homes, it's whether you're a good parent or not... MR. GREGORY: Right.

DR. POUSSAINT: ...is very, very key. And so everyone needs to be educated in that way. I would like to see, like, a national conference call, you know, on parenting... MAYOR FENTY: No, you're right. No, you're right. DR. POUSSAINT: ...you know, and get everybody on that same kind of wavelength to make a difference for their children. Because particularly now, it's going to take time for the stimulus to kick in. Families are going to be under stress. MAYOR FENTY: Mm-hmm. DR. POUSSAINT: And when families are under stress, children are under stress right now, and depressed and anxious. And there's going to be increased homelessness, at least... MR. COSBY: And abandoned. MR. GREGORY: Right. DR. POUSSAINT: And, and feeling abandoned. MR. GREGORY: And let--let's talk about, Congresswoman, let... REP. WATERS: Well, it's--yes. MR. GREGORY: The role of role model. REP. WATERS: Yes. MR. COSBY: Mm-hmm. MR. GREGORY: You go home to Watts... REP. WATERS: Yes.

MR. GREGORY: ...and you go out there and you see young people--the fact that we have a black president, that means something. REP. WATERS: Well, of course it means something. He's absolutely a role model. I was watching the young boys from the Ron Clark school who have a--they were in a choir, and they have created a song about Obama. And I was watching their faces. And certainly if there's one thing you can say about this historic election, it is that he has created hope. He has, you know, let young people know and young black boys know that you can, you can indeed succeed. Let me tell you about this parenting issue. I have--or we just had a Black Caucus retreat, and parenting emerged as the number one concern in that retreat. Now, as a public policymaker and a legislator, I think about ways by which we can be helpful in bringing about the kind of public policy that will assist families. And so parenting is one thing that I'm going to spend a lot of time on, because I think that we should dedicate personnel in our public schools to work with parents and to get parents involved. The PTA does not do that. But the teachers cannot do that, the teachers cannot be concerned about what is going on in the classroom and

follow the kids home. But if we have a component in the school that's dealing with going to the home, finding out what is happening with this child, what are the circumstances under which they are living, and be able to direct resources toward that family and give families support, I think we can use parenting as a way to begin to deal with these very serious problems where children drop out and children are already considered failures before they reach high school. MR. GREGORY: But, Mayor Fenty, how much of an experience do we have in cities across the country, but I'll talk about Washington, D.C.... MAYOR FENTY: Yeah. MR. GREGORY: ...where young kids are even paying attention to what's going on with Obama, but they may look at him and say, "No, no, that's not me. That's not my life. That's not my path." MAYOR FENTY: I see--I don't think that that's the case. I really think that Obama connects with this generation of Americans in a way that few presidents ever have. These shots of him, you know, preparing his young daughters to go off to school, I mean, these are just going to resonate through the psyche of, I think, people in Washington, D.C., and other cities. And you know, someone said to me in a, in an Obama fundraiser one time, he was a white gentleman in, in his 50s, he said to the crowd, "You know, to all of us he'll be the first black president. But to our kids and the younger generation, he's just the president." MR. GREGORY: Mm-hmm. MAYOR FENTY: That cap of the African-American never being a president will never exist for them. And I think that will have more of an impact on being a role model or anything else than anything we've ever seen in our community. MR. GREGORY: It's interesting, Bill Cosby, to tie a couple of these things together. There's actually been some research done by the so-called "Huxtable effect"; referring, of course, to your program "The Cosby Show," which we all watched in, in the '80s. There was something you said about this that, that comes together, which is what this family demonstrated is that they were in control of their kids, they weren't losing to their kids, which is something I said to my wife last night. I said--or actually, I said to my six-year-old. I said, "No, son, I'm the boss here." MR. COSBY: That's exactly right. MR. GREGORY: How important was that show, do you think, in paving the way for Obama's success? MR. COSBY: I, I, I don't know. I--look, that show's always--it was 25 years ago, so certainly it should have hit somebody before it hit Obama. So what, what I have to do is give credit to Michelle and to Barack and the beauty of what they've done with their children, with their lives. I still wear the, the rubber thing that says, you know, the Obama--because that was the day we were going around Detroit talking about get out and vote. MR. GREGORY: Mm-hmm. MR. COSBY: This moment is not just a black man, black man. And I'm not one of those people who professes, "Well, this is just a--this is not a black man, this is, this is about who happens to be." MR. GREGORY: Yeah. MR. COSBY: No, he's been. The important thing about it is what he's doing with this country, for this country. And the beauty of it is, is that his story, his story of his mother, his--Michelle's story of her father, this hits all colors, all religions... MR. GREGORY: Mm-hmm. MR. COSBY: ...all races. Verbum Dei, out where your community is... REP. WATERS: Yes, mm-hmm. MR. COSBY: ...these Jesuits, I--they have an answer, and they make their boys go out into the community and give service. MR. GREGORY: Mm-hmm. MR. COSBY: One of the things I've heard--and I'm sorry to take so much time. But one of the things I've heard is that when a person gives, when a person does a service, that there's something that happens to them emotionally. I've heard people in prison working with prisoners talk about prisoners breaking down and crying because they taught another prisoner, they mentored another prisoner to learn how to read. And that the, the mentoring person started to cry. You can't--as a policeman, as a policeman said to me--make a man cry by punching him in the face. They don't cry. But here this man is, and it's something emotional about us giving to each other, teaching each other. And that's what this family's talking about. MR. GREGORY: It's interesting, though. Let's, let's be honest about it, in the course of the campaign Barack Obama went out of his way to become a politician who happened to be black, so that people wouldn't necessarily think that he had some sort of,

you know, black-focused agenda. And there are limitations, perhaps, on the first African-American president. The New York Times wrote about it, Matt Bai, this summer, in which they say, in part, "Obama ... will confront ... how to be president of the United States and, by default, the most powerful voice in black American at the same time. Several black operatives and politicians [said] that an Obama presidency might actually leave black Americans less well represented in Washington rather than more so. ... The argument here is that a President Obama, closely watched for signs of parochialism or racial resentment, would have less maneuvering room to champion spending on the urban poor, say, or to challenge racial injustice." Is that a limitation? REP. WATERS: No, absolutely not. That's one of those arguments that's developed basically by pundits who kind of look from the outside. Barack Obama is about to lead the passage of a \$1 trillion stimulus package. As I said, it's never been done. He's going to have the support of Democrats and Republicans alike, and you're going to see the kind of leadership that you have not seen in the past. No, it does not take anything away from his ability to target to those who are most in need. We examine the language that Barack Obama used in our retreat, and we discovered that many of us are saying the same thing. MR. GREGORY: Mm-hmm. REP. WATERS: Except he found ways to say it that make people feel comfortable, that make them feel safe. He has a--has developed a style and a language and a way of presenting himself that causes people to stop and listen. I've been in presidential campaigns, I was with Jesse Jackson, and I thought to myself in the beginning of this campaign, here we go again. MR. GREGORY: Hm. REP. WATERS: But what Barack Obama understood was that you have to be very, very thoughtful about how you talk about issues. He talks about morality and empathy, and people buy into that. MR. GREGORY: Mm-hmm. REP. WATERS: And so I don't at all conclude that because he happens to be African-American, that somehow he won't be able to target our direct resources. This is not a good argument. MR. GREGORY: Hm. MAYOR FENTY: I, I think he's part of a new type of politician, whether it's a Cory Booker, a Deval Patrick, Martin O'Malley, Gavin Newsom... MR. GREGORY: Or you. You're also...

MAYOR FENTY: ...whoever you want to name, who are saying, "It's not going to be either or anymore." MR. GREGORY: Hm. MAYOR FENTY: "I'm going to be either a mayor, governor or president for all the people." He stuck with that message, and the American people overwhelmingly accepted it. I think that he's going to govern like that. MR. GREGORY: And this is what he told, this is what he told Ebony magazine just this past January here: "I don't have to choose between different [racial] groups. I want to put together a plan that is good for everybody. When we spend all of our time just focusing on things that are unique to us [as African-Americans], it becomes harder for us to build the broad coalitions to deal with the problems that we have in common with everybody." DR. POUSSAINT: I, I agree with that. I think he has to build coalitions. He will do that. He's done that already, I, I think. That he--if, if he improves the economy with the stimulus, he's going to help everybody. REP. WATERS: That's right. DR. POUSSAINT: He's going to help the black community. REP. WATERS: That's right. DR. POUSSAINT: And from what we just watched on the monitor, he is very concerned with what's happening to particular populations within the United States.

MR. GREGORY: Hm. MAYOR FENTY: Right. DR. POUSSAINT: African-American, Latinos, women and so on, because he's for social justice... REP. WATERS: That's right. DR. POUSSAINT: ...I think, as well. MR. GREGORY: But does he have an obligation, in your mind, to speak specifically to the black community the way you speak to them in this book? DR. POUSSAINT: I--well, that's up, that's up, up to him. I think, I think he does. I feel very comfortable about Obama as, I'd say, an African-American who's concerned about African-American problems. I think that's part of him. It's part of his life. REP.

WATERS: And he's going to get a lot of help. DR. POUSSAINT: Yeah. REP. WATERS: Alvin, he's going to get a lot of help. MR. GREGORY: Right. DR. POUSSAINT: Yeah. And I think that we... MR. GREGORY: Right. REP. WATERS: Yes. DR. POUSSAINT: I think we should ask what the black community can do, too... REP. WATERS: Yes. MR. GREGORY: Right.

DR. POUSSAINT: ...for Obama. That as he has inspired many of us, I think we also--everybody has to get behind Obama and in fact use his inspirational messages to build on, to help move us forward... MR. GREGORY: Right. Well... REP. WATERS: Yes. DR. POUSSAINT: ...both politically, socially and even with being better parents. MR. GREGORY: Bill... REP. WATERS: Well, let me tell you, experienced legislators, particularly in the Black Caucus, who now have arrived to chairmanships and subcommittee chairmanships... MR. GREGORY: Hm. REP. WATERS: ...we have the legislation. We're talking about the same kinds of issues that he's talking about. We have the knowledge, we have the experience to carry forth his agenda that he describes, in terms of morality and empathy. It's all about the least of these in many cases, and fortunately we'll be able to give a lot of assistance to him. We know how to do it. MR. GREGORY: We just have a couple of minutes left. REP. WATERS: Yes. MR. GREGORY: Mayor Fenty... MAYOR FENTY: Hm. MR. GREGORY: ...the inauguration. What are you expecting, and is the city ready?

MAYOR FENTY: Large numbers, certainly records. We're doing everything... MR. GREGORY: Three to five million people? More than that? What do you think? MAYOR FENTY: We're preparing for the largest numbers. No one knows exactly how many people will come, but the mall can hold somewhere in that range. If anybody can fill it, Barack Obama can. And we, we're working very closely with the Secret Service, everyone else to be as prepared as humanly possible. MR. GREGORY: All right. Now, before you go here... MR. COSBY: I want to address that. MR. GREGORY: You do? MR. COSBY: Yes. MR. GREGORY: OK. MR. COSBY: As a Philadelphian, I think that this crowd size will come in second to any Penn relay we... MR. GREGORY: I, I want--just yesterday, here at the famous Ben's Chili Bowl--ever heard of it? MR. COSBY: Oh, boy. MAYOR FENTY: Yeah. MR. GREGORY: Who was there, but our mayor with the president-elect. Now, they go inside. Hold on, hold on. MR. COSBY: I'm out of here. MR. GREGORY: No, no, no, no. Bill Cosby... MR. COSBY: No, man.

MR. GREGORY: ...listen to what happens inside. The president-elect goes inside and asks this question: (Videotape, Saturday) PRES.-ELECT OBAMA: What's a half-smoke? (End videotape) MR. GREGORY: What is a half-smoke? He goes to Ben's Chili Bowl and asks, "What's a half-smoke?" Can you believe that? MR. COSBY: I'm taking my vote back. MR. GREGORY: Well, there's something else you should know. MR. COSBY: Well--uh-oh. MR. GREGORY: There's something else you should know. MR. COSBY: You starting stuff, man. MR. GREGORY: Yeah. Now, wait a second... MAYOR FENTY: This is why... MR. COSBY: You don't look like this kind of person. MR. GREGORY: In Ben's Chili Bowl it says "Who eats for free at Ben's? Bill Cosby and no one else." But during the 2008 race they've changed it: "Who eats for free at Ben's? Bill Cosby and the Obama family." You're not alone. MAYOR FENTY: David, you know, he said backstage that Obama hadn't earned it. MR. COSBY: Not only, not only that, Mr. Loose Lips, I am saying also that the only--there are two people, Michelle and his mother-in-law. I don't mind them. But he has not earned it. Got to come a long way, Jack, before you can have...

MAYOR FENTY: See, the president's not big enough. MR. COSBY: But, but the mayor brought him to try to boost his name and put it on the thing. REP. WATERS: Oh! MR. GREGORY: Yeah.

Unbelievable. MR. COSBY: And his name, he's a... MAYOR FENTY: Cosby's upset because I had the first half-smoke at the new baseball stadium, the first Ben's Chili Bowl. MR. COSBY: And you raised, you raised the half-smoke and said "I beat Bill Cosby." That's what you said. MR. GREGORY: So there-what, what did you talk about yesterday? How's he feeling? MAYOR FENTY: Oh, he, he's, he's doing great, and I asked him that question. As is his family. And he, he, he's very concerned about city issues. We talked about schools, affordable housing, voting rights here in Washington, D.C., of course. But his energy's high. And I saw him the entire campaign, and I think he's, he's excited to come into this position. Within one week of being in D.C. he's already getting out and about. That's a great sign for him and for the country. MR. GREGORY: And, Congresswoman Waters... REP. WATERS: Yes. MR. GREGORY: ...Roland Burris. REP. WATERS: Yes.

MR. GREGORY: Will he indeed be seated, and are you looking forward to having him as the next senator of Illinois? REP. WATERS: He will be seated. It's a matter of the rule of law. He not only has a Supreme Court decision about not having to have the secretary of state's signature, but I think he'll be able to meet the requirements of going to the rules committee and getting a decision there, because the law is on his side. MR. GREGORY: All right. And just about 45 seconds left, I want to come back to a serious point, Bill Cosby. MR. COSBY: Go. MR. GREGORY: What do you think you've achieved in the year and a half since you've written this book and been doing callouts around the country? MR. COSBY: I think that Alvin and I have produced a book that says if you have a problem and it has anything to do with anything that's in this book, we have people who, who testified how they got out of the problem. MR. GREGORY: There are solutions. DR. POUSSAINT: Don't succumb to being a victim or have a victim mentality, have a victim mentality. It's like if Obama thought of himself as a victim... MAYOR FENTY: Yeah. DR. POUSSAINT: ...he would never be president of the United States.

MR. GREGORY: All right. Thank you all for being here. Thank you very much. REP. WATERS: You're welcome. MAYOR FENTY: Thanks for having us. REP. WATERS: Thank you. MR. GREGORY: We are out of time, but we'll lighten the mood and laugh a bit with Bill Cosby in our MEET THE PRESS Take Two Web extra this afternoon. You can also read excerpts on--of "Come On, People." It's all on our Web site at [mtp.msnbc.com](http://mtp.msnbc.com). Got it all right there. And we'll be right back. (Announcements) MR. GREGORY: That's all for today, the first of our leadership test for the new president series. We'll be back next week. If it's Sunday, it's MEET THE PRESS.