

The Changing Black Vote

I am not anti-Democrat, and I am not pro-Republican. I have been a registered Democrat since I first registered to vote. For many years, I believed the promises made by Democratic candidates who said they wanted to help remove the burden from the backs of black families. I believed they truly wanted to bring needed resources to our communities. But, for the most part, I have been disappointed.

I am deeply troubled by the pro-abortion, pro-gay marriage, tax-and-spend policies of the Democrats. And a lot of people in our community feel as I do. Consequently, there is a new dynamic in our midst: a new surge of African-American political activism with strong conservative roots—a movement that is drawing its energy from the conservative moral values of the new black church.

Most of the policies supported by Democratic candidates tend to reflect the values of the party's liberal base. On almost all the issues that matter most to me, I identify more strongly with the platform issues of the Republicans. I am strongly pro-life, pro-family and pro-traditional marriage, and I believe in fiscal restraint and limited government. I also have traditional views concerning same-sex marriage and the threats posed by the politically correct "hate crimes" laws sponsored by the Democrats.

And I am not alone. More and more blacks are beginning to question their relationship with the Democrats. If we expect to see real change in our neighborhoods, black voters are going to have to begin taking a closer look at the Republican alternative.

For their part, the Republican Party will have to convince somewhere between 15 percent and 20 percent of black voters in this country that their long-term interests are best served by

Republican candidates who are strong on the issues that matter to blacks. But I am optimistic that, in time and with constructive dialogue, that can happen.

The message coming through loud and clear today is that moral choices make a difference and social policies that undermine our moral choices ought to be avoided. Voting for a party because “we’ve always done it that way” is no longer acceptable.

What I have referred to as “the new black church” is outspoken on issues such as same-sex marriage and abortion. Our people have a history of looking to their Christian faith as a coping mechanism to help them deal with both prejudice and personal adversity. But today we understand that faith is essential in dealing with all aspects of society.

The new black church has conservative views on abortion and same-sex marriage, and we are not blind to the fact that the Democratic platform no longer reflects our views. It is no accident that more and more blacks are beginning to think like their white evangelical Christian counterparts about politics.

And it is no accident that more and more people in our community are coming to realize that the reverends Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton don’t speak for us. These are no longer the only voices of black America, and many would say they are not even authentic voices for our people.

The new black church is changing the old dynamic, and we are here to stay. Members of these churches still honor their clergy. They still expect these leaders to help them integrate their faith with contemporary life. But they want their lives and their votes to make a difference, and that means there will be many more changes to come—in our churches, in our homes and especially at the polls.

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