

People

■ Image-Makers



▲ **Carl Forti** is co-founding a strategic communications firm called the Black Rock Group with colleague ▲ **Mike Dubke**. Both Forti and Dubke hail from Buffalo, N.Y., and the new outfit's name comes from the "Black Rock" neighborhood in that upstate city. Forti is a seasoned political operative, having spent seven years (and four election cycles) as a spokesman at the National Republican Congressional Committee. He subsequently became political director on **Mitt Romney's** 2008 presidential campaign. Most recently, Forti worked for the pro-GOP group Freedom's Watch.

Forti, 37, came to D.C. to attend George Washington University. When **Paul Wilson** of the GOP political advertising shop Wilson Grand Communications spoke at one of Forti's classes, Forti ended up landing a job at Wilson's firm.

"I spend all my time trying to avoid the spotlight," Forti says. But as communications director at the NRCC during the scandal surrounding then-Rep. **Mark Foley**, R-Fla., and congressional pages, Forti had to deal with a media firestorm just before the 2006 midterm elections. He is proud of helping Rep. **Tom Reynolds**, R-N.Y., who got caught up in the GOP blame game during the Foley dustup, win a tough re-election fight. "He dropped 30 points in a weekend—and then six weeks later came back and won," Forti recalls.

Dubke has season tickets to the Buffalo Bills, and Forti periodically joins him at Ralph Wilson Stadium for home games.

—Gregg Sangillo

■ In the Tanks

After working on Capitol Hill and doing the political consulting thing, **Joshua Freed** decided there was another way. He has just taken a new position at Third Way, a think tank and advocacy organization with strong ties to centrist Democrats in Congress. Freed will work as senior policy adviser for Third Way's clean-energy project. "There's a very significant opportunity now to implement clean-energy policies, as **President-elect Obama** and the majority in Congress have discussed," Freed says.

There never seemed to be much doubt that Freed would get involved in politics and policy in Washington: He grew up in nearby Silver Spring, Md., and his father, **Bruce Freed**, was once a staffer to Sen. **William Proxmire**, D-Wis., on the Senate Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee. "Politics has always been a passion of mine, and it was viewed as a continuation of the family business," Joshua Freed says.

After graduating from Brandeis University in Massachusetts, Freed took a year off to enjoy Boston. He eventually came back to the D.C. area to earn a master's degree in American history from the University of Maryland (College Park). While in graduate school, he started working for a political consulting firm called SCN Public Relations. He would eventually become deputy chief of staff and communications director to Rep. **Diana DeGette**, D-Colo., and administrative assistant to Rep. **Robert Andrews**, D-N.J. Freed fondly remembers "being on the Hill in '06 and early '07, when we transitioned to the majority. Just being part of that team and the opportunities [we had] to impact policy in a much more meaningful way." DeGette's position on the House Energy and Commerce Committee got Freed turned on to the energy topics he'll be dealing with at Third Way. "This is one of the most important issues we're going to face in our lifetime."

Freed, 36, most recently worked for GMMB, where he was a member of the