

The Harbour League Articles



“Blacks, Democrats, and Republicans: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow”

By Deroy Murdock
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I thought I would start by telling you a little about how I got involved in public policy, and then discuss the relationship among black Americans, the Republican and Democratic parties, and some of the issues we all face as a nation.

I describe myself as a registered Republican and a practicing libertarian. Sometimes people ask me, “How could *you* possibly be a Republican?” I tell them, it’s easy: I like to see criminals busted, taxes cut, and terrorists killed.

Now, what about the libertarian part? My favorite definition of libertarianism comes from author P.J. O’Rourke. Here is how he sums up the libertarian philosophy: “You take a Right at taxes, make a Left at sex, and straight ahead is paradise.”

America did *not* look like paradise at the time I first started thinking about public policy. I was born in Los Angeles, California. At the time I started becoming aware of the world around me, we had under the Jimmy Carter presidency, things like inflation, malaise, the energy crisis, and gasoline lines, to say nothing of Communism on the move around the world. And I was very concerned about this country’s future and our safety as a people. My fear was that if Jimmy Carter got reelected, we probably would have had Red Army troops in Tijuana.

So at that time, there was all this anxiety and all of us wringing our hands, I started listening to these radio commentaries coming on the air as I was getting ready to go to school. Basically, it was Ronald Reagan coming on the radio every morning for about two to three minutes, talking about the Russian mistreatment of Jews, why tax cuts would be a good idea, why the

Energy Department wasn't making matters better, but rather making them worse, and all the various shortcomings of the Carter Administration.

I listened carefully to what he said, liked it, and thought that he ought to be our next president of the United States.

I started volunteering for the Reagan campaign in 1980 and was on the 1984 campaign. I started reading *National Review*, and, through that process, started becoming involved in the conservative and free-market movements. And that's where I remain today as a columnist and as a think-tank scholar. So I really have two people to thank for being here. One is Jimmy Carter, and the other is Ronald Reagan.

Ronald Reagan would have turned 96 last February 6. Back when he was president, he once said: "I turned 75 today, but that's just 24 Celsius."

Now, I would like to look beyond my own personal story to the much broader issue of the relationship among black Americans and the Republican and Democratic parties.

My basic message tonight is that the Republican Party and conservatives generally have spent most of the last 147 years trying to liberate black Americans and make them self-reliant, while Democrats and liberals have spent most of that time either trying to hold blacks behind or make them dependent on big-government solutions.

While the Right generally has tried to create a society built on equal opportunity where race matters less, the Left usually has tried to amplify the importance of race while apportioning power and privilege on the basis of skin color.

I would like to examine this phenomenon yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

Let's start yesterday.

In fact, let's go *way* back to 1860. That year, Republican Abraham Lincoln, was elected President of the United States. America's first Republican President headed a party that was dedicated to the abolition of slavery. And, in fact, President Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation in September 1862. It read, in part:

On the first day of January in the year of our Lord, one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, all persons held as slaves ...shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free...

By defeating the Confederacy, Lincoln's Republican government assured that slavery would be a thing of the past in the now *truly* United States of America.

But while the South was defeated, Democrats fought to deny the rights of just-liberated blacks.

As the House Republican Policy Committee explained in an historical calendar in 2005:

“Democratic opposition to Republican efforts to protect the civil rights of all Americans lasted not only throughout Reconstruction, but well into the 20th Century.

“In the south, those Democrats who most bitterly opposed equality for blacks founded the Ku Klux Klan, which operated as the party’s terrorist wing.”

White supremacists worked nightstick-in-hand with Democrats for decades:

- September 28, 1868: Democrats in Opelousas, Louisiana killed nearly 300 blacks who tried to foil an assault on a Republican newspaper editor.
- October 7, 1868: Republicans criticized Democrats’ national slogan: “This is a white man’s country: Let white men rule.”
- October 18, 1871: Republican President Ulysses S. Grant dispatched federal troops to quell Klan violence in South Carolina.
- September 14, 1874: Racist white Democrats stormed Louisiana’s statehouse to oust Republican Governor William Kellogg’s racially integrated administration; 27 people were killed.
- August 17, 1937: Republicans opposed Democratic President Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s Supreme Court nominee, U.S. Senator Hugo Black (D - Alabama), a former Klansman who defended his fellow Klansmen against race-murder charges.
- 1963: Georgia’s Democratic governor, George Wallace, struck a blow for white supremacy by raising the Confederate flag above the state capitol in Atlanta.
- Oct. 1963: Democratic Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy directed the FBI to wiretap the home telephone of Dr. & Mrs. Martin Luther King, Jr.
- January 2007: Democratic Sen. Joseph Biden calls black Democratic senator Barack Obama “clean and articulate.”
- February 2007: The Democrats’ KKK coddling today is embodied by Ku Klux Klan alumnus Robert Byrd, West Virginia’s long-serving, long-winded, Democratic U.S. senator.

Robert Byrd took office on January 3, 1959, so he is the Senate's most senior member. As the *Washington Post's* Eric Pianin reported, Robert Byrd wrote Grand Wizard Samuel Green of Atlanta in 1941 to say he wanted to join the KKK. He also enrolled 150 recruits to help him launch a Klan chapter in his hometown — Crab Orchard, West Virginia. Robert Byrd earned the rank of Exalted Cyclops of the Ku Klux Klan.

In 1946, Byrd wrote this to the KKK's Imperial Wizard: "The Klan is needed today as never before and I am anxious to see its rebirth here in West Virginia."

About that time [December 11, 1945], as President Truman prepared to integrate the armed forces, Robert Byrd wrote segregationist U.S. Senator Theodore Bilbo, a Democrat, to say he never would fight in uniform "with a Negro by my side."

He continued:

Rather I should die a thousand times, and see Old Glory trampled in the dirt never to rise again, than to see this beloved land of ours be degraded by race mongrels.

Robert Byrd was the U.S. Senate Democratic leader as late as December 1988.

On March 4, 2001, Robert Byrd said this to then-TV host Tony Snow on "Fox News Sunday:"

"There are white niggers... I've seen a lot of white niggers in my time; I'm going to use that word."

National Democrats never have arranged a primary challenge against or otherwise pressured this one-time white-hood wearer to take a long walk off the Robert Byrd Bridge.

On the contrary, Senator Christopher Dodd of Connecticut said this about Senator Byrd on April 1, 2004 on the occasion of Byrd's 17,000th Senate vote: "I do not think it is an exaggeration at all to say to my friend from West Virginia that he would have been a great senator at any moment," Dodd said.

He added: "He would have been right at the founding of this country. He would have been in the leadership crafting the Constitution. He would have been right during the great conflict of the Civil War in this nation."

Compare Chris Dodd and Robert Byrd with Trent Lott and Strom Thurmond.

Contrast the Democrats' coziness with the Ku Klux Klan with how Republicans have treated these hateful white racists. When former Klansman David Duke ran for Louisiana governor in 1991 as a Republican, national GOP officials scorned him. Local Republicans endorsed incumbent Democrat Edwin Edwards, despite his record of spectacular corruption. As one Republican-created bumper sticker pleaded: "Vote for the crook: It's important!"

Republicans also have supported legislation favorable to blacks, often against intense Democratic headwinds:

- In 1866, 94 percent of Republican senators and 96 percent of GOP House members approved the U.S. Constitution's 14th Amendment, guaranteeing all Americans equal protection under the law.

Every congressional Democrat voted: "No."

- February 28, 1871: The Republican Congress passed the Enforcement Act, giving black voters federal protection.
- February 8, 1894: Democratic President Grover Cleveland and a Democratic Congress repealed the GOP's Enforcement Act and removed federal protection for black voters.
- January 26, 1922: The U.S. House adopted Missouri Republican Congressman Leonidas Dyer's bill making lynching a federal crime.

Filibustering Senate Democrats killed that measure, which would have made lynching a federal crime.

- May 17, 1954: As chief justice, former three-term governor Earl Warren (R - California) led the U.S. Supreme Court's desegregation of government schools via the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* decision.
- Republican President Dwight Eisenhower's Justice Department argued on behalf of Topeka, Kansas' black school children.

Democrat John W. Davis, who lost a presidential bid to incumbent Republican Calvin Coolidge in 1924, defended "separate but equal" classrooms.

- July 2, 1964: Democratic President Lyndon Johnson signed the 1964 Civil Rights Act after it passed despite former Klansman Robert Byrd's 14-hour filibuster and the "No" votes of 22 other Senate Democrats (including that of Tennessee's Albert Gore, Sr.)

- Illinois Republican Everett Dirksen rallied 26 GOP senators and 44 Democrats to kill the filibuster and allow the bill's passage.
- According to John Fonte in the January 9, 2003, *National Review*, 82 percent of Republicans voted for the 1964 Civil Rights Act, versus only 66 percent of Democrats.
- June 29, 1982: Republican President Ronald Reagan signed a 25-year extension of the 1965 Voting Rights Act.
- November 2, 1983: President Reagan established Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday as a national holiday, the first such honor for a black American.
- President Reagan named Colin Powell America's first black national-security adviser while GOP President George W. Bush appointed him our first black secretary of state.
- President Bush named Condoleezza Rice America's first black female national security advisor, then our second (consecutive) black secretary of state.

In January 2005, former Klansman Robert Byrd and other Senate Democrats stalled Rice's confirmation for a week. Amid unanimous GOP support, Byrd joined 11 other Democrats and Vermont Independent James Jeffords in opposing Rice. This woman — who grew up in the Jim Crow South — received the most "No" votes for a secretary of state nominee since 14 senators turned thumbs down on Henry Clay in 1825. And Democrats cast 11 of those 12 anti-Rice votes.

For his part, former Klansman Robert Byrd voted against the nominations of black Supreme Court justices Thurgood Marshall and Clarence Thomas, as well as Secretary of State Rice.

So, as you can see, time and time again, Republicans have tried to do right by black Americans while Democrats have stood in our way.

As a consequence, blacks who could vote usually supported Republicans after the Civil War. Democrat Franklin Roosevelt won black support with the New Deal, but the black vote was not monolithic.

As Robert George of the *New York Post* notes, "Eisenhower got 39% of the black vote in 1956. Richard Nixon received 32 percent of the black vote in 1960.

"The Republican share of the black vote in 1964? Six percent."

What happened?

Senator Barry Goldwater (R - Arizona) opposed the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the very year he became the Republican presidential standard-bearer. Goldwater feared the 1964 Act would limit freedom of association in the

private sector. This is a controversial but principled libertarian objection rooted in the First Amendment rather than in racial hatred. In fact, Goldwater supported the 1957 and 1960 Civil Rights Acts and called for integrating Arizona's National Guard two years before President Truman desegregated the military. Still, Goldwater's opposition to the landmark Civil Rights Act did not impress Dr. King. He endorsed President Johnson for re-election.

That experience and generous public-assistance spending under the Great Society have helped keep black voters loyal to the Democrats for the better part of 43 years. In fact, these days, Democrats essentially take blacks for granted while Republicans typically assume they cannot win black votes — so, why bother? Since the days of Richard Nixon, the GOP has tended to focus on winning the votes of whites in the South while overlooking blacks elsewhere.

All of this is too bad, because if blacks would examine this situation, they would see that on many issues today, Republicans and conservatives offer policies that would improve their lives while Democrats and liberals scream in opposition.

As we go from yesterday to today, think about the issue of taxes.

President Bush has reduced taxes every year he has been in office, always over the objections of Democrats. The result is an economy that grew 3.3 percent last year, despite the ongoing War on Terror, battles in Iraq and Afghanistan, sky-high oil prices last summer, and the lingering legacy of hurricanes Katrina, Rita, and Wilma. The unemployment rate is now a very low 4.5 percent. An expanding economy is good for all Americans, but it is best for those with the least. In this sense, President Bush's tax cuts benefit all black Americans.

For those with lower incomes, the bottom tax rate fell by one third — from 15 percent under Clinton to 10 percent under Bush. Meanwhile, higher-level tax-rate reductions leave more money in the pockets of middle-class blacks, of whom many more exist than the media would have you believe. In fact, the Census Bureau recently reported that 39 percent of black Americans live in suburban communities.

The overall unemployment rate, as I say, is 4.5 percent. The bad news is that black unemployment is 8 percent. The good news is that black unemployment is *down* from its 10 percent average — under Democratic President Clinton. In fact, today's black unemployment rate of 8 percent is the lowest since July 2001. Average black joblessness has fallen from 12.4 percent over the last 30 years, to 10.5 percent over the last 15 years, to 8 percent today.

What about the gap between white and black unemployment? Right now, the white unemployment rate is 4.1 percent vs. 8 percent for blacks, so there is a gap of 3.9 percentage points between white and black joblessness. That gap has fallen from an average of 6.9 percent over the last 30 years, to 5.5 percent under President Clinton, and now 3.9 percent under President Bush. So, despite howls of protest from Democrats, President Bush's tax cuts have helped create the best black employment picture in a generation.

Next, think about Social Security.

Social Security shafts black people, especially black men. President Bush's Housing Secretary, Alphonso Jackson, yet another Cabinet member who happens to be black, addressed this issue in the *Wall Street Journal* on April 19, 2005.

"Today, the typical black household has a net worth of only \$6,100, while a typical white household has \$67,000," Jackson wrote. I call this nearly 11-1 asset-ownership gap between blacks and whites "the Dividend Divide." This absence of assets leaves very little for one generation to bequeath to the next. This would be bad enough if Social Security offered black Americans attractive returns on "investment." It does not.

Secretary Jackson notes that among black Americans: "One in three will get no benefit at all because he will die before he is eligible to collect benefits... After a lifetime of paying into Social Security, nearly 30 percent of black seniors are left in poverty, compared to 7 percent of white seniors... And while the average black male lives to age 67.8 — after collecting less than one year of Social Security — the average white male will collect seven years of benefits."

Social Security is essentially a vacuum that sucks money from the pockets of shorter-lived blacks and deposits it in the bank accounts of longer-surviving whites. Where is the social justice in *that*?

President Bush tried to do something about this, namely giving Americans the *option* to open *voluntary* Personal Retirement Accounts in which they could invest a portion of their Social Security taxes.

Democrats hollered at the tops of their lungs, and Bush's plan collapsed of inertia.

So, black Americans will continue to pour money into a system that rips us off. And many of us black men won't see a dime of the money that government yanks from each of our paychecks.

Thanks again, Democrats.

Now, let's look at K – 12 education:

America's government schools are in shambles, especially in our ghettos. Dropout rates are often at about 50 percent in many black high schools. Kids routinely leave school unable to read at grade level. Thanks to this system of institutional child abuse, many students exit stunted for life. They almost never catch up with their educated counterparts in terms of life chances, earning power, housing, healthcare options, or what they can offer their loved ones.

Republicans and free-marketers have preached school choice — either through charter schools or more ambitious voucher programs. With a few courageous exceptions, the liberal Democratic position is to yell "Hell no!" and leave poor, black, uneducated kids...poor, black, and uneducated.

Consider the Washington, D.C. school system. About the time President Bush was elected, 31 percent of eighth graders read at grade level across America. In 2000, the equivalent figure for students in Washington, D.C.'s government schools was not 31 percent, but just 6 percent. A bit earlier, in 1998, only 10 percent of Washington, D.C. fourth graders read at grade level, versus 35 percent nationally. Among local high school students who *do* graduate and advance to the University of the District of Columbia, *85 percent* need remedial education.

Is spending the problem? Nope.

Washington, D.C. public schools are usually No. 1 in America in terms of per-pupil spending. In 2000 – 2001, it spent \$10,477 on each of its 67,500 pupils versus a national average of \$7,483. While Washington's schools are at the top of the heap in spending, they usually are ranked 51st, below every single state, when it comes to student achievement.

So, with the help of some Democrats and the opposition of many more, the Republican Congress passed a Washington, D.C. school voucher plan to help a small number of local students escape this educational rubble pile. Democratic President Clinton vetoed D.C. voucher legislation— not just once, but twice. The Republican Congress passed it again in 2003, and, finally, GOP President Bush signed it into law.

Democrats and liberals almost always have the same solution: Leave things the way they are and just spend more money. Bigger education budgets benefit unionized school bureaucrats and teachers. And, of course, teachers and school-workers' unions are among the Democratic Party's most loyal sources of votes, campaign volunteers, and political donations. So, who do you think winds up on top, when it comes to educating America's kids?

Perhaps the most pernicious treatment blacks get from liberals and Democrats is the patronizing way we are treated when it comes to racial preferences.

Look, for example, at the entrance exam for the Lowell Academy in San Francisco. This selective government high school's admissions test had a perfect score of 69 points. Students of Chinese descent needed at least 62 points to pass. Whites and "other Asians" required 58 points for admission. Meanwhile, blacks and Hispanics could gain entrance with just 53 points.

How degrading.

How condescending.

How racist.

Who the Hell were San Francisco's liberal educrats to judge blacks and Hispanics intellectually inferior to other students? And were all these Chinese applicants brilliant? Surely a *few* of them were average, or worse.

This unconstitutional abomination was ditched in the 2000 - 2001 academic year after Chinese students sued and won their claim that their 14th Amendment equal-protection rights had been violated.

For another example of this attitude, just look at Rutgers University, in New Jersey.

In 1995, Rutgers' liberal president, Francis Lawrence, discussed plans to lower the Scholastic Aptitude Test scores expected of black applicants.

Why?

Blacks, President Lawrence explained, constitute "a disadvantaged population that doesn't have the genetic hereditary background to have a higher average" on the SAT.

Between San Francisco and New Brunswick, New Jersey, we find Ann Arbor, the home of the University of Michigan.

It also had a similar racial preference in its admissions policy. U. Michigan employed the race-driven practice of giving every black, Hispanic, and American Indian undergraduate-school applicant 20 points, out of a maximum 150-point scale, just for having the correct complexion.

This was a pristine example of what President Bush calls "the soft bigotry of low expectations."

Michigan's admissions officers did not practice the nasty, snarling bigotry born of hatred, but instead the polite, smiling bigotry born of pity. Yet it is bigotry nonetheless. An X in the box showing an applicant is black, brown, or red gave him a 13.3-percent boost over someone with white or yellow skin equally eager to learn in Ann Arbor.

How dare Michigan's administrators automatically assume that minority applicants are disadvantaged and downtrodden?

This is academic racial profiling.

If — as civil-rights activists scream until they swoon — it is wrong for cops to see a black man and assume he is a criminal, why is it right for Michigan to see someone and assume he needs special help simply for applying while black?

Yes, there are many destitute blacks, but there also are black students whose parents are doctors and consultants. Similarly, there are white folks who grow up poor and fatherless. Had Georgetown University not admitted a poor white guy from Arkansas, Bill Clinton might have stayed in Hot Springs and out of the Oval Office.

I am all for more aggressive outreach efforts. College recruiters should look for promising applicants in every community they can reach. And helping those who have excelled despite true adversity is fine, so long as race is not an issue. A valedictorian from a coal-mining town should have as much of a shot at a hand up as an all-state champion debater from the housing projects. But ultimately, race should *not* be a factor in who does or does not get into school. Admissions officers should evaluate applicants as individuals rather than as ethnic inputs. This was the entire point of the civil-rights movement. Freedom riders were *murdered* in the Jim Crow South while struggling for racial *equality*, not racial advantage.

Dr. King could not have been clearer about this when he delivered his 1963 "I Have a Dream" speech — fittingly enough — on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. Dr. King said he had a dream that his children would "live one day in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character." Unfortunately, the Supreme Court disagreed with Dr. King's philosophy and ruled that, while Michigan's system was too mechanical, universities could consider race as a factor in admissions.

Imagine if a municipal bus company tried to use race as "a factor" in admitting passengers.

So, from yesterday, to today, to tomorrow, what does the future hold for blacks, Republicans, and Democrats?

For starters, President Bush's black support grew from 9 percent in the 2000 election to 11 percent in 2004. That is not huge, but his black vote actually improved by 22 percent despite his being vilified by the media and Democrats for four long years. In Ohio, President Bush's support among blacks grew from 9 percent in 2000 to 16 percent in 2004. As tight as things were there, it is fair to say that black voters handed President Bush Ohio, and thus renewed his four-year lease on the White House.

These voters tended to be socially conservative, church-going blacks who turned out to vote for a ballot measure opposing gay marriage. Enough of them also voted for Bush, a same-sex marriage opponent, to make all the difference for him on Election Day. While I support gay marriage, I understand how an emotional issue like that one can have a serious impact on changing traditional voting patterns.

Republicans will have to work harder than they have to appeal to black voters. Last fall, attractive black Republican candidates like Michael Steele, Ken Blackwell, and Lynn Swann failed to get elected to statewide offices in Maryland, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. Obviously, 2006 was a terrible year for Republican candidates. Maybe these guys would have won in a better year. Who knows?

Hurricane Katrina and the ensuing, deadly chaos in New Orleans did not help. Racial demagogues like Congressman Charles Rangel (D – New York) said that, "George Bush is our Bull Connor." He added: "If you're black in this country, and you're poor in this country, it's not an inconvenience. It's a death sentence."

Rangel equated Republican President Bush with Theophilus "Bull" Connor, Birmingham, Alabama's former segregationist police commissioner who notoriously used attacks dogs and fire hoses to disrupt civil-rights marches by Dr. King and other protesters in 1963. As is Rangel, Bull Connor was...a Democrat.

Of course, for all the federal failings, Rangel's outrageous comment ignored the spectacular incompetence among Democrats in charge of Louisiana's governor's mansion and New Orleans' City Hall.

Remember that photo of the 255 school buses drowning in a municipal lot in New Orleans? Ray Nagin, the Crescent City's black, Democratic mayor could have used those buses to evacuate people from the Superdome and Convention Center; instead, he screwed up and let them get swamped below sea level.

As for President Bush's supposed anti-black genocide, if he really wanted to drown black Americans, why did he urge Democratic governor Kathleen Blanco to evacuate New Orleans? From a press conference the Sunday

morning before Katrina hit on Monday, here's what happened, in Governor Blanco's own words:

Just before we walked into this room, President Bush called and told me to share with all of you that he is very concerned about the citizens. He is concerned about the impact that this hurricane would have on our people. And he asked me to please ensure that there would be a mandatory evacuation of New Orleans.

For his part, President Bush dispatched four Navy ships to the Gulf Coast and called Congress back to Washington from vacation to approve \$10.5 billion in immediate federal assistance to the region (which he signed the Friday after Katrina hit, that previous Monday). He also recruited his father and President Bill Clinton to raise private and corporate money to aid Katrina's survivors.

President Bush and the Republican Congress did not abandon New Orleans before Katrina, as Democrats and the media claim. In fact, according to calculations by then-Heritage Foundation scholar Kirk Johnson, between 2000 and 2003, federal anti-poverty spending per recipient in Orleans Parish increased under Bush and the Republicans by 73 percent, or an average, annual hike of 24 percent for three years! We all should be so abandoned.

Having said all of that, in tomorrow's races, Republican candidates need to knock on doors in black neighborhoods, run ads in black newspapers and on black radio stations, and otherwise promote themselves with even more energy and intensity in order to win a greater share of the black vote. Remember, Republican nominees — do *not* have to grab 100 percent or 90 percent of the black vote to win elections. All they have to do is move their support from 10 percent of the black vote, where it usually stands, to 15 percent or 20 percent. In tight elections, that hammers the Democrats' electoral base into dust.

The best way for GOP candidates to get blacks to consider voting Republican is to ask them a simple question:

"What have the Democrats done for you lately?"

Thank you very much.

Deroy Murdock is a New York-based columnist with the Scripps Howard News Service and a senior fellow with the [Atlas Economic Research Foundation](#) in Arlington, VA.