

The Political Forum

*A review of social and political trends and events
impacting the world's financial markets*

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THEY SAID IT

“America today needs a president for ALL the people. It is time we began to look at people not by their race but by their citizenship as Americans. There is only one race and that is the human race.”

-- Paula Diane Harris, Founder, President & CEO of the Andrew Young National Center for Social Change.

THE NATION'S "SECOND BLACK PRESIDENT." Numerous political commentators, including Steve and I, have asserted during the past several months that the selection of John Kerry as the Democratic Party's standard bearer says more about the paucity of good choices from within that party's ranks than it does about Kerry's "electability." What none of these commentators, to my knowledge, has noted, but which provides a strong corollary to this observation, is that the ranks of black Democratic Party politicians have also grown exceedingly weak during the past decade or so, as demonstrated by Al Sharpton's role as the party's African-American standard bearer in the recent primaries.

I started thinking about this last week when I read that Kerry had noted in an interview on the American Urban Radio Network that while Bill Clinton has often been described as the first black president, he, Kerry, "wouldn't be upset" if he "could earn the right to be the second."

My first reaction was amusement. For starters, it was a stupid, condescending thing for a white boy from Massachusetts to say, especially one whose mother's maiden name was Forbes, whose wife's name is Heinz, and who would, if elected, go down in history as the third richest president to date. But more importantly, it was not necessary politically.

Kerry may not get a majority of votes from women, or men, or soccer moms, or hockey dads, or Vietnam veterans, or the elderly, or even some ethnic communities that fall within the general classification of Hispanic. But he will get the vast majority of black votes of both sexes and all age groups, no matter what he does or says, short of seeking repeal of the 13th amendment.

In fact, as the Democratic Party's candidate, Kerry's lock on the African-American vote is so solid that, if he were smart, instead of courting black voters with his "just a an ordinary guy"

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routine, he would stage a Sister Soulja moment, like Clinton did, in order to shore up his standing with disaffected white Democrats.

In any case, my amusement with Kerry's comment turned to interest a few days later when Paula Diane Harris, founder of the Andrew Young National Center for Social Change, demanded that he apologize for the remark. "John Kerry is not a black man," she said. "He is a privileged white man who has no idea what it is to be a poor white in this country, let alone a black man."

Then she went on to assert that Mr. Kerry "and anyone else who wants to know," should be aware that "we have plenty of African Americans in this country who are qualified to lead this country and be a president for **all** the people."

Now Ms. Harris is not a major player on the national civil rights circuit, her organization being a small, web-based, for-profit consulting service based in Harrisburg, Pa. And to my knowledge no nationally recognized spokesperson for African-Americans echoed her demand for a Kerry apology. But her remarks raised two issues that are routinely overlooked by political pundits of both parties, but which have had, and are likely to continue to have an important impact on the future direction of American politics.

The first, which she addressed directly, deals with the quadrennial dilemma faced by the African-American community of being patronized by Democratic presidential candidates. She put it this way: "Kerry's comment is another example of the mentality of some members of the Democrat Party who take black votes for granted. It is time our votes were earned. This election is too important for ALL Americans to have time for this type of theatrical statement."

The second and arguably more important issue, which she didn't address, is the systematic process by which the Democratic Party has slowly over the years adopted policies that have had the effect of preventing the emergence of an African-American Democratic Party politician at the national level who has the credentials to run for president and win.

This is a complicated process, but it began several decades ago when the Democratic Party, under pressure from the African-American community, began the task of expanding the ranks of black members of Congress and protecting their tenure by promoting the creation of congressional districts with majority black populations. This seemed like a good idea at the time, as a means of assuring that the voting strength of black communities would not be watered down by a process of dividing them up into small groups and situating these groups within majority-white districts.

Republicans quickly realized that one effect of this gerrymandering would be to assure a great many majority-white districts in states where this was occurring, but most especially in the South, where the GOP was beginning to make substantial inroads. This appealed to them, so they rushed to support the effort. And, as it turns out, this was one of those rare political occurrences that seems to have made everyone happy

The black community substantially increased its participation in the House of Representatives. Low to lower-middle income urban blacks had a much better chance of being represented in Congress by black politicians who understood them, their problems, and their world view. And

Republicans were pleased to see the creation of a great many districts with substantial majority white populations.

I did not do a comprehensive analysis of the entire membership of the Congressional Black Caucus, but a brief review of their websites reveals that with two exceptions, every member is from a district in which fewer than 50% of the voters are white. Approximately 65% of Rep. Julia Carson's Indiana district is white, as is almost exactly half of Rep. Sanford Bishop's Georgia district. In most of the rest, whites account for something in the range of 20% to 40%.

Hence, with few exceptions, the Congressional Black Caucus today is comprised of some of the most liberal members of Congress, some fanatically so. And the result, which no one seems to recognize, is that the Democratic Party has developed virtually no black politicians at the federal level who have attained national political stature. This is not because they are black but because they are, for the most part, far too liberal to appeal to the political center of the nation and, out of necessity, heavily focused on issues of prime importance to the black community. In fact, I think this goes a long way to explaining why there are no black members of the U.S. Senate.

So, while Ms. Harris may well be correct when she says that there are "plenty" of African-Americans who are "capable" of being president, the fact of the matter is that few if any black Democratic Party politicians at the federal level could be considered a viable presidential candidate, given that the great "moderate center" of America generally decides who will occupy the White House.

There are a few signs that changes are underway, reflecting, among other things, the phenomenal growth in the black middle class during the past several decades, which has provided opportunities for black politicians with more moderate views to enter the national political arena.

One example of this occurred two years ago when Denise Majette beat incumbent Representative Cynthia McKinney in the Democratic primary for the Fourth District in Georgia, which is described in *The Almanac of American Politics* as "part of the core of the Atlanta metropolitan area . . . [containing] one of the nation's largest collections of affluent black neighborhoods, rivaled only by Prince George's County, Maryland."

McKinney was a full-fledged member of the wacky left, who trafficked in crazy conspiracy theories (President Bush may have had prior knowledge of the September 11 attacks and did not act on it because the war on terrorism would boost the defense stocks of associates of his father) and divisive political rhetoric. Her fellow Georgia Democrat, Senator Zell Miller, once publicly referred to her as just plain "loony," while the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* described her as "the most prominent nut" among conspiracy peddling "nut cases."

Majette, on the other hand, is an accomplished attorney who commands respect throughout the state from individuals of all races. She received her undergraduate degree from Yale, and her law degree from Duke. She was an adjunct law professor at Wake Forest, and later a Georgia state judge before quitting that post to run for Congress.

McKinney charged that Majette's victory was due to Republican crossover voting. She charged that Majette was a "tool of white interests" and a "Democrat in name only." McKinney's father,

Billy McKinney, then a Georgia state representative, blamed his daughter's defeat on "Jews," who, he said, "have bought everybody."

In fact, while Majette did benefit from the fact that white voters, which make up 32% of her district, were disgusted with McKinney, the real story behind her victory was the overwhelming support she received from the growing number of affluent blacks who live in her district

Yet her victory was not an easy one. Besides having to convince voters to trust her as their representative in Washington, she had to contend with the vociferous opposition from the mainstream of America's black liberal establishment, who quite clearly felt threatened by the changes that her presence in national politics portends. Among those who endorsed McKinney were "civil rights leader" Joseph Lowery, state Representative Tyrone Brooks, Martin Luther King III, Jesse Jackson and, of course, the Nation of Islam's Louis Farrakhan.

A second strong indication that change is in the wind has been the emergence of Rep. Harold Ford (D., Tenn.) as an attractive, high profile, black politician with a voting record that is moderate enough to gain him membership in a group called Blue Dog Democrats, which is made up of 36 House members whose stated goal is to bring their party back to the center of the ideological spectrum. They are self-described "fiscal conservatives," who take pride in their independence from the liberal leadership of the Democratic Party and their willingness to cooperate with Republicans.

Like Rep. Majette, Ford is something new among black Democratic House members. A graduate of St. Albans, the Washington, D.C. area's most elite prep school, he has his undergraduate degree from the University of Pennsylvania and a law degree from the University of Michigan. He was 26 when he was first elected to Congress, and today at 34, he is still the youngest member in the House.

As is the case with Rep. Majette, his appeal to white as well as black voters is an important source of his political strength, but disquieting to many members of the current leadership of the nation's black community. Nevertheless, unlike any other national black politician, he is routinely mentioned as having a very good chance for a seat in the Senate in the not too distant future, and with that a shot at being not just a leading black politician, but a highly respected, nationally recognized politician who happens to be black. He himself said recently, "I absolutely look forward to serving the entire state of Tennessee some day."

I would not even attempt to forecast when Americans might elect their first black president. But I think it is safe to say that when that event occurs, the individual will either be a Republican or a Democratic in the mold of Majette and Ford. And then, we can truly begin to discuss who will be the "second black president." The one certain thing is that it won't be John Kerry.

THE MAKINGS OF A ROUT, PART I: TRADE POLICY. Regular readers know that Mark and I are both more than a little dubious about John Kerry's chances to upset President Bush this fall, for several reasons, many relating to fundamental weaknesses in the Democratic Party. But while we have never made a secret of our doubts about Kerry's chances, neither of us has bucked the conventional wisdom that says that the nation is still divided very evenly and, regardless of perceived Democratic flaws, the contest will be close. Until now.

While the mainstream media and most traditional political analysts and pundits are focused on such inanities as current polling data, which remind one of the headline seen recently on the satirical newswire, Scappleface.com reading “Survey Shows: If Election Were Held Today, Most Americans Would Miss It,” I am going to go out on a limb here and say that this won’t be a close race.

In addition to carrying the burdens of his party, John Kerry is carrying his own tremendous personal burdens. While I still don’t foresee a total rout along the lines of Nixon-McGovern or Gipper-Mondale, when all is said and done, I think most people will look back and wonder how they ever thought this thing would be close. Kerry is a dud, and I suspect that the “people” (voters, media types, analysts, etc.) will figure this out, and my guess is sooner rather than later.

This is, of course, a contention that we intend to back up with various observations and arguments as the campaign progresses. This week, though, I thought I’d focus primarily on the ridiculousness of Kerry’s professed stances on trade. Now, I know that a great number of voters don’t vote based on anything even resembling reason, but nevertheless, I have to note that Kerry’s positions and rambling statements on trade and related issues make it next to impossible for a reasonable person to take him seriously.

Let me just say at the outset here, that I earnestly doubt that John Kerry would, if he were elected President, set a terribly protectionist agenda. Indeed, I think he’d probably be somewhat similar in policy to Bush, i.e., less of a free trader than Clinton, but more of a free trader than most union leaders, Democratic politicians, and paleoconservative-former-presidential-speechwriters/CNN talk-show-hosts-turned-anti-Semitic-magazine-publishers would like.

That said, it should be noted that the United States does not have actively to engage in protectionism to start an economically crippling trade war. It just has to threaten the rest of the world enough to scare them into starting one. And Kerry’s blatherings on the subject of trade are enough to make him look foolish, to say the very least, and potentially to scare trading partners into reexamining their relationships with the United States.

For starters, following the lead of his one-time challenger for the Democratic nomination John Edwards, Kerry has decided that job creation and specifically the “outsourcing” of jobs is the key trade club with which he will bash Bush. Late last week, he assaulted the administration openly, derailing the nomination of Anthony Raimondo, chairman and CEO of Behlen Manufacturing Co. in Columbus, Nebraska and the President’s choice to be his new “manufacturing czar” in the Commerce Department. Kerry made confirmation appear next to impossible and compelled Raimondo to withdraw his name from consideration after he (Kerry) disclosed that Raimondo’s company had opened a plant in China in 2002, causing it to lay off 75 American workers.

Most economists would suggest making the case against Kerry’s position on the merits of the argument, since he is wrong. But that’s probably too complicated and risky a strategy for the administration to pursue, especially in light of the drubbing that Council of Economic Advisors chairman Gregory Makiw received from mendacious politicians from both parties for simply telling the truth that outsourcing is a net positive for the U.S. economy.

Instead, Bush and team will simply take the easy road on this one, choosing to counter Kerry's hostile rhetoric by noting that multi-billion dollar Ketchup and relish behemoth Heinz (as in Teresa *Heinz* Kerry) has outsourced *57 of its 79* (that's nearly 75%, for those of you keeping score at home) factories to foreign countries. As columnist James Glassman noted last week: Heinz's own web site proudly proclaims that it "is making ketchup, pizza crust, baby cereal and other edibles in such countries as Poland, Venezuela, Botswana, China, Thailand and India."

Now, I am not an unabashed admirer of the collective intelligence of the American electorate, but even I think voters are smarter than Kerry apparently believes them to be. I mean, does he really think that he can whip voters into a frenzy over "outsourcing," while he and rich-wife-#2 bask in the economic fruits of that very manufacturing policy? I know the Senator has a nasty reputation for being contemptuous of regular people, but this is beyond the pale. What amazes me most in all of this is that he appears not to know this or, perhaps more likely, appears to think voters aren't smart enough to make the connection.

Of course, as strange as Kerry's contempt for voters appears to be, it is nothing when compared to his contempt for America's trading partners. While Kerry and every other Democrat worthy of the name has spent the last year-and-a-half (if not more) running around accusing President Bush of alienating our allies by fighting terrorists on his terms, the only thing that appears to have really rankled true allies is Kerry's aggressively protectionist rhetoric.

India, for example, the target of much of the outsourcing slander, has been a steadfast ally in the war on terror, understanding our fight against radical Islamists intimately. But the Kerry-lead attack on outsourcing has raised more than a few concerns in the world's largest democracy. According to Glassman, "many Indians feel they are the scapegoats for America's cyclical economic downturn in what they see as a racist campaign." Indeed, India's Deputy Prime Minister Lal Krishna Advani recently complained, "On the one hand you talk about opening up our markets. On the other, you want to ban . . . outsourcing."

The Indian reaction has been rather tame compared to that of other allies, though. A few weeks ago, London's *Independent* ran a long piece detailing how the Democratic protectionist platform is playing in Great Britain, another true ally. According to the *Independent*:

Patricia Hewitt delivered a blistering attack last night on the two Democratic candidates for the US presidential nomination, accusing them of vying with one another in their "protectionist rhetoric."

In a speech laced with digs at America over its attitude towards free trade, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry took John Kerry and John Edwards to task for pandering to the protectionist lobby.

"My message is don't play politics with people's jobs and people's prosperity. We know – the United States knows – that protectionism is the road to recession," she told a dinner at the Mansion House . . .

Digby Jones, the director general of the CBI [Confederation of British Industry], said last night: “Some US politicians seem to be in a race to be more protectionist than the next.

“I don’t like to hear talk of ‘Benedict Arnold CEO’s’ which is completely unfair. Nor do I like to hear people replacing the phrase ‘free trade’ with ‘fair trade’ and then going on to propose measures that are really about creating unfairness. If it wants a job-rich recovery, America too must resist the siren voices of protectionism.”

John Kerry’s trade rantings are dreadful. They are, as OpinionJournal.com’s James Taranto described them, “ugly rhetoric [that] risks alienating our allies and making America a pariah in the world.” They are also one of the key reasons why I believe Kerry will flame out long before next November.

Bush may not be the perfect trade president. Indeed, he is probably not perfect on most issues. But in comparison to Kerry, he looks very good. He has, as I have noted many times before, the good fortune of having the current crop of Democrats, led now by Kerry, as his opponents. And that is probably more than enough to keep him in the White House for four more years.

COLRADO: POTENTIAL TROUBLE FOR GOP. Two weeks ago this Wednesday, Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell, a sometimes Republican from Colorado, announced that he would not seek reelection this fall, setting off a frantic rush of potential candidates into a race that once seemed fairly certainly decided.

Most voters throughout the nation will ignore Campbell’s decision. After all, if Campbell is known for anything at all outside the state, it is for being the Senator with a ponytail who heavily (perhaps too heavily) emphasizes his fractional Native American heritage and who conveniently joined the GOP roughly six weeks after the party assumed the majority in 1995. Nevertheless, Campbell’s decision will likely have significant repercussions for national-level politics, not just this year, but four years hence as well.

In the days immediately after the announcement, most speculation about a possible replacement for the Senator centered on Governor Bill Owens, an extremely popular two-term conservative who is term-limited and thus unable to stand for re-election in 2006. Most observers believed that Owens, who has been described as “America’s Best Governor” by the likes of *National Review* and our friend Steve Moore’s Club for Growth, would enter the race, in large part because he will be looking for work in just over two years, and he could, almost certainly, postpone that looming unemployment date indefinitely by joining the ranks of the nation’s greatest bloviators. Last Tuesday, however, Owens bucked conventional wisdom and politely declined to enter the race. In my opinion, this can only mean one thing: Bill Owens intends to be President of the United States someday, most likely beginning on January 20, 2009.

Owens knows as well as anyone that the road to the White House almost never runs through the Senate. In the nation’s history, only two Senators have been elected President directly from the Senate, John F. Kennedy and Warren G. Harding. The most recent former Senator to serve as President was Richard Nixon, three decades ago, and most Senators-turned-presidential-candidates, including, I believe, the current such aspirant, turn out to be duds (e.g. McGovern,

Mondale, Dole, Gore). Owens appears to know that if he wants to be President, he's better off out of the Senate than in it.

So while the current presidential election is still nearly eight months off, if President Bush wins re-election, I think it is possible to name the early frontrunner to be his replacement, or at least to be his replacement as the GOP nominee for the slot. Today, a ridiculous amount of time before the '08 presidential contest, I anoint Colorado Governor Bill Owens as the man to beat. Like the current Democratic bench, the GOP bench after Bush is pretty thin, particularly if Vice President Dick Cheney adheres to conventional wisdom and declines to seek the presidency himself.

Owens does have some personal problems at the moment, being a conservative Catholic and advocate of "family values" who is currently separated from his wife of more than 28 years. But he has to be considered a good bet, as he is appealing to both the conservative base and the libertarian fringe and is nevertheless unlikely to trouble centrists too terribly. Besides, his most serious competition from within the governors' ranks, the man called "the second best governor" by *National Review* and Club for Growth is unlikely to be a serious candidate for president, at least in '08, most notably because his last name is Bush.

As far as the Campbell announcement's impact on the '04 election, it could, conceivably, be much more significant than most observers admit. First, it is almost always the case when an incumbent bows out, particularly this late into the election cycle, that the opposition party's chances of capturing the seat increase dramatically. And so it is with Campbell's seat; or to put it in Charlie Cook-esque parlance, the race for the Colorado Senate seat has moved from "likely Republican retention" to "toss-up." And with the Senate divided as evenly as it is, this, in and of itself, is notable.

More importantly, though, Campbell's retirement could make it more difficult for Bush to carry the state and its nine electoral votes this fall. You see, one of the first Republicans to throw his name into the proverbial ring to replace Campbell was Congressman Tom Tancredo, who, as chairman of the House's "Congressional Immigration Reform Caucus," has been one of the most ardent and vocal critics of President Bush's proposed plans to deal with illegal immigrants and with related immigration matters.

Colorado has one of the fastest growing Hispanic populations in the nation, up from just over 12% after the 1990 Census to more than 17% after the 2000 Census. And while Tancredo's activism on this front has not yet proven unpopular in his district, which is in the Southwestern Denver suburbs and includes Columbine, if he were to become a statewide representative, his immigration rhetoric could have a very negative impact on the GOP's chances of gaining Hispanic support throughout the state.

Given this, President Bush will be manifestly unhappy if Tancredo is, indeed, the party's nominee. Bush would, of course, nominally support Tancredo's candidacy in the name of party loyalty. But he would also likely avoid campaigning with or near Tancredo, both out of personal pique and out a desire not to negatively affect his courting of Hispanic voters nationwide. And this, in turn, could cause problems with the Bush campaign's re-election strategy.

You see, Bush likely will need to campaign aggressively in Colorado if he wishes to win there again this fall. He won the state by nine percentage points over Al Gore in 2000, but he only carried just under 51% of the vote, while Ralph Nader and a collection of other candidates pulled in a not-insignificant 7%. And this time around, the state may be even more competitive, as the Kerry camp has already declared Colorado a “must win” state in its much-discussed strategy to take the White House while not taking a single Southern state.

So while most political analysts and pundits have played the Nighthorse Campbell decision not to run for re-election as merely an “evening out” of the open seats that each party must defend this fall (now 3 for the GOP to 5 for Democrats), in the end it may well turn out to be a far bigger story than that, one that may well affect GOP aspirations in some way or another for years to come.

END NOTES: A Terrorist’s End. Abu Abbas, the terrorist mastermind of the Achille Lauro hijacking and murderer of American citizen Leon Klinghoffer, died in U.S. custody last week, having been captured by U.S. troops in Iraq last spring. Among others, Abbas’s widow and his former playmate Yasser Arafat screamed bloody murder, accusing American forces of killing the thug intentionally. We doubt it. At the same time, though, we are unsurprised that American authorities have not exactly rushed to deny the allegations, since it can’t hurt for terrorists to question whether such things might occur. There are hundreds of mostly apocryphal stories about how terrorist suspects refused to talk to anyone about anything until they were told that Mossad agents were on their way to continue the interrogation, at which point, they spilled the proverbial beans, rather than have to face the dreaded Israelis. It wouldn’t hurt at all for American interrogators to be similarly esteemed.

Flippity Flop. John Kerry has taken a lot of heat for his penchant for taking both sides of just about every issue. But sometimes, when a good laugh makes the day a little brighter, you have to love him for it. Such was the case last week when I read Kerry’s explanation for having described the long-time terrorist Yasser Arafat as a “statesman” in his 1997 book *The New War*. “He was [a statesman] back in 1995,” Kerry said of Arafat. “As far as I’m concerned he’s [now] an outlaw to the peace process.”

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