

Two nations under God: The divided states of America

By Lloyd Williams
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After the Civil War ended, all the Confederate states which had seceded from the Union returned to the fold, at least technically. But they remained so embittered by the Emancipation Proclamation, that they behaved in a host of devilish, surreptitious ways to continue subjugating their newly-freed slaves.

Commonly referred to as The Solid South, this region below the Mason-Dixon line was comprised of 11 states where discrimination, lynching, segregation and intimidation were the order of the day.

And, for almost 100 years, it voted as a bloc in national elections, as "gray" states that could be counted on to support any Democratic Presidential candidate, due to their lingering resentment of Republican

Abraham Lincoln.

But then, after World War II, the glaring hypocrisy of eradicating Nazism but not our own domestic brand of racism led directly to the Civil Rights Movement.

The Jim Crow system of segregation was gradually dismantled with considerable help from the Democrats. So, The South seethed, rebelling again, but now embracing Republicans as the standard bearers of their reactionary causes.

Thus, because George W. Bush's base is in the Confederacy, it makes more sense to compare his tallies in these gray states to the election results in the rest of the country, rather than breaking the vote down in terms of the reds versus the blues. As you may recall, the President (59.5 million) beat Kerry (56 million) by a total of about 3.5 million votes

nationwide.

But his margin of victory in the 11 ex-slave states alone was over 5 million: Virginia (300,000), Georgia (500,000), Alabama (500,000), Florida (400,000), South Carolina (300,000), North Carolina (400,000), Texas (1,700,000), Mississippi (200,000), Louisiana (300,000), Tennessee (400,000), Arkansas (100,000). This means that Kerry must have prevailed in the other 39 states by 1.5 million popular votes.

I highlight these statistics simply to counterbalance the prevailing post-mortem by a punditocracy desperate for an easy explanation for the alleged Bush mandate.

The pointy-headed chin-pullers have suddenly seized on the notion that the Democrats have somehow lost touch with the pulse of the people, suggesting that the contest had been

a referendum on a fundamentalist Christian agenda.

I resent this presumptive grant of the ethical high ground to a group which has never really led the land in matters of morality. How did we arrive at a place where the rest of us are expected to kowtow to their antediluvian ideas about gays, stem cell research, abortion and who knows what else?

Sorry, I'm not moving one iota to the right just because Cheney's chia pet of a President won courtesy of backwards, Bible-thumping, Boobus Americana, especially when we'll never know whether brother Jeb might have put his thumb on the scale again, thanks to the miracle of paperless computerized voting.

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Children

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the District of Columbia offer coverage through CHIP. But eligibility and benefits vary from state to state, and as states make different decisions about budget priorities, more and more families are finding that their benefits are being cut or they're no longer eligible at all.

The crisis is worst in Texas. Texas already leads the nation with the highest rate of uninsured children. Almost one in every four Texas children lacks coverage. After drastic new cuts by the state legislature Texas also leads the country limiting child health benefits. Viridiana and her siblings were among the 500,000 Texas children who lost dental and vision coverage under CHIP in 2003. All children enrolled in CHIP lost dental, vision,

hospice, and most mental health services under that cut (although mental health benefits have since been partially restored). Even worse, 151,000 children were completely dropped from the CHIP program.

Here are just a few stories of other Texas families hurt by these unjust and shortsighted cuts:

A third grade school teacher and single mother in West Texas lost coverage for her two children because her child care expenses were no longer taken into account in determining her income. Her daughter had a serious case of strep throat, and seven months later the mother is still paying off medical bills. She was able to provide medication for her daughter only because her doctor gave her free samples.

"Anna" and her husband are a two-parent working family who can't afford private health insurance for their children. She makes \$8 an hour working at a health clinic, and he makes \$9 an hour catering airplanes. Recently, the family was forced to pay \$200 out-of-pocket for their daughter's eyeglasses, couldn't pay their light bill, and lost electricity for two days during the hottest month of the year. They put their children in the bathtub in the middle of the night to keep them cool.

Five year old "Lynne" has cerebral palsy. She lost her CHIP dental coverage and has many untreated cavities. When her mouth swelled from new teeth growing in, her family couldn't afford to take her to the dentist. Lynne's mother washed her mouth out with baking soda to reduce the swelling and used Tylenol to reduce the infection.

A working mother in Fort Worth whose son lost CHIP coverage couldn't afford to get him a needed root canal and crown. Six months later he had to have the tooth extracted for lack of treatment.

Janice Vasquez's story was profiled in the Houston Chronicle. Her husband makes about \$550 every week delivering linens and often

works overtime, but his job doesn't provide health insurance. Their two-year-old daughter Vivian was enrolled in CHIP. So when Vivian was hospitalized for a week for serious pneumonia and some of her medications cost \$100 each, her family was able to get them. No longer. Because of the new way income is being calculated, the Vasquez family income now is \$37 a month more than is allowable to qualify for CHIP, and they can't afford the \$500 to \$600 a month it would cost to pay for private health insurance — that's an entire paycheck. Janice doesn't know what she's going to do if Vivian has a relapse.

These families should never face these dilemmas in the wealthiest nation on earth. CDF is leading the Campaign to Restore CHIP in Texas, a coalition of 230 organizations and 2,000 individuals. We need to hold politicians accountable for supporting children's needs and make sure more of our children are receiving the care they need to stay healthy, not fewer. America's children and families deserve much better.

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Overstreet

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worked. The ballot initiative for banning gay marriage was passed by the people of Ohio by a 62% to 38% margin.

This margin of victory in terms of votes was 1,200,000. Thus, it is easy to deduce, if these people didn't turn out to vote or more of them voted their economic interest instead of their fears, Ohio's electoral votes would have gone to Kerry rather than Bush. Then the

situation would be that our country would be headed by President Kerry and not four more years of President Bush. This last sentence is for persons who didn't put up their vote so shut up and tough it out for at least the next 48 months. Finally, I almost hope that those of you in Ohio who cast a bigoted vote, instead of one for your economic interest, catch hell trying to pay your heating bills this winter.

Walters

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support for Bush in 2000 was 9 percent, this year, it was 10 percent — only 1 percent higher, if that. So our view that Blacks, as a rule, don't vote on issues such as gay marriage or faith-based funding, or other extraneous issues is supported by this result. Although Blacks did not break all records in voter turnout, they did their thing for the Democratic Party, but they needed far more help from Hispanics and moderate Whites.

The slim silver lining for the Black community in this race was that the Congressional Black Caucus gained a net of three new seats, bringing their total to 42, and of course, Illinois State Senator Barack Obama was elected to the U. S. Senate. The three new CBC members are Gwendolyn Moore of Milwaukee, a long time state legislator; Emmanuel Cleaver, politically savvy former Mayor of Kansas City, Mo., and Al Green long time Democratic party activists from Houston.

Ironically, because the Republicans expanded their control over the House, the increase in number of Black legislators will be unlikely to give them a greater political opportunities.

So much has been said about Barack Obama's coming to the Senate, but I will add my own view that it is one of the most

positive political developments, even in this sea of trouble. But his leadership there is also likely to be more symbolic than substantive for a considerable period of time.

The dirty little secret is that the result of this election is not all that earth-shaking because Blacks would probably have to battle a moderate John Kerry just hard for some priorities as Bush. Perhaps the result is better because it clarifies the target of our efforts, but organizing the ability to hit the target will be our greatest challenge. But let me repeat a thought that I have used at times in this space which is that one cannot understand what happened by logic alone, because what is driving the support of George Bush is the fact that the political center of gravity in America at this time is conservative, that many of the people who support him know little about the fine points of his policies.

They know more about the cultural cues that he gives off — the good ol' boy image, the faux Christian conservatism, the cowboy stance, etc. It is regrettable, but these are valued more by the majority of Americans than common sense, logic and intelligence.

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Curry

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African-Americans, like any other group, are smart enough to support people who support their interests.

The tragedy of today's GOP is that in order for most African-Americans to advance, he or she must oppose affirmative action. Look at Bush's top appointees. To his credit, Secretary of State Colin Powell has been an ardent supporter of affirmative action. Condoleezza Rice has supported it sometimes and opposed it at others, such as the landmark University of Michigan cases. Secretary of Education Rod Paige firmly opposes affirmative action. So does Housing and Urban Development Secretary Alphonso Jackson.

Republicans weren't always this hostile. There was a time when Black Republicans supported affirmative action. Former Sen. Ed Brooke of Massachusetts, Former Assistant Secretary of Labor Arthur Fletcher and Former Secretary of Transportation William Coleman were perhaps the most prominent. Because Black Republicans in the 1960s and 1970s fought for affirmative action and "Black capitalism" programs, they enjoyed a certain amount of respect in our community. We didn't always under-

stand them, but we knew that when it came to civil rights, they wouldn't betray us.

As late as 1960, when John F. Kennedy ran against Richard M. Nixon, the Republican nominee received 32 percent of the Black vote.

But when the GOP shifted radically to the right in 1964 with the nomination of states' rights candidate Barry Goldwater, Black support fell to 6 percent and since that time has never exceeded 15 percent.

George W. Bush's opposition to affirmative action, his refusal to meet regularly with the Congressional Black Caucus or accept an invitation to address the NAACP, the nation's oldest and largest civil rights organization, and his snubbing the Black media makes GOP inroads into the Black community highly unlikely over the next four years.

The Crack Center for Political and Economic Studies is not dealing with reality when it keeps ballyhooing flawed reports overstating Black support for Republicans.

It should be required to enroll in a detox program until it kicks the habit.

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