I’m sure you have heard of the famous “second-lining” that goes with the joyous, African-inspired dance that is so popular in New Orleans. Well, there is a new dance that is not so popular, but very public and it goes on mostly behind the scenes.

When Civil Rights leaders complained earlier this year that not much had been done to open the flood gates of money to fuel the “Road Home” program, and Senators Joe Lieberman, Barack Obama and others went down to New Orleans to hold hearings, President George W. Bush said his administration had appropriated $5.3 billion dollars and had done their job. Then, he sat down and watched the dance.

Problem is that the money is not moving very fast to those who need it, since over $100 million has been positioned for rebuilding homes in New Orleans and only $200,000 of that money has been distributed to homeowners. Something smells. Moreover, when I recently said on a radio show that the “slow down” dance amounted to a strategy to further confuse and frustrate those homeowners who would come back, some caller said that was “conspiratorial.” Maybe as a political scientist, I’m too sensitive to manufactured conflict, but I don’t think I’m too far off base.

Witness the recent fact that local officials have pushed the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to spend more than $76 million to renovate two large housing complexes, the 276-unit Gaslight Square apartments that will be affordable apartments for moderate residents. But this has been opposed by a city councilwoman and a state senator who would rather use this land for green spaces and single-family homes, in other words, continuing to emphasize a middle class style of rehabilitation.

Meanwhile, Mayor Ray Nagin has not come down on either side of this dispute, largely because the land is owned by the Louisiana Housing Finance Agency. Perhaps he knows that the Louisiana Recovery Authority serves as the quarterback behind the “slow dance” and may influence the middle class strategy in the end.

This “slow dance” is killing the disbursement of money not only for New Orleans, but coastal rehabilitation as well. A Tulane law professor, Mark Davis, ran the Coalition to Restore the Gulf of Louisiana for years and believes that shoring up the damage to the coast—thereby helping to prevent further erosion and damage from storms—is being held back by a cumbersome approval process and congressional bickering. A journalist from the Times-Picayune believes that “Leadership from the White House could cut through the squabbling in the Congress, but as of right now, Senator Landrieu says that she sees ‘no sign of presidential intervention.’”

Meanwhile, Rep. Maxine Waters has included money in a bill to fund low-income housing in New Orleans that would go directly from the HUD and bypass the Louisiana Recovery Authority, thus avoiding the “slow dance” route. But her initiative may be held up in the huge fight between the House and Senate over funding for Iraq at this writing.

At the local level, State Senator Cleo Fields is moving ahead with legislation in Baton Rouge to try to speed up the money for the Road Home Program, but there is no assurance from the Republican dominated State Legislature that his bill will pass muster. Volunteers are taking place of the kind of professional assistance that should come from government funded efforts, and in that respect, I take my hat off to 500 Howard University students who gave up laying in the sun during Spring Break to rebuild homes in New Orleans.

All of this means added pressure should come to the fore and so, the National Rainbow PUSH Coalition recently held a “March in New Orleans 9th Ward” on April 28 under the slogan, “Reclaiming Our Land.” The point is to get the State Legislature to “release the money” and let it flow to many of the 250,000 still in exile, who want to come back home and rebuild. Rev. Jackson said that, “It is time to March again,” and so it is. A march/demonstration is a different kind of dance and it has historically had the result of breaking impasses and causing officials doing the “slow dance” to speed up their cadence.

Let us hope that it does the same thing in this instance. But that will only happen if people will come by the tens of thousands and if they continue to believe that this form of struggle will “keep hope alive.”

(Ron Walters is the Distinguished Leadership Scholar, Director of the African American Leadership Institute and Professor of Government and Politics at the University of Maryland College Park.)
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