

Don't Be Duped Again: An Open Letter to Black Clergy

We are in the middle of one of the most volatile and unpredictable presidential elections in living memory. Any political principles at stake are getting swallowed up by daily scandals and larger-than-life personalities.

And as often happens, so much focus has been on the presidential race that many Americans have forgotten that their governors, senators, congressional and state representatives—as well as a litany of local elected officials—will have far more influence on their day-to-day lives than whoever occupies the White House.

“Conservative” is often used interchangeably with “Republican,” but the two words do not always mean the same thing, particularly this year. Although people define conservatism differently, in the American tradition, conservatism generally includes the ideas of restrained government power, affirmation of the traditional family, respect for religious conscience, peace from a place of strength in foreign policy, and respect for the autonomy and dignity of each individual human being.

I believe there are many reasons why conservative political principles are better for all Americans, but in this letter I will share just a few reasons why African Americans in particular should consider voting for Mr. Trump and candidates—at every level of government—who adhere to conservative principles.

1. Restrained Government

Blacks, more than almost any other people group, have good reason to be skeptical of excessive government power. From slavery to Jim Crow and the Tuskegee experiments, government

power has been used to enslave, discriminate against and abuse blacks. While many government programs are promoted as “helping” blacks, the help always comes with the authority to regulate and intrude.

2. School Choice

For years, surveys have repeatedly demonstrated that black Americans overwhelmingly support the conservative idea that the zip code in which people can afford to live should not determine the quality of the education their children receive. Yet opponents of school choice repeatedly insist that children whose parents cannot afford private school must attend the public school for which they are zoned, even if that school is unsafe and incompetent.

3. Economic Opportunity

The black unemployment rate remains nearly twice the white unemployment rate, despite a theoretical economic recovery. Conservative elected officials resist the government interference in the labor market that raises unemployment and prevents many from getting needed job experience.

Furthermore, leaders governed by conservative principles will work to remove the stifling regulations and taxes that discourage new businesses from forming and existing businesses from growing.

4. Family

The decline of marriage has many complex causes, but it has hit the black community the hardest. Yet much of the liberal agenda has been devoted to redefining the traditional family out of existence. Blacks who marry and stay married have drastically better outcomes than those who divorce or do not marry at all. Strong marriages make healthy families and build vibrant communities.

True conservatives also believe that parents should have the right to raise their children how they see fit, as long as they do not abuse or neglect them. In many communities, African American parents have the reputation for being stricter than their white counterparts.

As Nancy Hill wrote this summer in *US News and World Report*, "To [keep their children safe], African-American parents are often much stricter and require more obedience than do other parents—aptly called 'no-nonsense parenting.' From the outside, this parenting may seem harsh and unyielding. However, African-American parents are preparing their children for a harsh and unyielding society." Hill notes that research confirms these techniques are associated with better academic and life outcomes.

5. Foreign Policy

We are living in a dangerous world, where various entities like ISIS and the regimes in Iran and North Korean openly declare their hatred of our country and desire to destroy us.

Conservatives generally believe that peace must come from a place of military strength, while their opponents tend to think that by making concessions to our enemies we can persuade them to hate us less. Yet history demonstrates that this practice emboldens rogue states and dictators, making them even more dangerous.

6. Religious Liberty

Religious liberty has been under assault for some time now, and African-Americans have been deeply affected. From Atlanta Fire Chief Kelvin Cochran to Dr. Eric Walsh, well-respected black professionals have been persecuted or even fired because of their faith. Conservatives believe that all Americans should be allowed to do their jobs and run their businesses in accordance with their religious consciences.

7. Self-Respect

Conservatives believe in self-reliance and personal responsibility, as well as the importance of mediating non-governmental institutions like the family and local churches. This viewpoint is deeply compatible with the long, proud African-American tradition which emphasizes strong individuals, families and churches.

This election, I urge African-Americans—and all Americans—to critically evaluate where candidates stand on these principles, and vote accordingly. This means voting for Mr. Trump and true conservative, down ticket candidates.