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HERMAN CAIN AND THE RISE OF THE BLACK RIGHT

Now I acknowledge that liberty is a great thing, and worth seeking for, if we can get it honestly; and by our good conduct prevail upon our masters to set us free: though for my own part I do not wish to be free,...for many of us who are grown up slaves, and have always had masters to take care of us, should hardly know how to take care of themselves; and it may be for our own comfort to remain as we are(p. 19).

Jupiter Hammon, 1760 (Banks, 1996)

There have always been Black conservatives. The quote above is from America's first Black published author, Rev. Jupiter Hammon. His master saw fit to publish his defense of slavery but other works on the humanity of slaves were left unpublished. Hammon preached that political resistance and agitation were unimportant and that the true task was to live a proper life seeking the salvation of God. One scholar cites his beliefs as perhaps the first expression of a distinctly African American Protestant ethic (Bracey, 2008). From the Afro-British of the pre-Revolutionary War era through Booker T. Washington and the Black Republicans of the Nixon administration, Blacks have demonstrated a range of perspectives yet it would be difficult to label any of them right wing. They believed their fate was tied to that of other Blacks in a struggle for equality. The route to be taken to secure that equality was the subject of contention. Thus the rise of a Black Right, symbolized by the brief ascendance of Herman Cain, denying collective struggle and uniting with those opposing civil rights is a new phenomena.

Despite the public prominence of such figures as Cain, Clarence Thomas and Allen West, their existence is paradoxical. Historically, the right wing in the United States is at the core of a political order or institutional regime that is fundamentally anti-democratic, elitist, and inequalitarian. The existence of Black leaders or politicians identifying with the right runs counter to the right's perspective of Blacks in general as "un-American," "culturally deprived," and "the other." What accounts for the rise of the Black Right, what are its potential bases of support within the Black masses, in short where is it headed?

It is often mentioned that approximately 5,000 Blacks fought against England in the Revolutionary War symbolized by Crispus Attucks, the first rebel to die in the "Boston massacre." Less known is the fact that more Blacks fought on the side of the British who promised them their freedom. The enslaved Blacks as well as the free African Britons of the 17th century worked hard, educated themselves, worshipped the Christian God, supported their family members, participated in community affairs and served in the militia. In short, they embodied the values of the White conservatives they imitated. To focus on this group, however, would force Black conservatives to acknowledge that this early Black commitment to White conservative values ill served Black people. The African Britons were swept aside in a rising tide of racism and slavery that ironically proclaimed the equality of all men (Jones in Tate, 2002).

A more "organic" conservatism with some parallels to today's Black Right is witnessed in the establishment of the American Moral Reform Society (AMRS) in the mid-to-late 1830s. Growing out of the African American convention movement that began in 1830, organic Black conservatives viewed "immorality" within the Black

community, rather than White racism, as the principal obstacle to racial progress. William Whipper, the Philadelphia leader of the convention movement and AMRS, rejected emigration believing Blacks could make themselves more acceptable to Whites by focusing on educational uplift and morality (Weems in Tate, 2002).

Whipper's organic Black conservatism ultimately failed to attract lasting mass support for three reasons, according to Robert Weems, Jr. First, Whipper and his fellow moral reformers belief that moral reform alone could end racism and slavery seemed naïve. By 1830, the abolition movement was shifting from an elitist, conservative, morality-centered gradualism to a more inclusive, politically based immediacy that condoned slave rebellion. This debate over the utility of moral suasion versus armed action between such figures as Whipper and David Walker foreshadows the divide between Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X during the civil rights movement.

Third, the free Black community rejected the AMRS's denigration of both racial identification and racially based institutions. Whipper believed African Americans were "deeply afflicted with 'colorphobia', which we must throw off in our churches and other institutions" (Weems in Tate, 9. 36). Responding in *The Colored American* an unknown writer with the pen name Sidney said,

That we are colored, is a fact, an undeniable fact. That we are descendants of Africans—colored people—negroes if you will, is true. We affirm there is nothing in it that we need to be ashamed of, yea, rather much that we may be proud of. There is, then, on our part, as identified with the negro race, no reason why the term [colored] should be repudiated....

Discontinue the use of the term—does prejudice die? Oh no, Leviathan is not so tamed (Weems in Tate, p. 37).

Of course, uplift ideology did not die with Whipper and the AMSR. It found a home in Reconstruction politics (Holt, 1977) and in 19th century Black Nationalism. These latter phenomena proved one did not have to shed Black identity and organizations to adopt White values. Wilson Moses characterizes these elite nationalists as believing Africa will be redeemed while also accepting European cultures as more advanced (Moses, 1978). Thus they join the integrationist Whipper in embracing a White standard for Black moral worth.

As Kenneth Gaines points out, however, uplift ideology was not simply a matter of educated African Americans wanting to be White as E. Franklin Frazier posits in *Black Bourgeoisie*. Rather it represents the struggle for a positive Black identity based on the construction of class differences through racial and cultural hierarchies. It is also an advance over the “house slave/field slave” dichotomy popularized by Malcolm X in which the house slave totally identified with the master (See Kelley in Marable, 2013; Asante and Hall, 2011). This construction was seen as a form of cultural politics that replaced the biological politics that denied the humanity of middle-class African Americans (Gaines, 1997).

The personification of uplift ideology is Booker T. Washington. He synthesized integrationist and nationalist strains of Black thought at Tuskegee. His pedagogy made Black development seem a normal part of national economic growth making immigrants rather than African Americans the “outsiders.” For Washington separation was a strategy that allowed self-confidence to develop and Tuskegee relied on private funding to avoid

state control and employed all Black teachers to serve as role models who could appreciate incremental student progress. Moreover, he established a number of Black organizations such as the National Negro Business League and promoted all-Black towns.

At the same time, unlike his peers Alexander Crummel and W.E.B. DuBois, Washington believed any unique cultural attributes must be suppressed to compete with Whites. He allied Black interests with White elites and the great corporations of the day rather than labor unions. Secretly, Washington supported legal challenges to Black disenfranchisement and gave his own children a liberal arts, not vocational, education. Although Booker T. Washington is frequently called the “father of Black conservatism”, his pragmatic philosophy is more appropriately labeled “accommodationism” rather than “conservatism” (Toll, 1979; Harlan, 1972, 1983).

A more appropriate prototype for today’s Black Right is long time *Pittsburgh Courier* columnist George Schuyler. In his early years, Schulyer was sentenced to prison for rebelling against racism in the military and began his writing career with A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owens’ socialist journal *The Messenger* in the early 1920s. By the end of the decade he was being mentored by White conservative journalist H.L. Mencken and joined the anti-Communist movement after World War II. However, what really separates Schuyler from Black Republicans of the period is his avid opposition to the civil rights movement. He joined the John Birch Society and went so far as to appear with Sheriff Jim Clark in Selma, Alabama. Schuyler broke with the *Courier* over his 1964 support for Goldwater but was quickly adopted by White conservatives like William Loeb of the *Manchester Union Leader*. By 1965, his columns opposing Martin Luther

King's Nobel Peace Prize appeared in 150 newspapers. His popularity with White conservatives did not translate into votes in Harlem where he lost a Congressional challenge to Adam Clayton Powell in 1964 obtaining only six percent of the vote (Williams in Tate, 2002; Bracey, 2008; Schuyler, 1966).

Another Black conservative, Rev. Joseph H. Jackson, proved a more significant threat to King and the civil rights movement. Jackson, who was a good friend of Martin Luther King, Sr., was president of the National Baptist Convention, home to five million members and 20,000 preachers. As such, it dwarfed the NAACP and SCLC and King sought to move it from political apathy to political relevance. Yet Jackson opposed the sit-in movement and became envious of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s fame. When the latter threw his support to a reform leader in an attempt to replace Jackson as president, Jackson was able to use parliamentary procedure and physical force to beat back the challenge. Having beaten King's supporters in the National Baptist Convention, Jackson had the temerity to publically denounce the March on Washington at the annual convention of the NAACP in Chicago. To his surprise, he was booed for the first time in his life and hecklers threatened to kill him (Branch, 1988). Schuyler and Jackson's (and to a lesser extent Washington's) opposition to the civil rights movement marks an important distinction between an older generation of Black conservatives and the rise of Black neoconservatism in the 1980s.

Generally, the Fairmont conference in San Francisco in 1980 is seen as the beginning of Black neoconservatism. It is a subset of the societal shift to the right led by Ronald Reagan. The popular base for this shift rests on at least three factors. First, it was a rejection of the identity politics of the late sixties and seventies or put another way—a

reassertion of White hegemony. Second, a reaction to the economic and military decline of the United States symbolized by the formation of OPEC and Vietnam respectively. Third, a questioning of the liberal values emerging from the sixties as reflected in sexual mores, abortion, and secularism. Although the neo refers to the fact that a number of new conservatives had been liberals or socialists in the 1950s and 1960s, it is important to note that the Republican party began moving to the right in 1948 and a number of its most influential figures such as Reagan, Barry Goldwater, William Buckley, Robert Bork and William Rehnquist had opposed civil rights legislation (Lowndes, 2008; Smith, 2010).

Neoconservatism has two –sometimes-conflicting – branches. A religious right questioning the cultural values emerging from the sixties and engaging such issues as school prayer, drug use, women’s rights, gay rights, and popular culture. Institutionally such groups as the Moral Majority, Religious Roundtable, and National Action Coalition represented it. Its leaders included Jerry Falwell, Phyllis Schlafely, Pat Robertson, and Robert Reed. With the help of direct mail pioneer Richard Viguerie, it developed an important political presence.

The other branch, the intellectual right, questioned the growth of government. Supported by corporations this branch focused on policies such as affirmative action, busing, welfare, crime, and foreign policy. A proliferation of well-funded think tanks emerged including the Heritage Foundation, American Enterprise Institute (AEI), Hoover Institution, Manhattan Institute, Institute for Contemporary Policy Studies, and the Georgetown Center. Academics like Samuel Huntington, Kevin Phillips, James Wilson, Daniel Bell, Aaron Wildavsky, Charles Murray, Dinesh D’Souza, and Jeanne Kirkpatrick

found their views welcomed in journals and newspapers such as *Commentary*, *Public Interest*, *Washington Times*, *American Spectator*, and more recently Fox News (Walters, 2003; Singh, 2004).

Ironically, given the long history of social conservatism in the Black Church as represented by Rev. Jupiter Hammon and Rev. Joseph Jackson, Black neoconservatism has largely reflected the economic and political policy concerns of Black academics and their White sponsors. The best-known figures at the 1980 Fairmont conference came from the academic and business worlds, not the church. They include Thomas Sowell, Clarence Thomas, Glenn Loury, Clarence Pendleton, Walter Williams, and Samuel Pierce. Thomas, Pendleton, and Pierce would go on to serve in high positions in the Reagan administration. They represent Reagan's attempt to supplant traditional Black leadership including Black Republicans. That is, as Reagan and his followers pushed moderate Republicans, often called Rockefeller Republicans, out of the party, he simultaneously excluded most Black Republicans who were moderates. They included such well-established Black Republicans as William Coleman and Arthur Fletcher, who were part of the Nixon administration, and Senator Edward Brooke. Coleman, for example, supported Thomas's nomination to the federal district court but refused to back his Supreme Court nomination (Thomas, 2007).

Although the new Black right constantly proclaimed that their voices were suppressed they quickly institutionalized themselves in a host of "think" tanks and political action committees. They include the National Black Republican Council, African American Republican Leadership Council, National Leadership Network of Black Conservatives (Project 21), Center for Equal Opportunity, Brotherhood

Organization for a New Destiny, Pacific Legal Foundation, Black American Political Action Committee, Center for New Black Leadership, Black Alliance for Educational Options, Coalition on Urban Renewal and Education, Alternative Black Speakers Program, Operation Hope, American Civil Rights Institute, National Tea Party Coalition, and the Lincoln Institute. Funding for these new groups came not from the Black community but from conservative foundations. Funders include the Bradley Foundation, Hickory Foundation, Olin Foundation Donner Foundation, Scaife Foundation, Castle Rock Foundation, AEI, the Hoover Institution, Cato Institute, Coors Foundation, and the Heritage Foundation. For an ideology that stresses individualism and a lack of group consciousness, it is remarkable how many of these new groups identify themselves as “Black.”

While Black neoconservatives might be distinguished from an earlier generation of Black Republicans, they are not uniform in their beliefs. Sowell was mentored by Sterling Brown at Harvard and accepted a job at Howard University against the advice of another mentor, Milton Friedman. Glenn Loury and Robert Woodson broke with AEI over the publication of D’Souza’s *The End of Racism* and call for welfare reform rather than its elimination. Shelby Steele, Alan Keyes, Ken Hamblin, Gary Franks, and Clarence Thomas have all appropriated Martin Luther King for their own use. In short, they exhibited some belief in linked fate that ties them to African Americans as a group (Ondaatje, 2010).

Other Black neoconservatives are much more individualistic or libertarian in their viewpoints. Economist Walter Williams has denounced welfare, applauded the South for its stand during the Civil War and supported states displaying the confederate flag. Jay

Parker, head of the Lincoln Institute, and sociologist Anne Wortham have attacked the civil rights movement as lawless and as escaping individual responsibility (Ondaatje, 2010). As such, these Black neoconservatives are more properly categorized as the forerunners of the Black Right.

Although it is always difficult to generalize, we might say that Black conservatives and the Black Right share a belief in capitalism, are anti-union, support limited government, and oppose such policies as affirmative action, gay rights, women's rights, and minimum wage. The Black Right of today, however, has divorced itself from more traditional conservatism by opposing all welfare, promoting states rights, and supporting an extreme individualism. This individualism denies a collective Black fate and sees Black identity as limiting rather than fulfilling. One important example of this position is the admiration a number of Black neoconservatives express for the self-help ethos of the Nation of Islam (Thomas, 2007; Steele, 1991). Despite this admiration, they cannot embrace Black Nationalism because of its emphasis on the collective rather than the individual. Given these extreme views, what are the potential bases of support for the Black Right in the Black community?

At a crucial point in Herman Cain's story about his "journey to the White House," he talks about overcoming stage four cancer and God's role in his treatment. He says beating colon cancer "is a true test of my faith" (Cain, 2011, p. 93). Cain then points out other signs of divine intervention. He is impressed that the specialist that agrees to see him in Savannah is named Dr. Lord. When he is admitted to the cancer treatment center in Texas, Cain notes that a woman named Grace delivers his orientation briefing. "You see," he says, "the Lord gives you these road signs—that is if you know how to

recognize them” (p. 95). When Cain asks the surgeon about the operation, he says, “I’m going to make an incision like a ‘J’. Like in J-E-S-U-S? I asked. Yes, he said. I replied, A ‘J’ cut! I smiled and said, thank you, Lord!’ that’s because when you are in the ‘Word’, you can listen and hear when God is speaking to you” (p. 96). When Cain asks himself why he was spared against the odds he says, “Did it have something to do with the Lord wanting me to survive so that I might help set this great nation of ours on its own path to recovery?” Of course his answer is yes—“My journey now is God’s plan” (p. 96).

Nowhere in the discovery and treatment of his cancer does Cain mention that he had the finest medical care available. On feeling ill he went to his doctor who ordered a colonoscopy followed by a CAT scan, both expensive procedures. With results in hand his assistant researched the best cancer treatment centers in the country as opposed to a general hospital. She identified the top two—Sloan Kettering in New York and MD Anderson in Houston. His assistant then asked Cain if he knew anyone who could get him into MD Anderson. Cain replied, “yes I do. Boone Pickens, the oil magnate” (p. 93-4). Pickens, who had been on the board of MD Anderson, called the head and Cain was promptly admitted. Before he went to Houston, he got a second opinion, at no charge, from a colon research specialist recommended by his assistant who had a friend at the National Health Institute. Obviously, the average cancer patient—with or without God’s intervention—would not have access to these resources.

Like Cain, Clarence Thomas takes refuge in God during a crucial period in his life. During his confirmation hearing for the Supreme Court Thomas states, “[t]he more hopeless things appeared and the more vulnerable I felt, the more I turned to God’s

comforting embrace, and over time my focus became primarily God centered (Thomas, 2007, (p. 249). He then quotes the apostle Paul, “[t]herefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong” (p. 249).

After Anita Hill testified, Thomas was tested again. He and his wife Virginia went home and “spent the evening praying, reading the Bible together, and listening to religious music” (p. 254). They invited four other friends over the next morning to join them in prayer. “It had long since become clear to me that “this battle was at bottom spiritual, not political, and so my attention shifted from politics to the inward reality of my spiritual life” (p. 254). Thomas suspects he has been guilty of the sin of pride (he hides his Corvette in the garage during the hearings) and now must submit totally to God’s will. The fate of his nomination is now posed as an issue that will be determined by God, not Thomas’s record or Hill’s charges.

On the day he responded to Hill’s charges, Thomas and his wife pray with his sponsor, Senator Danforth who exhorted him to “let the Holy Ghost speak through me (Thomas)” (p. 261). In a White House statement upon his confirmation Thomas says, “I will praise you, LORD, for you have rescued me... Weeping may go on all night, but joy comes with the morning” (p. 282). Thomas goes on to thank God’s direct intervention, which enabled him to raise phoenix like from the ashes of self-pity and despair.

What are we to make of the religiosity of these two symbols of the Black Right? Black politics has historically been centered on Black religion and the Black church (Henry, 1990). It is certainly common for Black leaders to proclaim divine inspiration. Eighteenth century Black leaders from Richard Allen and Paul Cuffee through Henry

Highland Garnet, Frederick Douglass and, Alexander Crummel were church leaders as well as political leaders. Yet by the 20th century neither Booker T. Washington nor Marcus Garvey were devout Christians. It was Martin Luther King's great achievement that he reenergized the political activism inherent in Black Christianity.

Unlike some on the Black Right, Cain and Thomas acknowledge King's importance but break with his politics.

While Thomas and Cain appreciate King's leadership of the civil rights movement, they do not appreciate or identify with the prophetic tradition in Black Christianity that produced King. As slaves were permitted or encouraged to become Christians in the antebellum period, there arose two types of Black Christianity. The master approved version that taught the slaves to obey their masters and receive a heavenly reward was centered on the gospel of Paul and openly preached by White and Black preachers like Jupiter Hammond. An underground version, however, was based on the book of Exodus and slaves identified with the oppressed Hebrews held in Egyptian bondage. Moses was a central figure as it was prophesized that Black slaves would one day be led to their freedom and inspired slave rebels such as Nat Turner, Denmark Vesey, and Gabriel Prosser. This prophetic tradition could be practiced more openly among free or freed Blacks like David Walker and Frederick Douglass. By the beginning of the 20th century, this tradition was in decline and was revived by King. A more recent proponent of the prophetic tradition in Black Christianity is Rev. Jeremiah Wright of Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago (Wilmore, 1986; Lincoln,

1990; Henry, 2011). Both argue that God will punish America for the sins committed against its Black citizens.

The prophetic tradition rests on a collective view of the linked fate of Black people. From Bishop Henry McNeil Turner's call for reparations through Garvey's African Orthodox Church to James Cone's Black Theology, it contends that God is either Black or on the side of Blacks. While this claim of God's favor is true of the followers of a number of religions, it was Garvey's contention that only Blacks worshipped a God who did not look like them. Thomas and Cain implicitly reject this tradition. While not denying their racial identity, it is not central to their religious practice. They have an individual relationship with God who sees them through difficult times and enables them to profit. Their religiosity bears a striking resemblance to the prosperity gospel fueling the rise of mega churches among Black and White Christians alike.

A 2006 Time-CNN poll found that 60 percent of the Christians surveyed believed that "God wants people to be financially prosperous" and over 20 percent agreed, "material wealth is a sign of "God's blessings." One third of respondents stated "if you give away your money to God, God will bless you with more money." And nearly half of those responding believed that "Jesus was rich and we should follow his example (Harris, 2012, p. 76). While nearly half of the respondents rejected the notion that Jesus was rich and agreed that the churches should do more for the poor, it is clear that the Calvinist notion that the rich are rich because they are blessed is alive and well in 21st century America.

Political scientist Frederick Harris argues that the prophetic tradition and the prosperity gospel are in conflict. The latter with its emphasis on individualism runs counter to the core political values of the Black church tradition. Yet T.D. Jakes, who supported George W. Bush and has been called the next Billy Graham, contends the social justice mission of the activist Black church of the sixties, is less important today. Jakes thinks the church needs to focus on helping people obtain the good life. Fellow prosperity gospel minister, Creflo Dollar, says that Jesus was born into wealth because “Kings brought him gold” after his birth and that Jesus had a “treasurer who [kept] up with his money.” Rev. Kirbyjohn Caldwell of Houston preaches that the Biblical scripture commanding that it is more difficult for a rich man to ascend to the kingdom of heaven than for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle is a misinterpretation. Rev. K.C. Price of Los Angeles has sold thousands of self-help styled books with such titles as *Name It and Claim It! And Prosperity on God’s Terms* (Harris, 2012, pp. 77-91).

Prosperity gospel ministers are not a new phenomena in Black America. The first decades of the 20th century witnessed the development of a number of popular Black “cults and sects.” Perhaps the best known were “Sweet Daddy” Grace’s United House of Prayer and Father Devine’s Peace Mission. Daddy Grace and Father Devine were known for their extravagant life styles and not all of their followers were Black. They might contend that their followers vicariously enjoyed their expensive habits. Certainly they could be accused of exploiting members of their flock. Yet, as Harris points out, the followers of these early cults were primarily people on the margins unlike the masses attending

suburban mega churches. Daddy Grace and Father Devine provided some social services for their members. During the depression, a believer could get a meal and a place to stay at little or no cost at one of Devine's Peace Missions. Moreover, they were actively engaged in politics promoting anti-lynching legislation and getting followers to vote (Harris, 2012, Fauset, 1971).

The prosperity gospel accepts and even promotes extraordinary inequalities of wealth. Its materialism and extreme individualism runs counter to the civic tradition of the Black church but fits well the conservative Republican narrative that rationalizes Black inequality as the product of personal not systemic failure. The "culture of poverty" argument emerged in the late sixties as a reason to shrink government social welfare programs and lower Black expectations of redress. Welfare, for example, did not become racialized as a policy issue until Johnson's "Great Society." It continues today in the guise of family values and uplift ideology. The religiosity of Thomas and Cain is perfectly suited to right-wing Republican politics. Jakes and Caldwell, however, have also provided spiritual counseling to President Obama. A left critique of Obama is that he has departed from the prophetic gospel of Rev. Wright's church and has ignored the poor during his administration. Even worse, he lectures Black audiences on the moral responsibility of Black father's on Father's Day (Harris, 2012; Kennedy, 2011).

If the church represents one major societal institution that might serve as a base for conservative or even right wing political perspectives, the military represents another such institution. Historically the military has been seen as a

conservative institution. A 2004 Annenberg Center survey of the military confirms this general impression. It found that 47 percent of respondents identified as Republicans compared to 15 percent identifying as Democrats. A Military Times Co. survey that same year placed the number of Republicans at 60 percent of respondents compared to 13 percent Democrats. These surveys confirmed studies in the nineties by the Triangle Institute for Security Studies, which produced similar results (Dempsey, 2010).

While these surveys indicate the political leanings of the military, a significant factor in its institutional prestige is the military's political neutrality. Yet eight of our nation's presidents were military leaders. And although General Eisenhower was our most recent president with such a background, the endorsement of George W. Bush at the 2004 Republican National Convention by newly retired General Tommy Franks was seen by some as a new level of military engagement in national politics (Dempsey, 2010).

In 2004, the army was approximately 60 percent White, 10 percent Hispanic, 24 percent Black, and 7 percent other (Dempsey, pp. 35-6). Thus, the military is disproportionately African American containing twice the number of Blacks as in the general population. This conservative institution shaping young Black men and women at formative stages of their lives might be seen as a potential incubator of Black conservatism.

Undoubtedly the best-known Black military figure in the world is retired general Colin Powell. Urged to run for president in 2000, Powell instead accepted a position as the first Black Secretary of State in the administration of George W.

Bush. Yet over the past few years another former Black military officer has been capturing political headlines—tea party favorite Allen West.

Following his controversial retirement,¹ West and his family moved to Florida where he worked as a high school teacher/coach and a military consultant before running for Congress in 2008. Another former military officer in Florida's 22nd Congressional District defeated West, however, with the rise of the tea party and Sarah Palin's endorsement he reversed the outcome in 2010. West was able to outraise the incumbent by more than a 2 to 1 margin (\$5.4 million to \$2.5 million). In Congress he joined both the Tea Party Caucus and the Congressional Black Caucus and was tapped as the keynote speaker for the 2010 Conservative Political Action Conference.

Like Herman Cain, West has a penchant for rhetorical fireworks. While portraying himself as a “modern-day Harriet Tubman “for leading African Americans off the Democratic ‘plantation’”, he has attacked the principles of Muslim Congressman Keith Ellison, contended that 78 to 81 Democratic members of Congress are Communists, and refused calls for a moratorium on gun metaphors and military rhetoric in the wake of the shooting of Rep. Gabrielle Giffords in Arizona.

With a seat on the House Foreign Affairs Committee and the support of conservative icons like Glenn Beck and Newt Gingrich, West was cast as a conservative “torch bearer.” His extreme views and redistricting, however, also made West a target for the Democratic Party. He lost his 2012 reelection bid to Democratic newcomer Patrick Murphy by a narrow 2400 votes in a more

Republican 18th Congressional District. As a Republican freshman West raised an astronomical \$17 million in campaign funds compared to Murphy's \$3.6 million. He had more funding than any representative except Speaker of the House John Boehner and most of it came from outside the state. West received 4,800 fewer votes than Romney in his district suggesting that even some Republicans found his views too extreme (Alvarez, 2012; Taylor, 2012; Murphy, 2012).

It is also likely that West's extreme views were not reflective of the military in general. Historically, surveys of political opinion in the military have often focused exclusively on the attitudes of senior officers and officers tend to be older and more conservative than enlisted soldiers. For example, a 2004 C&S survey asked both groups whether they favored affirmative action. Among enlisted respondents 38 percent opposed it while 22 percent were in favor. Fifty-six percent of all officers opposed affirmative action while 18 percent were in favor. And among senior officers 60 percent opposed compared to 15 percent favoring affirmative action (Dempsey, 2010, pp. 64-5). Moreover, Black soldiers were slightly in favor of affirmative action (46%) compared to 42 percent opposed. There is also evidence that the military is growing less conservative. Obama received 25 percent of the military vote in 2008, up 10 percent from the vote received by veteran John Kerry in 2004.² In short, the Black Right will find little support among Blacks in the military.

Throughout this discussion we have utilized a simplified categorization of the Black community as liberal or conservative. In reality, the politics are much more complicated and the community more varied. Does Black, for example,

include only African Americans or does it include the wider African diaspora? If the latter, what are the implications politically?

There is no better example of the political significance of the Black identity issue than the 2008 election of Barack Obama. Conservative Black Republican perpetual candidate Alan Keyes first raised the subject of Obama's Black heritage in the 2004 Illinois Senate race. Keyes charged his opponent was not Black because he was not descended from slaves. In 2008 Daily News columnist Stanley Crouch who said Obama had not "lived the life of a Black American" picked up this line of questioning (Henry, 2008). Debra Dickerson in her book *The End of Blackness* went so far as to exclude those descended from West Indian slaves because "voluntary immigrants of African descent are just that, voluntary immigrants of African descent with markedly different outlooks on the role of race in their lives and politics" (Dickerson in Henry, pp. 7-8). While this line of questioning of Obama's "Blackness" seemed to be directed at undermining his trust among African American voters, it was quickly dropped in the wake of his ties to Rev. Jeremiah Wright who was seen by some as "too Black."³ However, the questions around the political perspectives of various representatives of the African diaspora remain.

Historically, there is a long list of West Indian political activists or those with West Indian parents in the United States. The list includes Marcus Garvey, Malcolm X, Shirley Chisholm, Harry Belafonte, and Stokely Carmichael (a.k.a. Kwame Toure). Yet the actual number of West Indians in the United States was relatively small. Before the Hart-Cellar Immigration Act abolished the national-

origins quota system in 1965, immigration to America was the most selective of all Caribbean immigration streams. With the 1965 Act and additional reforms in 1986 and 1990, West Indian immigration (including Cuba) accounted for only 3.4 percent of all immigrants to the United States from 1891 to 1970. From 1971 to 2003 this number rose to 11.9 percent. During the same early period from 1891 to 1970, voluntary migration from Africa totaled only 0.3 percent of all immigrants to America. This number (including North Africans) grew to 3.3 percent of overall immigration to the United States from 1971 to 2003. Afro-Caribbeans now outnumber and are growing faster than such well-established ethnic minorities as Cubans and Koreans (Shaw-Taylor, 2007).

Although still less than one percent of the total United States population, this growth has created some tension in the wider Black community. Briefly, this tension revolves around three issues. First are issues of racial consciousness. Those from societies in which Blacks are a majority tend to be less racially conscious than African Americans. For these groups the decision to attach primary importance to racial identification comes in the context of weighing the advantages and disadvantages of being “other” in their new environment (Shaw-Taylor; Hintzen, 2001; Waters, 1999).

A second issue concerns linked fate. One study reports that the majority of Africans they surveyed planned to return and resettle in Africa. For many Afro-Caribbeans as well, there is a transnational identity aided and abetted by cheap air travel and social networking media. Unlike African Americans, they have the option to return “home” should their situation in the United States

become untenable. Therefore, the decision to invest a great deal of energy and resources on local politics in America is weighted differently. In addition, their reference group (relative deprivation) is the people they left behind rather than White Americans (Rodgers in Alex-Assensoh, 2000; Laguerre, 2006).

A final issue involves the social and economic profile of Afro-Caribbeans and African immigrants that is far above that of African Americans. Educational attainment of Africans of an average of 14.0 years of schooling, for example, is higher than Afro-Caribbeans at 12.6 years or even that of Whites and Asians (Logan in Shaw-Taylor, p. 56). Various studies have indicated that employers prefer Black immigrants to native Blacks.⁴ Black unity is also hindered by residential segregation. Although there is some overlap, each group tends to reside in its own geographical area” (Rodgers in Alex-Assensoh).

Overall the number of Afro-Caribbean and African immigrants is relatively small but it is concentrated in areas such as New York City and Miami. For example, if the current immigration and demographic trends continue, first- and second-generation Afro-Caribbean immigrants will soon constitute a majority of New York City’s Black population (pp. 31-5). This larger Black immigrant population has led to a shift in organizing from a more inclusive Black unity to more explicitly ethnic political organizing. The new Afro-Caribbean politics, says Reul Rogers, focuses primarily on symbolic recognition and heightened visibility for the immigrant community rather than substantive demands.⁵

A perhaps extreme example of the range of diversity in the political views of Afro-Caribbeans is the 2012 Congressional candidacy of Mia Love in the 4th

Congressional District of Utah. Love, the daughter of Haitian immigrants and a Mormon, works as an exercise instructor and is mayor of Saratoga Springs, Utah. Like another small town mayor from Alaska, Love's career was given a major boost by her speech at the 2012 Republican National Convention. In her two minutes—which she expanded to more than seven—Love recounted the immigrant story of her parents who helped make America self-reliant while at the same time blasting President Obama as a divisive leader. She said, “[m]y parents immigrated to the United States with ten dollars in their pocket, believing that the America they had heard about really did exist. When times got tough they didn’t look to Washington, they looked within” (Love, 2012).

Love's appearance was one of the highlights of the convention drawing a great deal of media coverage and prompting Senator Orin Hatch of Utah to state, “[s]he’s going to be a tremendous superstar in our party.” Former Utah House Rep. Stephen Sandstorm said, “I think the idea that she is breaking a lot of stereotypes of what a Republican is being female and black... I think she did break out.” NBC political editor Mark Murphy agreed that “rarely have we seen somebody who’s running for a House seat get this attention at the RNC, and this time and time slot” (desertnews, 2012)

Love's meteoric rise in the Republican ranks was derailed by her loss to Democratic incumbent Jim Matheson by less than 3,000 votes. She had been leading in most polls prior to the election and had raised more than \$2 million in campaign funds. The NRCC spent \$1.7 million on anti-Matheson ads and two dozen outside groups spent a total of \$6 million against both candidates making it

the most expensive Congressional race in the state. Some speculated that Love's star status hurt by her spending more time outside her district campaigning for Romney than getting to know her own constituency.⁶

It is striking that both Mia Love in 2012 and Barack Obama in 2008 utilize the concept of immigrant assimilation into the American dream as a central element of their campaigns. Obama had to convince voters that his "exotic" background was really a logical extension of the mythical "melting pot." While reassuring African American voters that he identified with the Black experience in the United States, he also sought to convince White voters that America was a nation open to immigration from regions that it had formerly been closed too. In his 2004 keynote speech at the Democratic National Convention Obama said:

My father was a foreign student, born and raised in a small village in Kenya. He grew up herding goats, went to school in a tin-roof shack. His father, my grandfather, was a cook, a domestic servant to the British. But my grandfather had larger dreams for his son. Through hard work and perseverance my father got a scholarship to study in a magical place, America, that shone as a beacon of freedom and opportunity to so many who had come before him.... I stand here knowing that my story is part of the larger American story, that I owe a debt to all of those who came before me, and that in no other country on earth is my story even possible (Quoted in Logan, 2011, p. 74).

Again in a *New York Times* Magazine story entitled "is (His) Biography (Our) Destiny" Obama states: "I think...that if you can tell people, "We have a president

in the White House who still has a grandmother living in a hut on the shores of Lake Victoria and has a sister who's half-Indonesian, married to a Chinese-Canadian,' then they're going to think that he may have a better sense of what's going on in our lives and in our country. And they'd be right" (p. 74). Thus candidate Obama promoted a cosmopolitan vision of an inclusive, globally oriented, ascendant nation. Obviously, his vision was attractive to a majority of voters of color, including recent immigrants, and to a substantial number of White voters.

Although Love hints at a more inclusive America that accepts her Haitian parents, she does it in the context of an attack on Obama and government. Absent is a sense of ethnic incorporation or a general welfare. Immigrants are simply admitted to a playing field where they will either sink or swim as individuals, not a group. This message coming as it did from a young Black woman was apparently more attractive to party elites than to Utah voters. Love lost in a district carried by McCain by more than 15 percent in 2008 and one assumes by an even larger margin by Romney in 2012.

In essence, Love was offering a kind of accommodationism. Accept my immigrant parents and me and we will make no demands on the state. It is reminiscent of Booker T. Washington's shifting of the burden of Black advancement from White to Black shoulders. Those individual Blacks with the "proper" middle class values or character would be permitted to compete in the economic marketplace.

More recently the concept of “deracialization” has served as a form of accommodationism that encourages Black political actors to emphasize policy issues with broad cross-racial appeal. As originally used by political scientist Charles Hamilton it served as an electoral strategy to deny Republicans racial “wedge” issues (Hamilton, 1977). William J. Wilson would expand the discussion to the policy arena with the promotion of “universal” programs versus “targeted” programs (Wilson, 1987). Shifting back again to campaign strategy, Joseph McCormick and Charles Jones define deracialization as,

conducting campaigns in a stylistic fashion that defuses the polarizing effects of race by avoiding explicit reference to race-specific issues, while at the same time emphasizing those issues that are perceived as racially transcendent, thus mobilizing a broad segment of the electorate for purposes of capturing and maintaining public office (McCormick and Jones, 1993, p.76).

While it is theoretically possible to include progressive issues in this strategy, in reality it has been used to appeal to primarily conservative constituencies.

In *A Bound Man*, Shelby Steele applies this concept to the presidential election of 2008. He describes “bargaining” and “challenging” as the two types of masks Blacks typically wear in dealing with Whites. In the pre-Civil War Era, these masks were usually labeled “race men” and “non-race men” (Henry, 1990). “Bargainers,” says Steele, “make a deal with White Americans that gives [them] the benefit of the doubt. I will not rub America’s history of racism in your face, if you will not hold my race against me” (Steele, p. 74). Steele applies this label to

Obama when it seems more suited to Black conservatives such as Cain, Thomas, West, and Love.

Herman Cain's presidential bid for the presidency in 2012 marks a watershed for Black conservatives. Unlike the most prominent Black conservatives of the George W. Bush administration—Thomas and Condoleezza Rice—Cain was running for elective office not appointive office. The fact that he won the Florida straw poll and briefly led Republican candidates during the primary race marks a new high in support for Black conservatives. Although Cain's campaign quickly began to deteriorate after charges of sexual misconduct were leveled against him in late October of 2011, Cain proved that Black conservatives could attract White conservative voters (*New York Times*, 2011).

Allen West and Mia Love briefly attracted the attention of conservative voters until their defeat in the 2012 election. Following Obama's re-election the Republican Party engaged in highly publicized "soul-searching" concerning their lack of appeal to minority voters. South Carolina Senator Tim Scott and neurosurgeon Benjamin Carson attracted attention as possible new "Black hopes". After 13 years on the Charleston City Council and a term each in the South Carolina legislature and the House of Representatives, Scott enjoyed a kind of "affirmative action" in being elevated to the Senate by South Carolina governor Nikki Haley as a replacement for retiring Senator Jim DeMint. Carson, on the other hand, has never held office. His political claim to fame rests on his challenge to Obama's policies at the National Prayer Breakfast attended by Obama at the start of his second term (Coates, 2011). Scott and Carson and other Black conservatives must confront the same fundamental problem that confronted Cain, West and Love. They are Black

candidates in a party that views African Americans and immigrants of color as the other, as outsiders, a party whose very unity rests in its contrast to the other as the rise of the tea party movement within weeks of Obama's election so clearly illustrates (Skopal, 2012). Scott, for example, has a zero rating on civil rights from the NAACP (Fox Nation, 2013). The Republican Party is not interested in changing its policy positions on issues that are important to the Black community. It simply seeks to find a Black face to sell those positions to that community. While their views demonstrate the ideological diversity (and opportunism) in the Black community, they do not see themselves linked to that community and vice versa.

NOTES

1 West was disciplined by the military for overseeing the beating of a civilian Iraq police officer in 2003. His defense of his actions made him a hero to the right wing. See "Iraq: The Inside Story by Lieutenant Colonel Allen West". OpinionBug.com. October 16, 2004

2 Neither presidential candidate in 2012 had served in the military. The House of Representatives had 320 veterans in 1970, but fewer than 130 in 1994. Moreover, in 1997, for the first time ever, neither the Secretary of Defense, National Security Advisor, Secretary of State, nor any of their deputies had ever been in uniform (Morgan, 2012, p. 76).

3 Obama's White ancestry was cited by many as helping reassure White voters of his racial moderation. His mother and White grandparents, not his African roots, were constantly mentioned by Obama during the campaign (See, for example, Kennedy, p. 76; and Logan, p. 71).

4 Recent immigrants are also preferred by some employers because they are less familiar with and less likely to utilize civil and employment rights laws.

5 Haitians and Jamaicans comprise the largest number of Caribbean immigrants while Nigerians and Ghanaians are the most numerous African immigrants.

6 Mia Love says election loss surprised her but she's mum on future,"
(desertnews.com/article/865566573) 11/12/12. Love's lead in the polls prior to the election suggests that the "Bradley effect" may have played a role in her defeat (Henry, 1983).