

Convention

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port says. "These states include most of the key battleground states for 2004: Florida, Michigan, Louisiana, Ohio, Missouri, Pennsylvania and Tennessee.

"More than half (59 percent) of Gore's voters in Louisiana in 2000 were Black, as were 28 percent of his voters in Florida, 21 percent in Missouri, and 20 percent in Michigan. In Ohio, a key battleground state this year, 17 percent of Gore's voters were Black, as were 40 percent of Gore's voters in North Carolina, a potential battleground state given that native son John Edwards is on the Democratic ticket."

Republicans are seeking to increase their following among African-Americans, hoping to raise Bush support to 25 percent. The GOP has announced that it will use Bush's Black cabinet members on the campaign trail to rally Black voters. However, the Joint Center report concludes, "The prospects of the Black Republican vote increasing in 2004 are remote. While Black public opinion is neither as liberal nor as uniform as observers in the press, politics, and academia have thought, the Bush administration's decision on affirmative action and the war in Iraq, together with rising Black unemployment, suggests that any increase in support for Bush is unlikely.

"The popularity of the Clinton administration with African-Americans, juxtaposed with the unpopularity of the Bush White House, have, if anything, strengthened ties to the Democratic Party."

Until the New Deal era of Franklin D. Roosevelt, a majority of African-Americans were Republicans. Until the early 30s, almost a third of Blacks were Republicans. But as the party grew increasingly conservative, more African-Americans shifted to the Democratic Party. That was solidified in 1964 when President Lyndon B. Johnson, a pro-civil rights Democrat, won in a landslide over Republican Barry Goldwater, who openly courted Southern segregationists. Subsequent GOP presidents Richard



The Rev. David Alston, a gunner on presidential candidate John Kerry's boat during the Vietnam War from Columbia, S.C., addresses the delegates during the Democratic National Convention at the FleetCenter in Boston on Monday.

Nixon, Ronald Reagan and now George W. Bush were considered hostile to civil rights and the interests of African-Americans. Consequently, after receiving only 69 percent of the Black vote in the 1960 presidential election, Democrats have received more than 80 percent of the Black vote in every election over the past 30 years. Clinton received 82 percent of the Black vote in 1992 and 84 percent of that vote in 1996. Running against Bush in 2000, Gore captured 90 percent of the Black vote.

In the Democratic primaries this year, Black voter turnout increased substantially in several states. Black turnout in South Carolina's Democratic primary more than doubled from 1992. In Tennessee, the Black turnout was almost twice that of 1992. It was up a third in Ohio and almost doubled in Georgia over that same period.

"The key to a Democratic victory in 2004 will be a strong Black turnout," says David A. Bositis, author of the report for the Joint Center. "Judging by Black participation in several of the 2004 Democratic presidential primaries, the Democrats' prospects look good."

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sounds like a Democratic version of George Bush. He'll never win the election being a photocopy of a Republican. How is he going to strengthen affirmative action? What will a Kerry administration do to increase affordable housing, not just Section 8? What are his plans for Black colleges? What is his overall domestic agenda?

Ironically, there have been a number of political shifts that might favor Kerry. A poll made public last week by the Pew Research Center For the People & The Press has plenty of encouraging news for the Democratic nominee. If the election were held today, registered voters polled favor Kerry over Bush 46 percent to 44 percent. When asked which party does a better job of handling the economy, foreign policy and education, Democrats were favored over Republicans. The poll has a margin of error that ranged from plus or minus 2.5 percentage points to 3.5 percentage points.

Bush led last month in the battleground states by 11 points (49 percent to 38 percent). But Kerry now edges Bush in those states, 47 percent to 41 percent.

Over the past two years, Democrats have improved their standings on the two key

issues — the war in Iraq and the economy. In the fall of 2002, Democrats and Republicans were virtually tied on who best would handle the economy. Today, 46 percent of the public says the Democratic Party can do a better job, compared to 34 percent for Republicans.

After seeing the GOP viewed as being better in the foreign affairs arena, the public is now divided. Republicans are seen as being able to do a better job in Iraq by a margin of 40 percent to 38 percent, but the numbers are switched when considering who would do best in overall foreign policy.

In one of the more dramatic reversals, Republicans have been traditionally seen as being the best party to improve morality. When Bush was inaugurated, Republicans held a comfortable 23-point advantage. However, in the most recent poll, that lead is now down to two points, 37 percent to 35 percent.

These numbers show that the GOP attack ads have had little, if any, success in misdefining John Kerry. If he can clearly define himself this week in Boston, Democrats will move one step closer to "re-defeating" George W. Bush.

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The flag, baseball, pizza pie: Notes on being Black in Boston

By Lloyd Williams
Special to Sentinel-Voice

It's beyond me why the Democratic Party would choose to stage its multi-cultural love fest called a national convention in Boston, the most rabidly racist city I've personally ever known, by far, including the dozen or so I've visited in the South. When I see all the cages, barricades and checkpoints setting up a Baghdad-style Green Zone around the Fleet Center, I have to pause and wonder whether it's to protect the delegates from terrorists or simply from the openly hateful and intolerant locals.

Because back in the '70s, when I tried to move to Boston after I was accepted to law school, I could not find a realtor who would show me a decent place to live anywhere near Boston University. I was lucky that through my school, which must have been familiar with the problem, I was able to find a Jewish family in the suburbs who would take me in.

In fact, I soon learned that Jewish neighborhoods were the only ones that African-Americans could walk through without being harassed. Even Boston's downtown areas were off limits. Every damn trolley and subway car in this Ivy League town with 88 colleges in close proximity was crawling with ugly graffiti referring to Blacks as "jigaboos."

A friend and fellow BU law school grad, Ted Landsmark found that out the hard way. On April 5, 1976 he had his nose broken by an angry and ignorant mob which held his arms and speared him in the face with a large pole carrying an American flag. Ted's offense? Simply walking while Black in a business suit on City Hall Plaza.

The moment was captured by a photographer in what was to become a Pulitzer Prize-winning snapshot. The

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government is nothing short of laughable. Testimony by refugees as well as human rights observers has spoken to the integral connections between the military forces of both groups. It has recently been reported that in light of international pressure on the Khartoum government, that the Janjaweed are being absorbed into the formal Sudanese military!

The ethnic cleansing in Darfur will only stop when the ruling clique in Khartoum



Joseph H. Rakes spears Boston attorney Theodore Landsmark with a flagpole bearing an American flag during an anti-busing demonstration on City Hall Plaza on April 5, 1976. The photo by Stanley Forman became a symbol for those who labeled Boston a racist, segregationist city.

poignant irony of the flag being used as a weapon of hatred was not lost on the rest of the nation. Still, the exposure didn't do much for the Black masses in Boston who continued to catch hell for venturing outside of inner-city Roxbury.

One particularly steamy summer day, a classmate of mine who was working with minority kids in the ghetto, decided to take them on an outing to nearby Carson Beach to escape the blistering heat of the streets. But they were run off that free, tax-supported, oceanfront oasis in South Boston by the segregationist fists of the arrogant, entitled White trash who ruled there.

Beantown's culturally-supported, vigilante-enforced, zero tolerance policy when it came to Black dignity translated into a wholesale denial of our equal protection. I'll never forget the night a buddy and I were refused service and assailed with racial epithets after we innocently decided to stop for pizza on our way home after a long evening of study at the law library. Nothing we had learned in any of the bulky books we were hauling helped us persuade anyone in the restaurant that we had every right to be there.

On another occasion, in 1976, I suffered the indignity of having beer and popcorn

poured on me at Fenway Park on Opening Day while a sold-out crowd of drunken, de-ranked rednecks chanted, "F*ck the Yankees, F*ck niggers!" Hell, they weren't even playing New York! Naively, I protested, expecting security and decent White people to intervene on my behalf. But ultimately, I departed this de facto "White Only" establishment, humiliated that nobody even challenged the insulting behavior as wrong, let alone come to my aid. I felt diminished and dehumanized by this experience.

Therefore, I was not surprised when John Kerry was booed off the mound recently by the Fenway faithful, because his progressive social platform represents the opposite of what Boston will forever symbolize to me. Protracted exposure to such unalloyed bigotry results in an indelible, intractable and understandable distrust. I'll even admit that on 9/11, when I heard that a plane out of Logan airport had hit the World Trade Center, my first thought was that any one of the many Boston racists I'd encountered had finally decided to f*ck New York.

I'm Lloyd Williams and I approved this message.

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understands that international troops will be deployed. Selective sanctions against the Janjaweed are ridiculous. Economic and/or military pressure brought by African countries, as well as trading partners of the Sudan will awaken the Sudanese government to the fact that their convoluted rhetoric is not an acceptable response to international demands for justice for the people of Darfur.

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