

Mark L. Melcher Publisher
melcher@thepoliticalforum.com

Stephen R. Soukup Editor
soukup@thepoliticalforum.com

THEY SAID IT

In the end, Barack Obama's candidacy is not qualitatively different from Al Sharpton's or Jesse Jackson's. Like these more irascible of his forbearers, Mr. Obama's run at the presidency is based more on the manipulation of white guilt than on substance. Messrs. Sharpton and Jackson were "challengers," not bargainers. They intimidated whites and demanded, in the name of historical justice, that they be brought forward. Mr. Obama flatters whites, grants them racial innocence, and hopes to ascend on the back of their gratitude. Two sides of the same coin.

Shelby Steele, "The Obama Bargain," *The Wall Street Journal*, March 18, 2008.

In this Issue

Taking Race for Granted.

What, Me Worry?

TAKING RACE FOR GRANTED.

For years now, we and other conservatives have argued that black Americans are playing a foolish game and could wind up as big losers for their trouble. Given that black voters tend to vote overwhelmingly for Democratic candidates, generally giving the Democrats 90+% of their vote, regardless of the candidates or their qualifications, we have maintained that it is only a matter of time before one of two things happens. Either black voters will tire of the same-old same-old and start to listen to the arguments and policy proposals made by Republicans, thus breaking free of the Democratic Party. Or, more ominously for blacks, they will become politically irrelevant as a group, as the GOP increasingly concludes that pursuit of the black vote is pointless, and as Democrats increasingly assume the permanence of the status quo, thereby taking blacks for granted, secure in the knowledge that nine in ten will vote Democratic, no matter what.

As we noted a couple of weeks back, we have spent many years waiting for the former to happen, for the expanding black middle class to begin to behave politically like the rest of the middle class by seeking a balance between left and right and voting accordingly. But we finally gave up, having grown more and more convinced every day that the latter has happened and that that the nation as a whole will be much worse off for it.

Now, we will readily admit that this may seem like a strange observation to make at this particular time, given that this campaign season marks the emergence of the nation's first *bona fide* black presidential contender, who now appears all but certain to win the Democratic nomination and who still has to be considered at least a very slim favorite to become the 44th President of the United States.

But Barack Obama is not the candidate he claims he is, the candidate of racial reconciliation and unity, or of probity and racial magnanimity. He has been shown, most notably through his connections to Jeremiah Wright and his “black liberation theology” and to other radicals like Weatherman Bill Ayers, to be little more than a standard, average, every-day liberal, an ambitious politician who joined Reverend Wright’s church largely out of political expediency and who has proven to be an effective if excessively slick political chameleon, willing to modify his disposition to suit specific ends and specific audiences.

More to the point, Obama has morphed from the racial reconciler and “the change we have been waiting for” into a standard, average, every-day *black* politician, which is to say that he has been exorcised from the political center. Through a combination of artfully effective campaign/labeling strategy on the part of Bill and Hillary Clinton and his own clumsiness in dealing with the public disclosure of his “black supremacist” religious affiliation, Obama has gone from being a presidential candidate who just happens to be black to the *black* candidate, someone akin to, even if somewhat less odious than, Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton; a candidate perceived by many to represent the interests of black Americans first and foremost and Americans in general second. This is, we’re certain, a rather iniquitous transformation because, for all his faults, Obama lacks the vile self-aggrandizement and self-absorption of a Jackson or a Sharpton. Still, there can be little question that he has been marginalized in the eyes of many non-black voters.

Conventional wisdom, of course, has it that we are wrong and that black voters actually hold more power in this year’s election than in any previous one. After all, it is they who will decide the party’s nominee. As the theory goes, given Obama’s recent collapse, party officials would, under other circumstances, likely broker the nomination for Hillary, the more experienced, better vetted, and less divisive candidate. But they can’t do that this time, for fear that they would upset the 90+% of black primary voters, who

have pulled the lever for Obama. Alienating black voters and convincing them to stay home would be the biggest mistake the party could make.

The problem with this conventional wisdom is that it presupposes that the will of black voters is somehow different from the will of the party elites and that “giving” the nomination to Obama is some sort of concession. Neither is true. Many of the leaders of the Democratic Party are just as enthusiastic about Obama’s candidacy as are black voters. To them he represents both the opportunity to wallow in their white guilt and the chance ultimately to excise the Clintons from the party. Moreover, what they are allegedly “giving” Obama is something that he has, in fact, earned. They are making no concessions to him or to his supporters. Under party rules, he will win the nomination fair and square.

That said, it is interesting to note that Hillary Clinton has kept this contest close. And under less ridiculous, fairer primary rules, she would be the party’s nominee, despite losing 90+% of the black primary vote to Obama. She has won all of the big states and she has performed better in primaries, which rely on votes, while Obama has won more caucuses, which are a goofy invention that rely more on organization. If the Democrats ran their primaries in the same way that Republicans do, she’d already have the nomination cinched. Which is to say that even in the Democratic Party, it is possible, at least theoretically, to ignore the black vote entirely, to concede 9-out-of-10 black votes to one’s opponent, and still manage to do well and even to win the nomination. That’s not exactly the hallmark of a powerful and highly valued constituency.

The liberal elites in this country have made no attempt whatsoever to conceal their contempt for and dismissal of black voters in this election season. In the face of the exploding Jeremiah Wright controversy, the media and political elites’ instinctive response was not to dismiss the Ranting Rev. as a isolated kook, as one might expect, but to claim that he was anything but unique and, in fact, personified perfectly the rage and ignorance typical of both “the black church”

and its attendees. It would be difficult to imagine a greater insult to blacks in America than that paid by the Democratic left and its media apologists, who said, essentially, yes, Wright's crazy, but that's not his fault (or Obama's); they're all crazy.

As we conceded in our previous piece on Obama and Wright ("Obama and Race," March 25), we have no idea what goes on in most black churches and we would never pretend that we do. Still, we are unprepared to suggest that the majority of religious black voters are exposed to kind of ignorant hate-mongering as was done by Wright. And there is some anecdotal evidence, coming in the form of interviews conducted by the *Los Angeles Times* with a handful of other black ministers, that suggests that Wright is, indeed, an outlier, unusual in his contempt and anger with the land of his birth. What this would mean then, is that whatever they say or claim to believe, liberal elites hold blacks in contempt and would prefer to have them portrayed as conspiracy-addled kooks than to concede that their presumptive presidential nominee chose poorly in selecting a church and a minister.

Of course, the real and most devastating evidence of the Democratic Party's disdain and disregard for the black voters who have helped make it the majority party for most of the last 75 years can be found a long way from Washington. And a long way from the political journalists and commentators who might otherwise be forced to confront the connection between the destructive pathologies of various black political leaders and the Democratic Party's indulgence of those leaders, irrespective of their deleterious impact on the community they claim to represent.

Take, for example, the recent antics of another revolting reverend, Al Sharpton, who is once again up to his old tricks, stupidly stirring racial passions and insisting that injustice be done in the name of "justice." Now, we know that Sharpton is considered by many to be a national political figure. And we'll readily concede that the normalization and legitimization of Sharpton is one of the Democratic Party's most impressive and most shameful recent accomplishments. Nonetheless, in his latest effort at

racial rabble rousing, Sharpton is a local New Yorker, not a national-level player. He's the same, tired, old thug who has encouraged localized racial violence for years, who perpetuated the Tawana Brawley hoax, and who incited the murder of seven innocents at Freddy's Fashion Mart.

Sharpton's latest cause *du jour* is the death of Sean Bell, a 23-year-old who was mistakenly shot to death by New York city police. The police were acquitted last week, and that, naturally, has inflamed tensions between the NYC police and the city's black community. Or, more accurately, that has only incited Sharpton to try his best to inflame tensions between NYC police and the black community.

For the record, we think that the shooting of Bell is tragic, to say the least. Moreover, we are more than willing to concede that his shooting and previous shootings of unarmed young black men may well suggest that there is some procedural problem with the NYC Police Department's policies on the use of deadly force.

More likely, though, the fact that innocent young black men keep getting shot might suggest that there is a problem with the perception by police of young black men. It is important to remember here that two of the three policemen who shot Bell and were called "KKK" and "murderers" by unhappy protestors are themselves black. Additionally, it is important to remember as *City Journal's* Heather MacDonald has pointed out, that young black men are overwhelmingly responsible for violent crime in this country. "From 1976 to 2005," MacDonald recently noted, "blacks committed over 52 percent of all murders in America." And no one knows these numbers better than the police. It is therefore not unreasonable that law enforcement officers – even *black* law enforcement officers – might be unwilling to give young black men the benefit of the proverbial doubt when there is a chance that lives may be on the line.

It doesn't have to be like this, though. In fact it *shouldn't* be like this. But in order to fix the problem, to keep young black men safer, and to calm and ease the concerns of the broader black community, people

like Sharpton and the leaders of the Democratic Party have to be honest and rational, something they appear completely incapable of being. Rather than insisting that due process and a fair acquittal is a master stroke of racial discrimination perpetrated by a hateful and vicious enemy, Sharpton et al. have to accept the verdict, accept the cause for the misunderstanding by police, and work with the city and its police force to rectify those misunderstandings, thus protecting young black men and the black community as a whole. For a party that is so big on “root causes,” the Democrats, led by Sharpton, seem keenly intent on ignoring the root cause of the problem here, namely the level of violent crime among young black men, and instead choose to scapegoat the police and to call them “white” racists, irrespective of their actual “race.”

Another prime example of the left’s unwillingness even to address the real problems facing urban blacks can be seen in the recent events in the nation’s deadliest city, Detroit. Before getting into the mess there, we should note that John Conyers, the Democratic Chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, is from Detroit. His wife, moreover, is a member of the Detroit City Council. And therefore one might presume that the city’s misfortune might be of primary concern to him.

Not so. While his home city crumbles and rots and his fellow residents are murdered at a higher rate than any other citizens in the country, Conyers continues to prattle on about impeaching President Bush and even has taken it upon himself to investigate the acquittal of the aforementioned police officers involved in the shooting of Sean Bell. Meanwhile, his wife, Madame City Councilwoman, is busy calling the president of the city council “Shreck” and being lectured by eighth-graders about how adults really should know better than to call other people names.

At the same time, the city’s Mayor, Kwame Kilpatrick, has shown once again that corruption is hardly the exclusive purview of Republican Congressmen. But while the GOP tends to purge itself of its corrupt members, the mayor of Detroit retains his job and has

staved off certain political demise simply by shrieking “racism” at those who seek to hold him accountable for his misdeeds.

Kilpatrick, for those of you who don’t know, is the “Hip-Hop Mayor” of Detroit, who had an affair with his chief-of-staff, fired two police officers to cover-up said affair, lied about all of this under oath, and then was caught in his lies by a series of text messages he sent. He has also been indicted for, among other things, obstruction of justice and perjury. But does anyone in the Democratic Party care? Does Congressman Conyers care? Apparently not.

Sadly, Kilpatrick is not the first mayor of Detroit to wallow in corruption. And the effects of his actions are felt by far more than the two hapless police officers who managed to get in his way. In a recent piece on Kilpatrick and Detroit, Rich Lowry, the editor of *National Review*, put it this way:

Detroit suffers from every possible malady except a plague of locusts, and that’s only because they find urban living uncongenial. The city has a revitalized downtown, but all around it, the city rots. *Forbes* magazine declared Detroit “America’s Most Miserable City,” on the basis of its unemployment and crime rates, among other things. The unemployment rate of 8.2 percent is the highest of any major urban area in the nation, and its homicide rate is higher than New York’s in the bad old days of the early 1990s.

The city has lost 1 million residents since 1950. It was hit by the decline of the auto industry and white flight, fueled partly by racism. These trends would have rocked the city no matter what. Detroit compounded them with disastrous governance, personified by Mayor Coleman Young, who held office for 20 years beginning in 1974.

His record raises the question why, if it wanted to engage in a nefarious plot to hurt blacks, the federal government would invent the AIDS virus when it could simply emplace mayors like Coleman Young instead. “Imagine a Rev. Jeremiah Wright with real power,” says urban expert Fred Siegel. Coleman taunted suburbanites, accusing them of “pillaging the city,” while his scandal-plagued administration managed the city into the ground.

He neglected policing, maintaining that “crime is a problem, but not the problem. The police are the major threat...to the minority community.” The 1967 riots never really ended in Detroit, dragging on in a long crime wave. With government services terrible to nonexistent and both crime and tax rates high, there was no reason for anyone to stay. “Several Detroit mayors have been the best economic development officers Oakland County ever had,” comments Michael LaFaive of the Michigan-based Mackinac Center for Public Policy, referring to the county to Detroit’s north.

All of this is part and parcel of the very same phenomenon we noted in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in September 2005, namely the Democratic Party’s willingness to ignore the plight of black citizens in favor of supporting corrupt and destructive black politicians. Back then, we noted the following:

Certainly race was a crucial variable in determining one’s chances of surviving Hurricane Katrina, *but it was not the causative variable.* Those who died and suffered unduly in the aftermath of this storm did so principally because they were poor, not because they were black. Of course, it just so happens that

most of the poor were black, but here again, race was not the determinative variable. What precipitates poverty, particularly in cities like New Orleans, Detroit, Washington, D.C., and East St. Louis, is corruption, the breakdown of the family, and what has become known as “the culture of dependency.” And what precipitates those factors is the civil rights and liberal establishments’ tolerance for such things, their absolute and steadfast refusal to acknowledge that there are problems plaguing the black community that are entirely unrelated to white racism.

President Bush has a phrase that many conservatives detest which he uses in conjunction with his education policies, “the soft bigotry of low expectations.” This phrase, more than any other, captures the liberal establishment’s attitudes toward predominantly black cities in this country. For reasons we can’t even begin to imagine or understand, the liberal and civil rights establishments are willing to tolerate conditions in predominately black municipalities that they would not tolerate elsewhere, *despite the fact that the people who suffer most from of these conditions are themselves black....*

Anyone who questions the accepted orthodoxy on these issues is immediately branded a racist, which means that no one of any standing will even think about doing so. And so it will remain the case that the state of America’s biggest and most predominantly black cities is the predominant threat to the health, well-being, and economic prospects of its black residents.

If the leaders of the Democratic Party actually cared about the poor, black residents of places like Detroit, they would do something about it. They would do

something about the Kwame Kilpatrick and Coleman Youngs of the world. They would make clear that they understand that the true racial crime here is not legal pursuit of manifestly corrupt black politicians, but the conditions in which these politicians have allowed their constituents to wallow, while they pursue their own personal aggrandizement. The conditions that persist in much of urban black America are a disgrace, a tragedy that is shockingly out of place in a nation of so much prosperity and comfort. But it is a disgrace for which liberalism is predominantly responsible and which Democratic Party officials choose to ignore, for reasons we can't even begin to imagine.

As we noted last month and at the top of this piece, we had thought and indeed hoped for many years that the problems associated with black voters' overwhelming loyalty to the Democratic Party would organically dissipate as the black community moved more and more into the social mainstream. That hasn't happened. And while we can't say that it won't happen, our fear is that it won't.

A big part of the reason that this is so, we believe, is because both political parties have come to the conclusion that fighting over black votes is foolish. Republicans have given in to despair and conceded the black vote to their opponents. And Democrats have, apparently, decided that the appearance of concern is all that matters and that their actions do not have to match their rhetoric.

This is bad for Republicans. It is bad for Democrats. It is bad for the black community. And it is bad for America.

WHAT, ME WORRY?

In our humble opinion, this presidential election campaign has been a lot of fun so far and promises to get even better as the summer progresses. It started out a little slow, but now we have a daily dose of the highly relaxed, really quite funny when relaxed, avuncular John McCain, whose wife runs a beer distributorship, which automatically places him head and shoulders above the other two liberals in our estimation.

Even better, we have the daily joy of watching the increasingly weird Barack Obama and his creepy minister, and the always-entertaining Miss Hillary, with her chipmunk cheeks, her cheery smile, and her doltish husband standing around with his mouth hanging open, constantly reminding one of Muggeridge's famous description of the American journalist and communist sympathizer Anna Louise Strong: "an enormous woman with a very red face, a lot of white hair, and an expression of stupidity so overwhelming that it amounted to a strange kind of beauty."

Not incidental to the happy circumstance of this fun and amusing presidential election is the fact that there really is very little to worry about as far as the outcome goes. Rub-a-dub-dub, three liberals in a tub. In fact, it is hard to remember a presidential election that hasn't been widely described by pundits and political experts on both sides of the aisle as "one of the most important in the history of the nation," a "watershed election," "crucial to the future course of mankind."

But in case you hadn't notice, you don't hear any of that kind of talk this time around. It's like watching "America Idol," or "Extreme Boxing." Just good fun. And if you haven't wondered why this is, you should take a minute and think about it. Because if you do, it will make you feel better when you're paying \$4 a gallon for gasoline and \$2.25 for a loaf of bread. (Where's Jean Valjean when you need him?) You see, the reason that this election is fun and not widely regarded as a "matter of life or death" to the nation, is

that things are pretty good right now in the good old U.S. of A. And they are likely to stay pretty good for a while.

Ah yes, we know the “average consumer” is “in trouble,” conservatism is on ropes, the culture is in an advanced stage of decay, a majority of Americans think the nation is “headed in the wrong direction,” and George Bush has done a lousy job. Blah, blah, blah.

Now all of this and more may well be true. But troubles are relative. In the 14th century, 30% to 60% of Europe’s entire population died from the Black Plague. The big topic last week among the three intrepid competitors for the post of the most powerful leader of the world in the opening days of the 21st century was whether the federal tax on gasoline would keep Americans from enjoying their summer vacations. Believe it or not, this is the kind of trouble that nations have when times are good. Indeed, whether you like George W. or not, the fact is that when he hands the keys to the White House over to his successor next January, he will honestly be able to tell him or her that things are reasonably well under control.

Yes, there are wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. But war happens, to paraphrase a popular scatological phrase among the youth of today. And as wars go, these two are going reasonably well. In fact, barring some major surprise, both could be highly manageable by the time the next president takes office, and could, thus, offer that individual an opportunity to enjoy the fruits of two, highly valuable American military and diplomatic outposts smack dab in the middle of the world’s hottest spot and on top of one of the world’s biggest oil deposits. Mmmmm!

Moreover, virtually everything else is okay, if not great. For example, the only explanation up with which we can come (as Churchill would not have put it) for President Bush’s reluctance to use military force to prevent Iran from gaining nuclear weapons and to force North Korea to abandon its nuclear program is

that he is reasonably confident that the behind-the-scenes diplomatic efforts are working. Wouldn’t that be something?

As for the economy, the baby boomers are entering retirement age, which means endless opportunities to make money for anyone who is smart enough to figure out how this gang is going to collectively remake the world in order to make their new circumstances comfortable for them.

And finally, the two biggest threats to American superpower status, i.e., China and Russia, will each very soon be entering a period of demographic stagnation that boggles the mind and makes it highly unlikely that either will do anything too adventuresome militarily for at least a few years.

As for terrorism, either there is no real threat at all, or the Bush administration has set in place a fairly good system for keeping it in check. Take your pick. Either way, the lack of any large scale, 9/11 type attack since 2001 is another reason that the American people can have a few laughs at the expense of Barack and his crazy preacher, the “new Hillary” and her goofy old husband, and John McCain, the knight of the happy countenance.

And that’s not all the good news. The hard and happy truth is that whoever occupies the White House in 2009 is going to be faced with what we, many, many years ago in these pages, described as “blessed gridlock.” Or to put this in another way, not much is going to happen at the instigation of the next president. Partisan politics will play a roll in keeping him or her from doing too much damage, as will the shaky state of the economy.

Even more important is the fact that the American legislature has grown increasingly stupid over the years, probably in response to being products of at least four decades of declining educational standards, but possibly having something to do with the water supply up there. We don’t know. In any case, the election of a river rock to any congressional or senatorial post

in the land would raise the collective IQ of the entire U.S. Congress, which means that more and more of the heavy lifting when it comes to solving problems will be done in response to circumstances, rather than the forward looking imaginations of our congressional leaders. Thus, the solution to higher oil prices will be higher oil prices, rather than too much congressional tinkering, and the solution to the immigration problem will be too many immigrants, rather than congressional tinkering, etc., etc., etc. “And that’s a pretty good deal,” to borrow the tag line from a 7-11 advertisement back in the 1970s for two hot dogs and a soda for \$1.

Now if you happen to be a social conservative, who is concerned about the moral rectitude of the nation and the ill effects that a president who has a lax attitude toward the issues that concern you, let us remind you once again, that the solution to societal decay does not lie in politics.

As we’ve said many times in these pages, Washington is where the score is kept in the battle for the soul of America. If there are no conservatives in positions of political responsibility in the nation’s capital, it is not a sign that the political game is being lost in Washington. It is a sign that the game is being lost in the homes, schools, and houses of worship, and centers of entertainment and culture across the land. If you are unhappy with the choice you are being offered by the two political parties next November, the place to begin to remedy that situation is closer to home than the cesspool that Washington has become.

You will recall that Hercules was the son of Zeus, and therefore had a slight edge when it came to cleaning up the Augean Stables. You, being a mere mortal, will not be able to clean up Washington in one fell swoop, but will have to do it one cow pie at a time.

In the meantime, enjoy the only presidential election in memory, and most probably the last one ever, that really doesn’t matter much.

Copyright 2008. The Political Forum. 8563 Senedo Road, Mt. Jackson, Virginia 22842, tel. 540-477-9762, fax 540-477-3359. All rights reserved.

Information contained herein is based on data obtained from recognized services, issuer reports or communications, or other sources believed to be reliable. However, such information has not been verified by us, and we do not make any representations as to its accuracy or completeness, and we are not responsible for typographical errors. Any statements nonfactual in nature constitute only current opinions which are subject to change without notice.