No Place to Go: African American Voters and the 1992 Presidential Campaign

Thomas Caiazzo, Ph.D
Collin County Community College

During the 1992 presidential election, both the Republican and Democratic Parties were reluctant to energetically pursue the black vote. Because on the one hand, even in the light of some African Americans contemplating abandoning the party, the Democrats wanted desperately to attract the vote of the so-called "Reagan Democrats." On the other side, the Republican Party did not want to lose a grip on their own constituency. Therefore, neither party assertively sought the black vote, and consequently ignored the black voter in the 1992 Presidential election. Hence the purpose of this research is two-fold. First, after a thorough history of the relationship between blacks and political parties are examined, the paper will examine the apparent neglect of the African American voter during the 1992 presidential election. And second, in relation to the voter, the electoral strategies put forth by the Democratic and Republican parties, including the Ross Perot campaign, will be discussed.

Introduction

During the 1992 presidential race, Democratic nominee Bill Clinton, Republican president George Bush, and Independent candidate Ross Perot, all stayed away from matters pertaining to discrimination and racism. The Democratic party, who took a severe thrashing in the 1988 presidential election for being too 'liberal,' adopted conservative-sounding positions on many key issues (such as crime), and desperately tried to court the so-called 'Reagan Democrats.' On the other hand, the Republican party, being internally challenged by conservative columnist Pat Buchanan, assiduously tried to maintain a grip on its own

Clark Atlanta University, Department of Political Science
Atlanta, Georgia 30314
constituency, in light of President Bush's declining leadership and support. Further, billionaire entrepreneur Ross Perot, who put a scare into both political parties when he announced on February 1992 that he would run for president if his name was placed on the ballot in all fifty states, was benefiting from the American electorate's disgust with the two-party apparatus. In fact, the response of his candidacy was so overwhelming, that by mid-September, Perot's name was placed on the ballot in all fifty states and the District of Columbia. Yet, despite the plethora of party collusion, the major political parties and candidates were not overtly focusing on the needs of the African American community and voter. As a matter of fact, the 1992 presidential election was the first since Roosevelt's 1944 victory, where the civil rights of African Americans were not dealt with in some viable tone.

Historic Overview

The US Constitution makes no mention of political parties, and none existed when the Constitution was written in 1787. Instead, it was typical to refer to groups pursuing some common political interests as factions. Although factions were seen as inevitable to politics, they were considered very dangerous and unpredictable. To deter factional influences from controlling the government, James Madison proposed in Federalist No. 10, that by creating a federal system of government, federalism itself would restrict the power of factions. Other founders, such as George Washington, warned against political parties and John Adams even declared that there was nothing he dreaded as much as the division of the country into "two great parties."

The Anti-Federalist and the Federalist were two major groups that arose out of the controversy over the Constitution. Granted that both of these factions were in agreement on unifying the new nation, there were still many intra-group differences within these groups. One major issues that presented a dichotomy among the elite in Philadelphia was the issue of slavery. James Madison, representing the views of the Northern states, stipulated that slavery was the "most oppressive dominion ever exercised by man over man' and wanted the issue to be decided by the national government." On the other hand, representing the views of the Southern delegates, Abraham Baldwin of Georgia argued that slavery was a local, rather than a national issue, and it was
the right of each state to decide the issue of slavery.\textsuperscript{3}

The main discussion in reference to slavery focused on abolishing the slave trade and counting the slave population in determining representation in the House of Representatives. Now, regardless of the debates pertaining to this issue from both sides (the concern was more economic than moral), the \textit{US Constitution} solved the dispute. Concerning the slave trade, Article 1 Section 9 explicitly states: "The migration or importation of such persons as any of the States now existing shall think proper to admit, shall not be prohibited by the Congress prior to the Year one thousand eight hundred and eight, but a tax or duty may be imposed on such importation, not exceeding ten dollars for each person." And with respect to the issue of representation in determining the size of the states's delegation to the House of Representatives, Article 1 Section 2 states: "Representatives and direct taxes shall be apportioned among the several States which may be included within this Union, according to their respective Numbers, which shall be determined by adding the whole Number of free persons, including those bound in Service for a Term of Years, and excluding Indians not taxed, three fifths of all other persons." Additionally, as Article 4 Section 2 of the \textit{US Constitution} proves, the framers made sure that the "such persons" would be kept in their place by including a fugitive slave clause in the document.

The Anti-Federalist faction eventually became the Democratic-Republicans, and the Federalist later became the Whigs. During this political transition, the slave population was continually subjected to a secondary status, mainly they were still considered 'property.' Both of these parties stood firm on this stance. In 1852, an attempt was made by the Free Soil party to challenge the two party system and the doctrine of slavery. Adopting a Free Soil party entered unchartered territory.\textsuperscript{4} However, after an inadequate and poor performance in the 1852 elections, the free Soil party dissolved.

Though there were additional attempts by other groups such as the Liberty party, Abolitionists, and religious organizations to push the slavery battle into the forefront of party politics, the two major parties remained firm on their views pertaining to slavery. Only when the Republican party, formed in Ripon, Wisconsin in 1854, although no blacks were represented at the meeting, did the issue of Black Americans (slave or free) become a major item of discussion. It must be
mentioned, however, that the Republican party itself was divided on the slavery issue. For example, the Know-Nothing's wing of the party was pro-slavery, while the Abolitionists, Independent Democrats, and the Whigs' faction wanted a destruction of the institution of slavery. Pro-slavery Republicans generally supported colonization, while anti-slavery Republicans argued for granting suffrage to the Black man. The pro-slavery cluster had hoped that all Blacks might be sent out of the country (some went to Liberia) and finally solve the issue of Blacks permanently, while the anti-slavery group saw granting suffrage to Blacks as an excellent strategy to increase the party's chances of electoral success.

Moreover, after the Civil War (due to Reconstruction) and before the 1930's, Black Americans were overwhelmingly Republican. Between 1868 and 1896, Louisiana elected thirty-two black state senators and ninety-five state representatives. They supported the party of Abraham Lincoln, and the platforms of the Republicans put forth to better the condition of Blacks. Now, despite the infamous Hayes-Tilden Compromise (where in 1876 neither Republican Rutherford B. Hayes and Democrat Samuel Tilden relieved enough electoral votes to win the election; a 'deal' was made which allowed Hayes to become President, by ceding the electoral votes of a number of Southern states in return for recalling the armies of occupation and yielding to Democrats the control of the last three Southern states including Florida, South Carolina, and Louisiana, which was still run by the Republican Party). Blacks still remained loyal to the Republican party up until the New Deal era, when they started shifting to the Democrats. Their support for Republican candidates remained substantial, as Eisenhower received 39 percent of the black vote in 1956 and Nixon gained 25 percent four years later. In the 1964 presidential election between Barry Goldwater and President Lyndon Johnson, the images of the party became sharply differentiated on the civil rights issues, with the democrats clearly perceived as the more liberal of the parties. In that election, Blacks voted overwhelmingly for the Democratic candidate and have continued to do so in succeeding elections.

Even though a growing majority of Blacks started voting for the Democrats during the New Deal era, the Republican party still remained an appealing political preference for many African Americans. In the 1952, 1956, and 1960 presidential elections, African Americans remained slightly independent of the Democratic party, dividing their
votes between the two parties. For example, Eisenhower received about 40 percent of the Black vote in 1956, Richard Nixon netted almost one-third of the black vote in 1960, and it was not until the 1964 presidential election that the overwhelming majority of blacks began to identify themselves as Democrats.

Independent Black Parties

Though African Americans were relatively active in both the Democratic and Republican parties, some efforts were launched to form their own exclusively black oriented political party. These independent parties were established to meet the demands and needs of the black community and voter. In the 1840’s and 1850’s, for example, delegates at the Negro Conventions discussed the challenge for the ‘free blacks’ to develop their own independent organizations to fight slavery. Additionally, after Woodrow Wilson strengthened racial segregation laws despite black electoral support, W.E.B. DuBois advocated the creation of an All Negro Party that would act as a broker for black interests.

The Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party

The Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP) was created in 1964 as part of the “Freedom Summer” program established by the Council of Federated Organizations (COFO). The intent of the delegation was not only to display the racists atrocities occurring in the state of Mississippi to the rest of the nation, but to also eliminate the barriers to black suffrage and office-holding in the state. Additionally, the MFDP desired to introduce the disenfranchisement and the harassment of African Americans, as well as their exclusion from both the state democratic party and from the total political process in Mississippi. Yet, due to internal divisions and efforts to discredit and delegitimize the MFDP, the association disbanded in 1968 and was replaced by the Loyalist Democratic coalition.

The National Black Political Party

During the early nineteen seventies, blacks began to stretch many of the civil rights issues raised during the decade before into a more effective and forceful effort for political concentration. One idea from its members was that of forming an independent black political party.
In 1972, the National Black Political Assembly (NBPA) held a convention in Gary, Indiana. At this assembly, almost 3,000 official delegates and between 5,000 and 6,000 observers registered. It is noted that, “the basic document of the meeting, the Black Agenda, is one of the most visionary and progressive statements ever issued by African Americans about their position in this country.” In addition, some of their primary objectives were to develop state assemblies, organize a National Assembly, and draft a needed charter which would govern the national and state organizations. At the second meeting of the National Black Political Assembly in Little Rock, Arkansas, almost one year later, workshops were conducted on numerous items. For example, seminars were undertaken on campaign management, improving the efficiency of local NBPA chapters in relation to the National Assembly, and strategies for increasing the number of black elected officials at the federal, state, and local levels.

However, like the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, the National Black Political Assembly met its demise primarily because of internal disputes between two major factions - the militant black nationalists and the more mainstream black elected officials. Between 1974 and 1976, most of the latter withdrew their membership because of the “revolutionary character of the assembly.” A result of the disassociation, is that none of the many objectives were met, and the NBPA became a predominately black nationalist organization.

The National Black Independent Political Party (NBIPP) was an outgrowth of the National Black Political Assembly. In 1979, the NBPA made the decision to become a black political party, rather than merely an assembly. The NBIPP promised to serve as an organization committed to civil rights and grassroots political organization. Primarily because of dissatisfaction with the Carter administration, the leaders of the NBIPP asked black voters to either not vote for the office of the President at all, or support a third party of independent candidate. By 1981, the NBIPP had opened 46 chapters in 27 states in addition to its headquarters in Washington, D.C. However, like the previous efforts of black political party formation, the party disbanded during the early eighties, mainly because of internal divisions.

The New Alliance

Though not exclusively a black political party, the New Alliance...
No Place To Go

party has attempted to offer individuals, especially African Americans, an alternative party option.

In 1988 and 1992, Dr. Lenora Fulani became the first African American presidential candidate to have no affiliation with the Democratic party. In those presidential elections, she ran as a third party candidate waving the New Alliance banner. The New Alliance party is a multiracial organization that encourages the economic and political empowerment of minorities and women.20

Dr. Fulani, one of the party’s founders, initially wanted to point out the necessity of voting for independent contenders, as a way to end the Democratic party’s exploitation of the black vote.21 Additionally, during the 1988 presidential election, Fulani, a developmental psychologist and political activist, was the first woman candidate to be placed on the ballot in all fifty states and the District of Columbia. In 1992, her minor party ticket appeared on the ballot in nearly all fifty states, and she became the first black woman to qualify for over $1 million in federal primary matching funds in 1988 and 1992.

The New Alliance party has long been controversial, thanks largely to its custom of recruiting members through group psychotherapy, and its alliance with figures as diverse as neo-fascist Lyndon LaRouche and the reverend Al Sharpton.22 However, after more than twenty years of existence, Fulani’s candidacy and third party campaigns were finally taken seriously in the 1992 election. For example, in November 1988, Fulani accumulated two percent of the national vote (217,219) and in 1992, she received around 75,000 votes. Fulani’s status as an African American woman, along with the utter absence of a consistent progressive agenda from the Democratic party, has made the New Alliance party an attractive alternative. Though she actively favored the independent candidacy of Ross Perot (whom she pledges to endorse in the 1996 elections), conventional wisdom suggests that she herself will run for president in 1996. Further, the progressive organization is wealthy, well organized, and has a clear electoral strategy. There is no reason to think that the New Alliance party will fade away.

The 1992 Presidential Election

On November 3, 1992 Democrat William Jefferson Clinton was
No Place To Go

elected the 42nd president of the US. Though he only obtained a plurality of the voting electorate, Clinton garnered 43 percent of the popular vote. His closest challengers Republican incumbent George Bush and Independent billionaire Ross Perot each accumulated 38 percent and 19 percent respectively. Further, as the Table displays, Clinton received well more than the needed 270 electoral college votes.

**Table 1.0**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Popular Vote</th>
<th>E.C. Vote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>William Clinton</td>
<td>Democratic</td>
<td>44,908,232</td>
<td>370</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Bush</td>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>39,102,282</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H. Ross Perot</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>19,725,433</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The 1992 election ended twelve years of conservative policy making. Assisting in the termination of Republican dominance in the White House, were the support and the vote of African American voters. Black voters, who represented 8 percent of the total vote, were the margin of victory in several key states, giving Clinton 82 percent of the African American vote, compared to 11 percent for Bush, and 7 percent for Perot. Also, the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies indicated that, “the black voter alone provided the Clinton margin of victory in the states of Georgia and New Jersey.”

Additionally, as the Table below displays, blacks overwhelmingly voted for Bill Clinton in the 1992 presidential election. In relation to the African American voter, Democratic candidate Bill Clinton did substantially better in all categories than both Republican President George Bush and Independent candidate Ross Perot.
## Table 2.0
### 1992 Presidential Vote By Race

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Bush</th>
<th></th>
<th>Clinton</th>
<th></th>
<th>Perot</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 - $15,000</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$15-29,999</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$30-49,999</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50-75,000</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+$75,000</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- High School</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Sch. Grad</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some College</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Grad</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post Grad</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-Time</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-Time</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homemaker</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideology</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

No Place To Go

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party ID</th>
<th>Democrat</th>
<th>Republican</th>
<th>Independent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ID</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


On the sixth of November, President-elect Bill Clinton apparently responded to the black community's support by naming a few African Americans to his executive cabinet. To begin with, he named Vernon E. Jordan Jr. the chair of his transition team, making him the first African American to head a transition team of any US President.25 The new President also named an African American woman, Alexis Herman deputy director of his transition team. Later, Clinton also nominated, and later confirmed by the Senate, an unprecedented number of African Americans to serve in his cabinet. He named Ron Brown (Secretary of Commerce), Jesse Brown (Secretary of Veteran affairs), Hazel O'Leary (Secretary of Energy), and Mike Espy (Secretary of Agriculture- who recently resigned), who were the first African Americans to ever hold such positions. Further, Clinton nominated Clifton R. Wharton, Jr., Undersecretary of State, which is the highest position ever held by an African American in the State Department.

Blacks and the Democratic Party

In the 1992 presidential campaign, Clinton managed to do considerably well with the African American voter (82%). Nevertheless, prior to the election, the relationship between the Democratic party and the African American community was very unclear. For example, the presidential election of 1992 represented the dramatically uncharacteristic political environment where the votes of African Americans were desired and needed by the Democrats, but their support could not be too openly wooed. The votes of African Americans were...
feared by the Republican party, but they could not be openly challenged or insulted. On the other hand, the Democrats had been told that they were losing white votes because the party was being perceived as too much under the dominance of "special interests and especially leaders such as the Reverend Jesse Jackson."\textsuperscript{26} The Democratic party saw this prior approach as a sure way to continue losing moderate conservative Democrats or the so-called 'Reagan Democrats' to the Republican party.

In addition, during the eighties, the Democratic party started to abandon many of the civil rights and social welfare programs that it established during the 1960s. This turnabout produced an abundance of negative feelings between the party and African Americans. In an effort to calm the animosities between the two groups, Ronald Brown, an African American, was chosen as the party's national chairman. This move has been interpreted by some as a move by the party to appease black Democrats and show a reaffirmation of the party's long term commitment to blacks.\textsuperscript{27} Furthermore, to extinguish any confusion Brown asserted that the Democratic party was the best option for African Americans, for every important gain that has had a helpful impact in the black community "has been made through, with, and because of Democratic leadership."\textsuperscript{28}

The Democratic party, since 1968, has controlled the White House only once. Some members of the party started putting the fault on blacks. This blame was implemented into an electoral strategy for the 1992 presidential election: if blacks would start to participate less or become less visible supporters of the Democratic party, then the party would not lose its white supporters.\textsuperscript{29} Since the party depends on black votes in close races, the real electoral strategy was not that blacks would participate less, but that they would become less visible. It must be restated, therefore, that the Democratic party's electoral goal was to win over the 'Reagan Democrats' which they viewed as a mandatory objective if they were going to win the 1992 presidential election.

**Bill Clinton**

As one of the founders of the Democratic Leadership Conference, which is a moderate caucus within the Democratic party that Clinton chaired in the 1980's. Clinton built a solid reputation as a centrist
No Place To Go

governor of a conservative state. Viewed as a ‘New Democrat,’ Clinton was the party’s choice to secure a White House that they haven’t occupied since 1980. As a ‘New type of Democrat’, Bill Clinton favored the death penalty, supported abortion with some restrictions, and sought alternatives to welfare. For a running mate, he picked another southerner, Tennessee Senator Al Gore Jr., who was considered by many people as a moderate to conservative on at least some key issues.

It seemed inevitable, therefore, if the Democrats wanted to accomplish their strategy of attracting the Reagan Democrats, they would have to confront Jesse Jackson. As a leading member of the African American voting bloc of the party (he ran for President as Democrat in 1984 and 1988), the Democratic party and Bill Clinton had to ‘silence’ Jackson in an effort to accomplish their party’s electoral goals. The confrontation began during the campaign when Governor Clinton lost his temper during an early primary meeting. When it was reported that Jackson had endorsed his rival Tom Harkin, Clinton went ballistic into an open microphone chastising Jackson. The report was inaccurate and not true. Regardless, this was the opportunity for Clinton to go out of his way to distance himself from the extreme left of the Democratic party, which was represented by Jackson.

Then in early June 1992, Clinton seized the opportunity to accomplish the Democratic party’s strategic objective. In an address at a convention of the Rainbow Coalition, which Jackson heads, Clinton criticized rap singer Sister Souljah for preaching ‘racial hatred.’ Since Jackson had put Sister Souljah on the convention program the night before, Jackson took offense at Clinton’s criticism. Clinton refused to apologize stating, “I feel very comfortable with what I said.” Clinton’s refusal to endorse the more extreme forms of black nationalism was one way of staking out his position as a new kind of Democrat. “As a matter of fact, the Democratic party’s strategy was to emphasize Clinton’s independence from the special interest, militant blacks among them, that had seemed to exercise too much power in the party as to frighten away many middle-class white voters - a.k.a. Reagan Democrats.”

In addition, surprisingly, many black Democrats supported Clinton’s remarks. The incident, which was unquestionably premeditated, by the Clinton campaign for the reason of distancing Clinton from Jackson, was the source of newspaper columns and radio...
talk shows for days, mostly approving Clinton's stand. Numerous black officials, including former Mississippi Congressman and current Secretary of Agriculture Mike Espy, rose to Clinton's defense. Jesse Jackson, who was a leading Democrat who had run for President in 1984 and 1988, was still nevertheless a major force at the Democratic National convention. Yet, during this election year, the Democratic party had a different plan. The party was to prepare at all cost to make sure nobody, not even Jackson was informed that he could not, as in earlier conventions, withhold his endorsement to bargain over a campaign role. Cordially and without intimidation, party Chairman Ron Brown (who had been Jackson's 1988 convention chief) and Clinton aide Harold Ickes, told Jackson that he would have to obey the same rules as all other would-be convention speakers: "endorses Clinton formally and in advance." In other words, if Jackson did not endorse Clinton, he would not be able to speak at the convention. After much negotiation, Jackson endorsed Clinton.

It must be stated, however, that even though Jackson supported Clinton, the black community was still treated secondarily by the Democratic party and Clinton. The strategy, one must recall, was to attract Reagan Democrats. By putting black issues in the rear, and keeping the media confused, the Democratic party was achieving their objectives. As New York African American Congressman Charles Rangel observed of Clinton's treatment of blacks, "It appears that at this point we (blacks) are on the back burner. We are on an 'as needed' basis." Columnist Carl Rowan added, "Bill Clinton cannot win the presidency unless he wins alot of electoral votes in the South. I sense that Clinton knows this, which is why he is following a strategy of not embracing black Americans to the point that he provokes the 'bubbas' of the old slave states' vote against him." But what about the black voter? Their issues and demands were not a top priority for the party or Clinton because the African American voter was taken for granted. The party calculated that no matter what, blacks would overwhelmingly support the Democratic candidate (which they did), and therefore they needed to focus their energies on the Reagan Democrats. Further, the African American voter had nowhere else to go. The Republican party and George Bush, along with Independent Ross Perot, were African Americans' only alternatives. Yet, neither of these two groups, as I will show, catered or understood the
interests and needs of the black community and voter. It is true they could have voted for a third party candidate, such as Libertarian Andre Marrou or African American Lenora Fulani of the New Alliance Party, but most blacks (all voters) are hesitant to vote for third party candidates in general.

In retrospect, the Democratic party's electoral strategy paid off. By assuming that blacks would vote for Clinton, the organization aggressively went after the all important swing voters. In the process, they not only silenced Jesse Jackson, but totally ignored the needs of the African American voter. Simply, the African American voter had no place to go in the 1992 presidential election.

**Blacks and the Republican Party**

After having controlled the White House for the past twelve years, eight years of Ronald Reagan and four years of George Bush, the Republican party was content to maintain this continuity in Washington. To accomplish this goal, it would be necessary to not only maintain a grip of their own constituency, but also make an attempt to the African American community. Now immediately following the election of Bush in 1988, the Republican party's national chairmen Lee Atwater, publicly announced that he would like to see the black support for the Republican party in future presidential elections increase. Since that time, the Republican party has aggressively recruited black candidates, and in 1990 a black Republican from Connecticut, Gary Franks, was elected to Congress, and increased the number of blacks in Washington to twenty-five. Franks was the first black Republican elected to Congress since 1932.

The Republican party desperately wanted to obtain a portion of the African American vote. In the final months of the 1992 election, evidence and polls suggested that Clinton's black support was not that deep. A poll taken in the summer of 1992 showed that only 43 percent of blacks polled preferred Clinton when he was pitted against Bush and Perot. The Republican party was aware of this poll, and when they combined this fact with the declining black turnout in the 1992 democratic primaries, they worked quickly to sway black voters into the Republican camp.

One illustration of this effort was in early 1992, when Clayton K.
Yeutter, then chairman of the Republican party, stressed to the black community that the Republican party offers blacks more opportunities than the Democratic party. Yeutter indicated that the Democratic party’s approach to the African American and “their dependency on the government” was not a very self-satisfying environment to African Americans. Yeutter proclaimed that the Republican approach via the Bush administration is the best hope for African Americans. Reaching out to not only the African American community, but all communities, Yeutter emphasized that the “Bush administration will do an effective job of responding to the domestic concerns of all people.” To compliment this effort, Bush did have one positive point to woo black voters: he nominated Clarence Thomas to the Supreme Court.

Moreover, any chance that the Republican party thought it had to attract the African American voter, abruptly ended at the 1992 Republican National Convention. Besides the President’s decreasing popularity, the party was still very much anti-black. There was especially a far-right faction of the party, led by former Nixon aide Patrick Buchanan, that was vehemently against the progress that African Americans had been making over the years. This fact is best illustrated by Buchanan’s convention speech, which deeply offended many black Republicans. For example, Milton Bins, the Chairman of the Council of 100 and Faye Anderson, the executive director of the National Organization of Black Republicans, indicated that Buchanan’s speech hurt the party’s appeal to blacks and in essence their support for President Bush. They contend that black Republicans and independents who were receptive to Bush’s message because they “were offended by the racism and bigotry personified by Patrick Buchanan.” The Republican party’s strategy of allowing the ultra conservative Buchanan to speak at the convention was an enormous tactical mistake, and shattered the party’s hope for securing a substantial portion of the black vote.

George Bush

In March of 1990, George Bush’s approval rating was at 56 percent among African Americans, which was the highest for any Republican presidential candidate since Dwight Eisenhower. This rating spurred Republican pollster Robert Teeter to suggest that Republicans might double their share of the African American vote to
about 20 percent. With optimism in the air, Republicans estimated that to
become a majority party they only needed to attract a fifth of all black
voters, the most loyal component of the Democratic coalition, into what
the republicans called the ‘Big Tent’ and the ‘GOP Rainbow’.45

One important event that might have spurred African Americans
to increase their support for President Bush culminated in November
1991. President Bush signed into law the first piece of civil rights
legislation to pass Congress since the heyday of the civil rights era.46 It
must be noted, however, that the President had vetoed an earlier
version of this bill, and even attacked and labeled the piece of legislation
as a ‘quota bill.’

Nevertheless, with the nomination of an African American to the
Supreme Court, along with an extremely high approval rating among
blacks, combined with the signing of the civil rights legislation, George
Bush and the Republican party assumed that they would capture a fair
percentage of the vote in the African American community. But, as
earlier indicated, the Republican party made a tactical error in allowing
Buchanan to speak at the convention. And despite Bush’s approval
rating among African Americans, it was apparent that African Americans
were not going to vote for Bush, in fact he did not do any better with the
black voter in 1992 than he did in the 1988 election. As a matter
of fact, the 10 percent that he received in 1992 was exactly the same
amount he obtained four years earlier. It is obvious that no new African
Americans walked into the Republican ‘tent.’

With reference to the concerns of African Americans, some
blacks did cast their ballot for Bush. As Table 2 displayed, high status
blacks should have been substantially more likely than lower status
blacks to have identified as conservative and republican and to support
Republican candidates. This is mainly because Bush and the GOP were
widely viewed as favoring economic and social policies more consistent
with the class interests of more affluent and conservative voters.47
Overall as the Table below indicates, Bush fared poorly with the black
voter pertaining to critical issues in the black community.
Table 3.0
Candidate Qualities that “Mattered Most”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate Quality</th>
<th>Blacks</th>
<th>Whites</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bush</td>
<td>Clinton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bring Change</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best Plan</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cares About Me</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My Party Candidate</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong Convictions</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honest/trustworthy</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right Experience</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VP Choice</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handling Crises</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


No matter what their financial situation, two thirds of the black vote went to Clinton.

**Ross Perot**

H. Ross Perot’s popular vote performance in the 1992 presidential election was the finest by any third party candidate since Theodore Roosevelt propelled an ineffective “Bull Moose” renewal endeavor in 1912. Perot, who had run a highly prosperous computer services corporation, was a political newcomer. He obtained his notoriety not in an institutionalized setting, but by freeing his employees held captive in Iran. The only non-business experience Perot possessed was that he headed a commission that studied and proposed changes in the Texas public school system, along with his leadership in the decades long effort to locate American servicemen in Southeast Asia after the Vietnam War.48

Many of Perot’s backers were among the all important ‘swing voters’ (the same individuals that the democratic party and Clinton desperately courted) who usually determine the winner in presidential contests. Curtis Gans, head of the Committee to Study the Electorate, presented the 1992 Presidential statistics that showed voter turnout at 55.23 percent of the voting age population, which was the highest voting rate since 1968 when 61 percent of the voting age population...
went to the polls. The voter increase can be attributed to the Perot candidacy. Also, as the Table below shows, Perot’s performance with the necessary ‘Reagan Democrats’ was decent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Clinton</th>
<th>Bush</th>
<th>Perot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moderate Democrats</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative Democrats</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate Independents</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative Independents</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Moreover, with reference to African Americans, it is obvious that Perot’s independent candidacy had no idea how to campaign and court the black voter. This confusion occurred, because from the start, his campaign was never properly defined. He nevertheless tried, of course, to appeal to the African American community and voter. But it was again obvious that Perot was insensitive regarding race relations. This was exemplified through his summer presentation at the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). On July 11, 1992, Perot addressed the country’s leading civil rights organization. In his remarks he characterized his audience as “you people” and “your people” suggesting that he had not mastered the protocols of national politics.

Additionally, Perot did little to spread his presidential effort to the black voter. By campaigning in a very unconventional style, Perot used television shows such as “Larry King Live” and “Oprah Winfrey” to get his message out. Though his appeal initially sky rocketed, his message was very unclear, especially in the areas that concerned the African American community. For example, in reference to affirmative action and quotas, Perot told “Meet the Press” that “It’s got its pluses and its minuses...The plus is it cleans up inequity. That’s good. The minus is all the people who were more qualified and got passed over, who probably didn’t have any negative feelings based on race, started developing them.” Further, with respect to race relations in general, Perot not only quoted from
the Three Musketeers "All for one, one for all," but also used quotes from the late Bear Bryant, "A divided team will always lose to a tightly knit, unified one."52

Perot's movement has been very beneficiary to the American political process. The third party candidate served as an outlet to millions of disillusioned voters, and has motivated thousands of women and men to get interested in politics. Yet it is quite obvious that Perot was a very confused candidate. Perot's presidential plan was to transform the economy by cutting the military budget, domestic programs, 15 percent across the board cuts in government spending, and a fifty cent per gallon increase in the gasoline tax.53 Even though he could never quantitatively justify the claim, he promised to erase the federal deficit in five years. But, as displayed through his rhetoric and solidified by his support at the voting booth, Perot was far removed from the needs and demands of the African American community.

Conclusion

The 1992 presidential race consummated with the election of democrat Bill Clinton, as the 42nd executive of the United States. Though Clinton received more than 80 percent of the black vote, his campaign strategy was to distance himself from African Americans and to shed the label as being a 'liberal.' The Democratic Party's goal was to make sure that Clinton was viewed by the American people as a 'New Democrat,' which simply meant that he was of the moderate type. Simply, the party's electoral objective was to attract the so-called Reagan Democrats or the so-called swing voters. However, during this process, the Democratic Party took the black vote for granted.

On the other side, the Republican Party was having its own electoral problems. Though it tried to attract a certain type of black into its organization, Pat Buchanan and his far right faction of the party hurt any chances that the party considered for securing a portion of the African American voter in the 1992 presidential election. As the Republican candidate, Bush never openly courted the black vote and did not understand nor comprehend the needs of the African American community. Likewise, independent candidate Perot never really had his campaign strategy geared toward the African American population.
Also; Perot seemed to be very insensitive to racial matters, as exhibited in his summer speech at the NAACP convention. It is clear that the African American voter was ignored in the 1992 presidential election. Both parties strategically refused to focus on issues pertaining to discrimination and civil rights. The Democratic and Republican Parties were more interested in conservative America, and capturing the swing vote. And, during this process, both parties neglected the African American community and voter.

Therefore, the political climate is ripe for not only African Americans, but other individuals who have been ostracized and ignored by the two party machine to form a new and competitive institutionalized political party. America's two party system has neglected the demands of millions of men and women long enough. The contemporary American political environment is ready for change. The burden is now placed on thousands upon thousands of dejected African, Mexican, Native, Elderly, Hispanic, homosexual, and disabled, etc., Americans who have had enough with the Democratic and Republican Parties. The responsibility to challenge the omnipotent American two party system is presented, and this time, there are no excuses: "Fool me once, shame on you, fool me twice, shame on me."

Tom Caiazzo Ph.D, is professor of political science at Collin County Community College, Allen, Texas.

Notes


2 Steven D. Early, "Constitution Didn't Settle Slave Issue," in Teaching Georgia by the University of Georgia (Athens, GA: University of Georgia, 1989) p. 3.

3 Ibid.


6 Ibid. p. 6.


8 Ibid. p. 76.


10 Ibid.


12 Ibid. p. 52.


No Place To Go


17 Ibid. p.145.


21 Ibid.

22 Ibid.


24 Ibid.


31 Actually she had been quoted as saying, "If black people kill black people everyday, why not have a week and kill white people."


36 Ibid.

No Place To Go


42 Ibid.


44 Ibid. p. 255.

45 Ibid.


No Place To Go


52 Ibid. p. 112.


Christianity: Whose God Is It Anyway?

Christianity was consistently used to justify all systems of oppression. It was used in Africa by Leopold II and other despots as the excuse to steal land from Africans under the guise of bringing Christianity to the natives. It was used in perpetuate the institution of slavery by claiming that slavery was the curse of God on Ham, the dark-skinned son of Haman.


Clare Atlanta University, Department of Political Sciences
Atlanta, Georgia 30314