

POINT OF VIEW

BETWEEN THE LINES

Pat Buchanan: Hybrid of America's redefined politics of inclusion

By A. Asadullah Samad

The rise of Pat Buchanan and his thinly veiled politics of exclusion has been the surprise of the 1996 Republican primary season. For some, for others, his political rise is a matter of timing. To remember Pat Buchanan's 1992 Republican Convention speech, where he took "family values" in a direction that excluded everybody including the blind, the crippled and the crazy, he was claimed to be a political Neanderthal. However, two years later, the Angry White Male

revolution changed the time.

Anybody that has followed that course of this freshman Republican class (the sons of the congressional and talk show Frankensteins, Newt Gingrich and Rush Limbaugh) and the attitudes that manifested themselves in 1994's "Angry November," it was just a matter of time before one (or more) of the candidates played to the themes. Pete Wilson tried to play (and is still playing) outwardly to these themes, but his politics was (and is) perceived as "too racial" and "too exclusionary,"

and therefore was perceived as "too offensive" to gain any widespread support.

Being seen as even right of Buchanan, who is far right of everybody else, Wilson had to bring his race politics back to California. The rest of the country wasn't ready to be seen as openly supporting the politics of exclusion. White sheets went out with polyester suits. A more refined look is necessary for today's politics and Buchanan has learned some lessons from his past mistakes. One being that America doesn't necessarily disagree with what he says, it's how he says it. Therein lies their redefinition.

America doesn't have to be so bold to return to outwardly distinguishing separate bathrooms, lunch counters and drinking fountains. Even though that's where they may want to go, the time where they could say that's where they want to go is over (for now). While many flirt with this discussion, the reality is that the larger society has control of the social and economic situation without having to go there. They've taken this silent cue and have just reacted in a way that brought forth the same results as the "stated" policy did thirty years ago.

America is already more segregated than it was thirty years ago and the economic disparities between black and white are growing everyday. Even though equal opportunities have not come about as a result of them having their economic way for 300 years, and

less than 10% of all opportunities are extended to minorities, white America has established an exclusion argument of their own. Upset that they are not included in programs set up for the historically excluded, they now want to eliminate any program that excludes them.

Everybody knows that equality hasn't been reached in this country and that ethnic minorities are being scapegoated. Still, there is a great sensitivity to trying to outright end programs that offer minorities opportunities for competing in mainstream employment, business and educational endeavors. The same can be accomplished with a less direct, but just as repugnant message. One that plays, not to the exclusion of others, but the re-inclusion of themselves.

Pat Buchanan has effectively carried out America's new definition of its politics of inclusion. Buchanan disguises his message in a populist approach that says "he wants whatever is good for America because American values have been forgotten." He wants jobs for Americans, free trade for the benefit of Americans and to protect America from being lost to immigration. He called his platform a "cultural war for the soul of America." He claims he's not against any particular group, he's just for Americans.

Now most of us know what that means, including white America, and many are very uncomfortable with the discussion. Pat Buchanan's views are clearly not the views of the majority of the social and political

mainstream. However, don't be fooled because Buchanan's views are not far from the views of the American mainstream and that's why he has voter appeal. Voter appeal and voter support are entirely different, but in the end, appeal can translate into support, given the right time and circumstances. What is appealing to "Americans" is the notion of being included again (though they were never really excluded). Particularly to any American that ever felt they lost something to someone else because they weren't a minority.

Pat Buchanan plays to the victimization of America and calls for political reactions that will further victimize historical victims of discrimination and economic and social injustice. Sort of the "Better than us" theory. Or "Us" against "them." There is a "pitting against," versus a "unifying with," that allows you to see that Buchanan's position is, in fact, no different than it was some 25 years ago when he (as an advisor) told President Richard Nixon that "the ship to integration is going down; it is not our ship" when Nixon was considering the civil rights agenda. And his position on Israel? If Jewish leaders think they have a problem with Minister Louis Farrakhan, they'll really have a problem with Pat Buchanan, who has called our Congress an "Israeli-occupied territory," alluding to the four to six billion dollars in free American taxpayer dollars Israel receives each year. Another bell that rings solid in the ears of voter



A. ASADULLAH SAMAD appeal.

Clearly, Pat Buchanan is not the friend of anything perceived as un-American, including issues of social diversity and his positions leave much to be desired in the political mainstream in terms of being considered "electable." But what Buchanan has done is push voter sentiment to the right of center by making taboo positions, meritless or not, part of the mainstream political discussion. The more the public has to deal with his platform factors, the more familiar the public becomes with them and the more likely they are to be included in the Republican platform equation. And until his time comes, he has served his purpose which is to redefine this country's politics of inclusion and to make it so that his "Americans" can be included again. Where that leaves the rest of us, the original focus of political inclusion, only time will tell.

THIS WAY FOR BLACK EMPOWERMENT

The new populist partnership

By Dr. Lenora Fulani

While the press is busy writing about the Buchanan upset in New Hampshire, the other big political story of 1996 — what's going to happen with the Black vote — has yet to be covered.

Black Democrats are already working overtime to get their message out. And while the tone and form of the message might vary, the goal is the same — keep the Black voter tied to the Democratic Party at all costs. Some Democrats think that the party should play directly upon the fears the Black community has about social policy under a Republican administration. Others urge that Black voters — together with our traditional allies like white liberals, the women's movement, etc. — work to elect 75 additional Democratic Congresspersons to restore the Democratic majority. Still others argue that the Black community should consider (but not take) an independent option — in coalition with our traditional liberal partners — as a way to leverage our position with respect to the Democratic Party. These are all efforts to contain the growing dissatisfaction within the Black electorate about politics in general and the Democratic Party in particular.

That dissatisfaction, however, is not showing any signs of dissipating. That's why Bill Clinton, who wants to keep us in the fold while giving us as little as possible, made his appearance at the NAACP swearing-in ceremony for Kweisi Mfume. President Clinton is well aware that the African American electorate is restless and dissatisfied. We see that sentiment manifest in the monumental outpouring for the Million Man March last October at which Minister Farrakhan urged the Black community (even as I have personally urged Minister Farrakhan for years) to reconstitute itself as an independent "third force." The polls continue to back this up. Most recently, Dr. Michael Dawson, a political scientist from the University of Chicago, conducted a poll showing that 57% of African Americans favored the formation of a third party.

But those Black leaders who are trying to persuade us to resist the pull towards independent politics are relying upon the assumption that we can continue to ally with what have been our traditional white liberal coalition partners. I think this



DR. LENORA FULANI

is an error. The story of the last 10 years of U.S. politics has been the story of betrayal of African American interests by white liberals. Look, for example, at the desertion of New York Mayor David Dinkins by tens of thousands of white voters who switched loyalties to the Republicans during Dinkins' 1993 reelection bid. Look at the liberal Democrats' refusal to support the creation of new majority Black districts in the South. Look at the white liberal establishment's virulent attacks on Minister Farrakhan and other Black leaders who work.

There is less and less evidence that the white liberal community will work to coalesce with us at all, even inside the Democratic Party. There is no evidence that white liberals would join us in leading the way to a new, independent party! They, for the most part, reject independent politics. Indeed, they have been all too willing to downplay and ignore our interests in favor of keeping the Democrats in power no matter what the cost. But if keeping the Democrats in power means giving up on what's best for our people, what reason do we have to stay with the Democrats? In my opinion, none!

The fundamental challenge for the African American community in this election year is to establish that we can come together with other forces in ways which make us a significant enough threat to the status quo to give us some genuine leverage.

I have argued, and continue to argue, that the potential for the new alliance exists with the populist "white center," or the "Perot voter" as it is more popularly known. The Perot voting bloc, by going independent, has created a situation in which the powers-that-be are obsessively competing for them. We should do the same. Moreover, if we joined the whit populists in creating a new electoral coalition in an independent party, we'd be part of a new plurality that could win three-way elections at the national, state and local level.

CIVIL RIGHTS JOURNAL

What is wrong with America?

By Bernice Powell Jackson

It's been some month, this African American History Month of 1996. I'm not sure what has horrified me more. The report of the burning of 23 African American churches in Tennessee, Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama or the statement by the Justice Department official that we can't assume that these are crimes of racial hatred. The disclosure that Pat Buchanan's aide has ties to the militia movement and white supremacist groups or the fact that Buchanan hasn't been forced to fire him and his support of his "friend" has gone almost unquestioned. Indeed, after his win in New Hampshire, one must wonder whether Buchanan hasn't been rewarded for his extremism.

What is wrong with a nation which burns black churches? Oh, one fire has been attributed to a disturbed 10-year-old, but that still leaves 22 fires which have burned black churches to the ground. Twenty-two fires where the building has been destroyed, but the spirit of the people survives, along with their determination to re-build.

The stories of the burning of these houses of God recalls for many of us the bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, AL in 1963. That wretched deed resulted in the deaths of four little girls whose deaths rocked the nation and made us face the evil that was among us. And while no one has died in these fires, these fires are clearly meant to terrorize African American people. For if their



Bernice Powell Jackson

churches are not safe, what is?

Four of the fires have occurred in one town, Boligee, AL, two on December 22 and two on January 11. In Knoxville, TN, Inner City Community Church, where Green Bay Packer Reggie White is Associate Pastor, was burned on January 8. Indeed, it may only be because of White's sports fame that USA Today began its investigation and there began to be a recognition that something bigger than isolated church fires was going on.

What is wrong with a country which burns houses of God? And why hasn't there been an outcry by churches across this nation? An outcry by government and political leaders? An outcry by people of good will and all faiths?

Then there is the case of Larry Pratt, the co-chair of Buchanan's campaign who is now on a leave of absence. Which means Larry Pratt can come back any time he wants.

It amazes me sometimes how short our collective memory really is. It was less than a year ago that

the Oklahoma City bombing occurred. It was less than a year ago that Little children and federal workers were killed, injured and shaken. We decried the militia movement then and reports of the connections between the militia movement and white supremacist groups came to light.

Yet, we as a nation seem willing to accept Buchanan's acceptance of a leave of absence for Larry Pratt and his continued "support" for his friend. Even if Larry Pratt was only tangentially involved (and the evidence seems to be otherwise) in rallies by these hate groups, do we really believe that he didn't know what they were advocating as he stood on the platform with them? Do we really want a supporter of

militias and the Aryan Brotherhood as a kitchen cabinet advisor to a Presidential hopeful or a presidential nominee or a president?

Many of us who are African Americans in this land of the free and home of the brave are forced once again to wonder when will it all end? When will the hatred end? When will we truly be at home in this our native land? How long, O Lord, how long?

(Contributions to aid the churches destroyed by fire can be sent to Greene County Emergency Church Fund, Rt. 2, Box 94, Utah, AL 35462, or Mr. Nelson B. Rivers III, Southeast Regional Office NAACP, 970 Martin Luther King Jr. Drive SW, Suite 203, Atlanta, GA 30314).

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