

POINT OF VIEW

THIS WAY FOR BLACK EMPOWERMENT

Bill Clinton's way ahead. How does black America get ahead, too?

By Lenora Fulani

Bill Clinton continues to pull ahead in the polls. He's at 52% and Bob Dole is lagging further and further behind.

With their eye on the scope of that lead, some political forces are figuring out how to take advantage of the situation for differing agendas.

Take America's liberal/left for example. Here I'm referencing labor, feminist, environmentalist and socialist activists and sympathizers. This fairly small, but vocal constituency, has been upset about the Democratic Party's drift to the right for some time. They've wanted to make a

move to establish their political independence, to exert the political clout of the constituencies to which they relate (trade unions, women, students, etc.) by voting for independents, long acknowledged as the best way to overcome the enormous power of the special interest-controlled two parties. However, they've held back from voting independent in the past for fear of costing a Democrat the election and electing a Republican in a three-way race. In the black community, we're all very familiar with this argument. It's the one Jesse Jackson and

other black leaders used to keep you from voting for me when I ran for President as an independent in 1988 and 1992.

Now, however, with Clinton so far ahead and with Dole slipping so substantially, there is no fear that a defection from the Democratic Party to an independent presidential candidate will throw the election to the Republicans. This gives these left activist voters room to maneuver and finally make their third party statement. Thus, numerous left commentators and analysts are urging a vote for an independent presidential candidate—in most cases for the Green Party candidate Ralph Nader, who is on the ballot in about 20 states. I think this could help propel this mainly white liberal constituency into a more influential role in local and national politics and into a position to coalesce with other independents in the building of a major national third party.

The right has a right response to the Clinton lead, too. Here I refer to a major push by the Republican Party to seek black votes, votes which it ignores on the grounds that 1) they normally don't need them and 2) they normally can't get them.

CLING'S THING

O.J. (Rip Van Winkle) Simpson

By James Clingman

Has O.J. Simpson just woken up from a 25-year sleep? His latest "preachings" on the state of Black America suggest he is grabbing at what he perceives to be the last straw to rescue him from his public relations nightmare.

All of a sudden O.J. is concerned about Black people. He is perplexed at the fact that Black people are punished more harshly and inequitably when compared to the white population. Only now, it seems, is he interested in the welfare of Blacks and Hispanics. He thinks it's a real shame that we are portrayed by the media as "criminals," "junkies," "pimps," "welfare cheats," and the like.

O.J. is saddened by the unfairness, the disparity, the bias, and all of the other "revelations" he discusses before Black audiences—audiences that seem to be impressed by Simpson's ranting. I am not.

Simpson now wants to be the drum major for Blacks, Hispanics, Arabs (his words), and all of the other minorities in this country—the country which he described as not being afraid

Case in point is the South, where black voters could be the swing vote in a number of key Congressional races. The Republicans see two factors they hope to turn to their advantage. First, black voters did not turn out in large numbers for Democratic Congressional candidates in 1994, indicating growing black disillusionment with the Democrats (and leading the Democratic Party to blame us for the Republican landslide). Second, Bill Clinton has been so successful in winning conservative white voters to the Democratic Party by virtue of their overt and covert racism, that the Republicans think they have a shot at (not to mention a need to) court black voters. In some of the Congressional districts where the contest is between two white candidates, blacks make up as much as 35% of the population. If the Republicans pick up even 20-25% of the black vote they can win some of these seats. Thus, the Republicans are busy making a pitch for us. Of course, trying to project the Republican Party as a party of diversity and inclusion is a little like trying to convince the world that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu

really wants to work things out with the Palestinians. But the point here is that politicians see the black vote as being "in play"—to use the language of financial markets. The question for us is whether we will be able to cash in on the situation.

For us, the Clinton lead is a golden opportunity. In 1922, W.E.B. DuBois said, "May God write us down as asses if ever again we are found putting our trust in either the Republican or the Democratic Parties." I would add, now that it's 75 years later and we surely have been written down as asses: May God write us down as idiots if we don't grab the opportunity we have before us this year.

In 1992, we gave Bill Clinton 83% of our vote. Some of us believe—I am among them—that he deserves not a single black vote in 1996, based on his record, no matter the consequences. Others, however, remain concerned about the "consequences"—namely, helping the Republicans. That is why Jesse Jackson is still telling you to vote for the Democratic Party. But this year, there are no consequences. Clinton is too far ahead. Rev. Jackson is mistaken



DR. LENORA FULANI

(or misleading you).

If 20% of the black vote went independent this year, we'd set the terms of our political interactions, rather than trailing after power. I am urging that this independent vote go to Ross Perot and the Reform Party. I make this choice for two reasons. One, I believe that Mr. Perot's focus on democracy and fiscal reform is the best route to invigorating our economy and providing viable job opportunities for all Americans, including most especially African Americans. But there is a second reason that I urge black America to vote for Perot and it has nothing to do with Perot. It has to do with using your vote to create a new political party in America—the Reform Party.

The significance of the vote (See Fulani, Page 16)

Carl Rowan's Commentary

Bob Dole has drawn his only real blood from President Clinton with advertisements showing Clinton laughing as he told teenagers that while he failed to inhale hashish smoke while a college student in London, he would probably try to inhale again "if he had it to do over."



CARL ROWAN

That Clinton remark of ill-considered humor has allowed Dole to portray the President as a man who "winks" at teenage use of unlawful drugs, and as a "poor leader" who sets a bad example for a generation that is imperiled by illicit compounds.

This politicizing of the grim issue of drug abuse only adds to the multi-billion dollar curse, because it deludes Americans into believing that they can ease the suffering of their addicted relatives and themselves by citing scapegoats.

We Americans have long tended to blame someone else for our drug scourge. The farmers and politicians of Colombia, Peru, Mexico, Turkey and even India and Thailand have been cursed for a generation. The latest people cited as the villain who "sell poison to our children" are the island dwellers of the Caribbean—of Barbados, the Bahamas, St. Kitts and Nevis, and especially the U.S. territory of Puerto Rico.

Now finger-pointing politicians are helping the American people to remain in denial of the fact that the demands of affluent Americans for illicit drugs keep the dope trade alive, even as it defiles and corrupts many aspects of American life.

Dole wants voters to believe that he can and will use the Army, Navy, Coast Guard and National Guard to cut off the flow of illicit drugs into the U.S. to the point that our teenagers will be safe from the addictions, pregnancies, murders and other awful things that flow out of widespread drug abuse.

Dole promises what he will never be able to deliver. I've always been a "hardliner" regarding dope. I've opposed the legalization of marijuana and all the other destructive drugs. I've backed all the programs for military interdiction, and still do. But I've learned that when the American appetite for such drugs is so strong that "solid citizens" will pay anything for them, the drug traffickers bribe sheriffs and judges, pay off politicians and pilots, to deliver the most-craved drugs to Wall Street or Washington, Hollywood or hamlet X.

This political season has produced a contest to see which candidates can make the most inflammatory charges, or the most alluring but implausible promises. Thus, the politicians are helping parents to dodge self-examinations about their roles in making druggies of their children, including whether they're lavishing enough money on their college-age children for them to buy drugs without the parents ever having a clue.

It seems most parents prefer to wait in the futile hope that some politician will concoct some "cost-free" military scheme for making the United States a drug-free zone. So they and their kids become the victims of shameful political rhetoric.

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of him because he was "safe" for white America.

He described how he gave scholarships to Black kids and felt he had done his share, as if that absolves him from doing more and justifies his penchant for "transcending race" and "being safe" in white America and remaining distant from his own people.

Even before he was charged with murder, I had little respect for Mr. Simpson. Now I have even less. To think he can regain some of his millions (most of which he gave to white attorneys, white accountants, white business partners, white agents, and God knows who else) by pandering to and patronizing Black people, is insulting to all of us.

Sure, he may have just awoken from his long sleep—a pleasant, dreamy sleep during which he was never subjected to the horrors he now espouses as unfair and unthinkable—but he should at least acknowledge that fact. Most of us have had the same awakening experience, but most of us also remained silent for a while. We studied and learned more and we listened to some of those who had

experienced the things O.J. now loudly rages against.

There is a time to study, to learn, to be humble, and to reflect on your past ignorance, after your awakening. You don't run out immediately and proclaim to the world that Black people are being treated unfairly, (especially when it's been going on for longer than you have been alive), as if no one knows it but you.

If he only knew how ridiculous he looks in those pulpits and at those lecterns, spewing statistical data on crime, punishment, and revelations on bias in the media, as if they just began last week. If O.J. were "Live at the Apollo," Sandman would have given him the "hook" early into his performance.

After you have been coddled in the lap of luxury, accepted by white America, protected by white America, and idolized by white America, you should not start "preaching to the choir" about the injustices of white America, simply because white America has vilified and turned its back on you. It's not like this kind of thing just started, O.J. Or did it? Maybe you think so, because this time it has come calling at your palatial estate.

This is 1996. Where has he been? All of a sudden O.J. wants to make sure his children get educated among other Black children, to assure they have the proper perspective when it comes to their African heritage. All of a sudden he wants to champion the causes of Black people, after finally coming to realization that unfairness really does exist.

O.J. wants to come back home now, only after white America proved to him that no matter what he has done in the past, no matter how much money he gave to those white attorneys and accountants, no matter how "safe" he thought he was, he is still Black.

So come on back, O.J., but please, please, be quiet for a while. While you were asleep you missed a great deal. On your way to Brentwood you either forgot what you were taught or you skipped the class called "Life in America, 101"...and you obviously have a lot more to learn, my brother.

James Clingman is a freelance write in Cincinnati, Ohio and former editor of the Cincinnati Herald newspaper. P.O. Box 6722, Cincinnati, Ohio.