

Is Black a Color or an Ideology?

One of my friends is a black pastor. He is also a conservative Republican. As a result of his political views, he has been told by many of his friends that he is not black enough. And that leads to an obvious question: Is black an ideology and not just a color? If so, since when, and why?

I imagine that Kanye West would have something to say about this today.

He has come under heavy criticism for his positive tweet about black conservative Candace Owens, followed by even more intense criticism for his open support of President Trump. As noted by the strongly-leftist *Teen Vogue*, "People have expressed everything from rage at what they feel is a form of betrayal in his coming out as a Trump supporter to concern about his mental health."

But where is written that blacks must be Democrats or liberals? Where is the betrayal? As Chance the Rapper tweeted, "Black people don't have to be democrats." (By no means, though, was he expressing support for Trump, as his following comments made clear.)

It's true that a large percentage of white evangelicals voted for Donald Trump. But that was ideologically driven based on their evangelical convictions, not their whiteness. For them, defeating the ultra-liberal, pro-abortion Democrat, Hillary Clinton was of paramount concern. (According to exit polls, 57 percent of whites voted for Trump, 37 for Clinton and 6 percent for other candidates, or they didn't respond to the poll. So, the white vote as a whole was hardly monolithic. Plus, there has been a steady stream of white evangelical resistance to Trump.)

It's true that a large percentage of American Jews voted for Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton. That too was ideologically driven, since most American Jews are quite liberal, espousing a highly humanistic form of Judaism. In contrast, the more traditional a Jewish person is, the more likely he or she is to vote Republican.

Exit polls also indicated that two-thirds of Asians and Latinos voted for Hillary (compared to slightly over one-quarter who voted for Trump), and among other races, 56 percent voted for Hillary and 36 percent for Trump. So, while the clear majority of non-white voters stood for Hillary, they were hardly monolithic in their vote.

In contrast, black votes for Hillary was 89 percent, with only 8 percent for Trump (and 3 percent other or no answer). Why this overwhelmingly high percentage of black support for Hillary?

It's perfectly understandable that many black voters would have cast their lot with President Obama, recognizing the historic importance of having our first black president.

But their support for him in 2012 was not that much higher than their support for Hillary Clinton in 2016 or other Democratic candidates in previous elections. Why the assumption that blacks will vote Democrat?

On average, black Americans are more religious than white Americans, and many black Americans have strong, pro-family roots. How then do they end up being Democrats in such high numbers?

Planned Parenthood hasn't done them any favors. (Massive understatement.) The welfare system has not elevated their status. Identity politics have not served them well. Why, then, can a black pastor be told that he is not black enough because of his conservative political views?

The obvious answer is that African-Americans share a unique history (and, often, ongoing experience), because of which they share certain beliefs and convictions and outlooks. In their mind, it is the Democratic party that has shown an interest in their well-being, that understands their struggles and that wants to work with them against inequality and injustice.

Many African-Americans also see the Republican Party as being insensitive to their needs. It is, some think, the rich (white) man's party. It's almost as if, in the minds of many black Americans, it was Republicans who enslaved them in the past. (Interestingly, from what I have gleaned anecdotally, more recent African immigrants do not lean Democrat in such large numbers. But I'm not aware of solid data to support this.)

All this being said, it is an insult to believe that African-Americans cannot think for themselves, as if they, of all ethnic groups in our country, are unable to break out of the preconceived mold.

It is true that Taleeb Starkes listed "Lack of Diversity" as one of "The Top 5 Issues Facing Black Americans."

In his words, "Blacks repeatedly demand an 'honest dialogue or debate about race.' But how can there ever be an honest dialogue about race between blacks and whites when there is virtually no honest dialogue between blacks and blacks? It's hypocritical. And if a black doesn't think, 'whites are ultimately responsible for black people's problems,' they're labeled a 'sell-out,' 'Uncle Tom' or 'race-traitor.'

"As long as this type of groupthink exists, race-reverends of the Al Sharpton, Jesse Jackson type will continue to be celebrated while independent black thinkers such as Professors Thomas Sowell and Walter Williams will be shunned."

This is certainly a problem, but perhaps now is a good time to

put these issues on the table again and ask: Must blacks be Democrats? And what (or who) are you betraying if you are not?

What if Trump's economic policies proved beneficial for black Americans? Would that change their vote? And what would it take for Republicans to make African Americans feel welcomed and esteemed?

These days, it's not just black intellectuals like Professors Sowell and Williams who are making the case for conservatism. It's voices like Diamond and Silk. And maybe even voices like Kanye.

Either way, whichever way black Americans decide to vote, my only encouragement is this (and I look in the mirror as I speak as a white evangelical): Don't allow groupthink to do the work for you. You are far better than that, and our nation needs your independent voices. We need you to think for yourselves.