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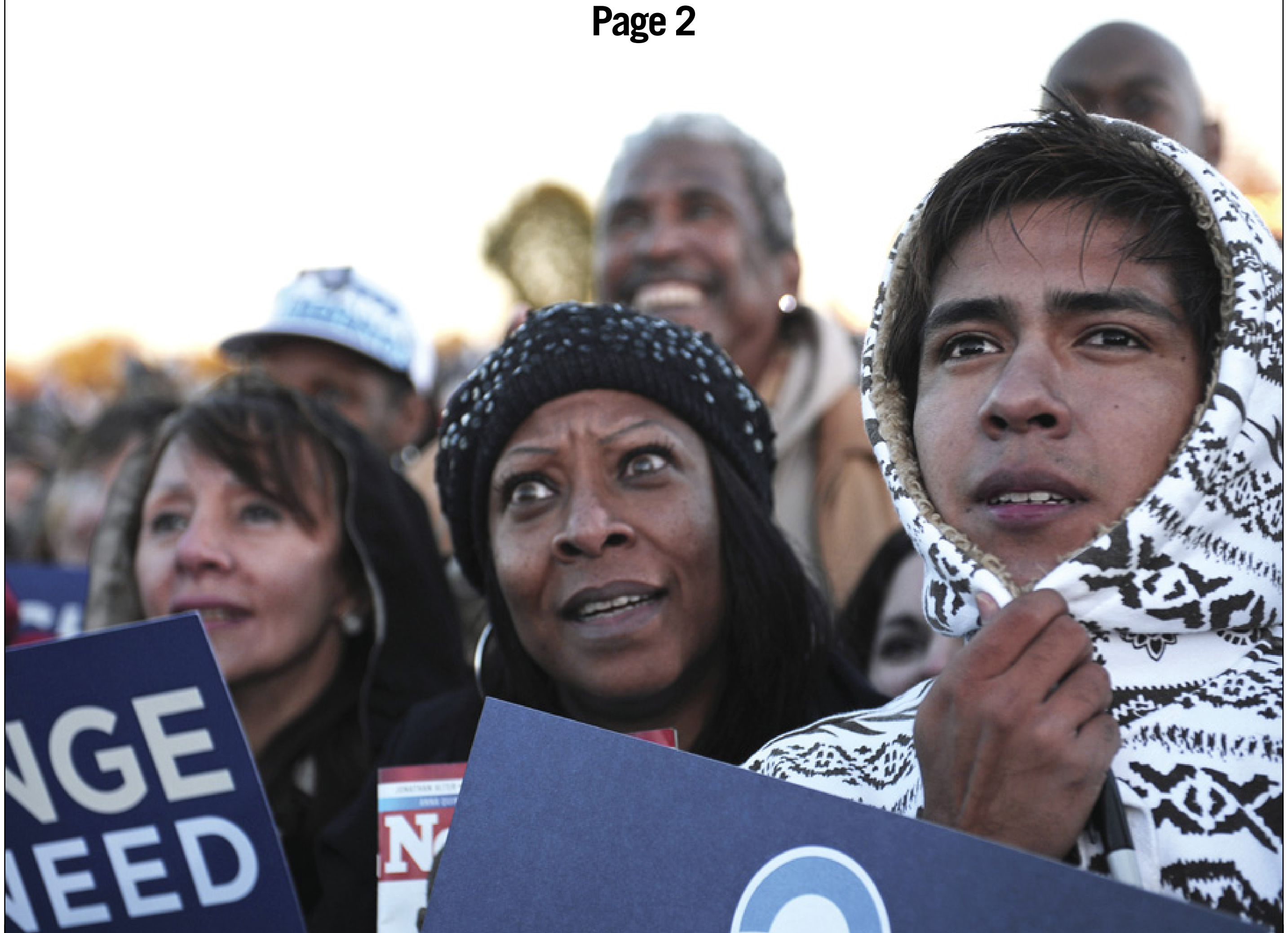

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Bush hosts do-nothing economic summit

Nicole Colson reports on the meeting of G20 leaders

WORLD LEADERS emerged from the Group of 20 economic summit patting themselves on the back—or in the case of French President Nicolas Sarkozy and George W. Bush, giving each other a celebratory "fist bump"—for coming together to discuss the global economic crisis.

Not that they came up with any real solutions, of course.

Speaking after the meeting, Bush called the agreement negotiated among political leaders from the world's largest economies "an important first step." But a closer look at the proposals in question shows that they amount to "too little, too late."

The general principles included in the G20 declaration include vague calls for strengthening transparency and accountability in financial systems; enhancing sound regulation; promoting "integrity" in financial markets; increasing international cooperation between the countries' financial regulators; and reforming international financial institutions to include emerging economies.

As National Public Radio's David Kestenbaum commented: "A lot of the details are 'to-be-figured-out-later.'…Oh, the leaders said they thought economic stimulus (building new roads, mailing out checks, that sort of thing) were a good idea. But José Manuel Barroso, president of the European Commission, said each country would have to decide what was right."

In other words, although the G20 summit was portrayed as a coming together of world leaders to take coordinated action to bolster the world economy, the reality is that each country will do what it's already been doing—use the power of its own state to boost its national corporations and financial systems, at the expense of other countries, particularly poor and developing ones.

That fact was underscored by the announcement that the group isn't scheduled to meet again until April 30, 2009—more than 100 days after Barack Obama is sworn into office.

"Though the countries' stimulus packages were cast as ambitious steps, they mainly reflected measures that the countries were already undertaking to respond to the crisis," the *New York Times* reported.

"What remains to be seen is whether, working with a new White House, the leaders will cast aside their political and economic differences to embrace more radical changes, including far-reaching but fiercely debated proposals to overhaul regulation."

U.S. opposition to regulation

Behind the scenes, even coming up with an agreement on these relatively toothless "principles" was nearly impossible, according to reports. Unsurprisingly, the U.S. seems to have dug in its heels the most at every suggestion of greater oversight and regulation.

Even mainstream economists rejected the idea that the summit achieved anything substantial. "This is plain-vanilla stuff they could have agreed on without holding a meeting," Simon Johnson, an economist at the Massa-

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