

**WILLIAM T. HOSTON**

# **THE FIGHT FOR BLACK LIBERATION**

**BREAKING THE POLITICAL STRINGS  
IN THE TRUMP ERA**





**THE FIGHT FOR BLACK LIBERATION**



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Fig. 1. Detail from Hieronymus Bosch, *Ship of Fools* (1490–1500)

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I want to thank my beautiful wife, Cecilia Hoston. I love you. You have given my life such love, happiness, and joy—the wind beneath my wings. My wife and my sons, William T. Hoston Jr. and Emery C. Hoston, are my world. I want to thank them for giving my life more balance and purpose. To my sons, Daddy loves you. “You keep me smiling / The things you do for me / *I Wanna Thank You.*”<sup>2</sup>

- 1 Ray Charles, “Hard Times (No One Knows Better Than I),” on *The Genius Sings the Blues* (Atlantic Records, 1961).
- 2 Maze, feat. Frankie Beverly, “I Wanna Thank You,” on *We Are One* (Capitol Records, 1983).

Thank you to the many Black Democrats and Black Republicans who served in a focus group capacity to allow me to shape this book. It started as one project and then became another. The initial goal was to have a conversation with Black voters to better understand our allegiance to the two-party system. It later became a book about leading Black voters to establish political independence and demand a Black political agenda to chart a path toward a Black Liberation movement in the United States.

Thank you to my brothers and sisters, racialized as white, who read this book for what it is and understand the worth of the topic.

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To Black people, this is “ours.”

*To My Family*  
*To my late mother, Janet Smith, I love you.*  
*June 29, 1955–November 26, 2020*  
*I hope I made you proud.*





*To My Sons*  
*Emery Cole Hoston*  
*William Terrell Hoston Jr.*  
*Both of you were birthed to fulfill God's purpose for you*  
*and take unconditional care of your mother.*  
*You have the greatest mother in the world.*  
*Daddy loves you.*

Dear Sons,

We, as Black men in America, live miracle-to-miracle. It is highly improbable that each of you will live your entire life and not experience discrimination and racism. Enemies of equality live beyond the threshold. Past the doors of Daddy's protection are wars going on outside — racial, civil, and peaceful — choose wisely — life is full of endless battles.

As supernatural human beings committed to God, family, and a righteous life, I pray that my words of wisdom will allow you both to avoid deadly perils. From reading Daddy's lips, your first act in this life will be dead-letter-perfect. However, the remaining acts will challenge you to pen and play out a life that delays death. This undertaking should be easier than it was for me. Both of you are emotionally connected to the perfect information for the solved conclusion.

From miracle-to-miracle, each of you were born from one womb to close another wound — surrogates of change. Our family has a history of hurting ourselves to see if God is real. We are an estranged band of people, considered owners of a lonely heart. I ask of the two of you, please do not hurt one another. Honor the "Hoston Rules." You are brothers — from the same father and mother — guided by the Heavenly Father and prayed for by a circle of Heavenly Mothers.

As supernatural human beings committed to God, family, and a righteous life, I pray that my words of wisdom will lead to freedom dreams.



*To My Biological Sisters and Brothers*

*Melody L. Lewis*

*Jelena L. Hoston*

*Feddrick M. Hoston*

*Cleveland R. Wilborn*

We all came from “Him” and different “Hers” / Children of a  
fatherless generation / Numbers in a mathematical equation /  
Trying to find the answer with no proof / How do you tell a child  
that they were born to be hurt? — Excerpt from the poem, “Fed-  
drick and Cleveland”



*We live in a beautiful world, but ugly souls push  
the buttons.*

— Black Ice, poet



## Author's Note

Throughout the book, I capitalize “Black” and “Blackness” and use lowercase for “white” and “whiteness.” This approach is adopted from The Brookings Institution, which states, “It is not merely a typographical change, it is an act in recognition of racial respect for those who have been generations in the ‘lower case.’”<sup>1</sup>

1 David Lanham and Amy Liu, “Not Just a Typographical Change: Why Brookings Is Capitalizing Black,” *The Brookings Institution*, September 23, 2019, <https://www.brookings.edu/research/brookingscapitalizesblack>.





## Preface

On April 3, 1968, the eve of his death, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered the acclaimed “I’ve Been to the Mountaintop” speech to a group of Black sanitation workers in Memphis, Tennessee. More than 1300 Black sanitation workers had been on strike for months demanding fair wages. In the face of threats, he delivered the speech to denounce the economic and racial injustices faced by the workers. He called for “economic equality” and ended the speech by acknowledging, “I’ve seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people, will get to the Promised Land.”<sup>1</sup> The next day, Dr. King was assassinated while standing on the balcony outside his second-floor room at the Lorraine Motel.

Before this death, those in his inner circle, particularly Rev. Dr. Ralph David Abernathy, who was thought to be Dr. King’s dearest friend, believed the next move was for King to publicly display his opposition to the dominant white society.<sup>2</sup> Opponents of King’s philosophy called him a political puppet in his

---

1 “I’ve Been to the Mountaintop,” *The Martin Luther King, Jr., Research and Education Institute*, <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/ive-been-mountaintop>.

2 Ralph Abernathy, *And the Walls Came Tumbling Down: An Autobiography* (New York: HarperCollins, 1989).

expedition for Black liberation, often criticizing him for joining existing Black grassroots movements and not pioneering his own. Besides the 1955 Montgomery Bus Boycott, he was not an essential organizer in protest campaigns from 1956 to 1968, only lending his voice to amplify the concerns. Opponents juxtaposed his political methods for gaining civil rights to the Black Panther Party and the Nation of Islam, which both preached Black self-reliance. These factions challenged Dr. King to continue to push for legislative reform to address racial injustice, understanding that failure to do so would ultimately result in revolutionary violence. His non-violent principles overshadowed the radicalism he revealed to inner members of the civil rights establishment.

King was no political puppet. In his last years on earth, he was more radical than ever, speaking out against the Vietnam War and advocating for the Poor People's Campaign. He admitted that Black people should prioritize economic group success over civil rights group success and the idea of integration was a failing strategy — one that white America had co-opted to produce a population of dutiful Negroes bond to a political system that would not offer the degrees of freedom needed for group success.

Undoubtedly, Dr. King never imagined that at almost the quarter-point of the twenty-first century, we, as Black people in America, would still be trying to get to the Promised Land — perceived as a mythical place — of living with economic opportunity and equal justice to ensure our human survival. We have never been to the Promised Land because our goal to achieve a Black Liberation movement has been inextricably tied to the unfulfilled promises of the white American political process.

The purpose of *The Fight for Black Liberation* is to contribute to the body of knowledge that makes the argument that people racialized as Black in America must take control of our own economic, social, cultural, and political embodiments to once and for all establish Black liberation in the United States. Focusing on solutions to address forms of structural, institutional, and

systemic oppression that affect Black people and human beings of African descent who live in the Americas, this book argues, amongst other strategies, that the tenet of political independence is the most significant factor in obtaining full citizenship rights and achieving Black liberation.

Each chapter explores a monumental concern related to the Black community and culture. They work to build the proposed argument and underscore a plan of action for the more than 30 million Black eligible voters and 46.9 million human beings in the us who have been racialized as Black or African-American. The mission is to gain collective political power and put in motion our quest for a Black Liberation movement. Such a movement involves Black people: (1) Exercising Black group consciousness and solidarity; (2) Rebuilding and building our own neighborhoods and communities; and (3) Forming a Black independent voting bloc to create political independence.

As a Black independent voting bloc willing to identify as progressive, and with the support of other progressive allies, we could influence and control the outcome of future presidential elections. The current political landscape has observed unaffiliated and independent voters deciding national and state voting outcomes in both the 2016 and 2020 presidential elections; thus, under the right political demands, this electoral approach can influence Democratic and Republican presidential candidates and the political parties they represent to address our concerns and issues.

Since August 6, 1965, with the passage of the Voting Rights Act, Black people have voted in national elections without a Black political agenda to advance the Black community and culture. To address this benign neglect of Black political interests in elections, my argument is front-loaded to focus on Black eligible voters — voters who have been the linchpin of electoral victories for the Democratic Party, yet are neglected in receiving political and legislative quid pro quo (i.e., the Latin term for “something for something”; “a favor for a favor”).

Establishing political independence for Black people in America is imperative to demand a Black political agenda

and chart a path toward a Black Liberation movement. Imagine a United States where Black people, most still believing in the power of the electoral process, continue to allow the two-party system to dictate our voting behavior. It would continue to solidify the facts that we are treated as second-class citizens in the country we built, and that we have been politically programmed to accept such treatment. The power of our vote can necessitate presidential candidates to pay attention to an agenda that places closing the enormous racial wealth gap as the number one political item, followed by opposing forms of racial injustice and addressing the most critical valence issues and concerns pertinent to Black people.

In the case of continuing to ignore our political power, I argue that Black eligible voters who actively participate in the political process will forever be defined as Black political puppets unable to break the political strings in the Trump era. According to the January 6 US House Select Committee, Donald J. Trump remains a “clear and present danger” to American society.<sup>3</sup> His return to the Oval Office in 2024, while he is still under numerous investigations and has been found guilty on felony counts of falsifying business records in the Stormy Daniels porn case — the first time a former US president has been convicted of a crime — is a historical event.<sup>4</sup> In the summer of 2024 a gunman attempted to assassinate Trump during a rally in Pennsylvania, which further made him a hero in the eyes of his supporters.

Trump’s base is politically, racially and ethnically, and physically motivated. His supporters have invested in a brand of politics that will fortify the maintenance of white supremacy. They would die to maintain this racial hierarchy. After Trump’s 2020 presidential defeat, one supporter called into the Rush Lim-

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3 Annie Grayer et al., “January 6 Committee to Argue in Upcoming Hearing Trump Remains a ‘Clear and Present Danger,’” *CNN*, October 12, 2022, <https://www.cnn.com/2022/10/12/politics/jan-6-hearing-trump-clear-and-present-danger/index.html>.

4 President Grover Cleveland is the only other president to exit the White House and return for a second term four years later (1885–1889 and 1893–1897).

baugh radio show and professed, “I love my president. I am not a revolutionary, Rush. But I will die for my president. This man has given more to this country than anybody.”<sup>5</sup>

Supporters’ loyalty to Trump is totally counterintuitive to enacting legislation to improve their own economic and political status. Economic anxiety alleged by poor and working-class white people falls secondary to their perceived societal value and willingness to find partisan common ground. Their societal status, economically and politically controlled by the white power structure to keep them in a faulty mental state, is the underpinning of their actual human existence. As a result of this disposition, they are not interested in being allies of any sort to bring “unity,” which has created a significant political divide between Republicans and Democrats since the 2020 presidential election.

Outwardly, some Republican politicians have tried to move on from Trump, but he continues to have a stronghold on the party and most of its voters. On the path to reelection, his presidential primary win showed his ability to unite Republican factions. The rally “round the flag” effect for white conservatives was in motion. With the unprecedented exit of incumbent President Joseph R. Biden, Jr. from the 2024 presidential race, a win for the Trump-Vance ticket was inevitable on November 5, 2024. He won and became the first Republican candidate to win the national popular vote in 20 years. It set the stage for a second Trump administration and the introduction of a new conservative blueprint to reinforce the white racial hierarchy in this country.

On the Democratic side, the political party is at a standstill. On July 21, 2024, President Biden decided to withdraw from the presidential race and pass the political baton to Vice President Kamala Harris. After a disastrous presidential debate against Trump on the campaign trail and concerns about his health, for

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5 Alex Henderson, “Watch: A Distraught Trump Supporter Tells Rush Limbaugh Says He ‘Will Die for My President,’” *AlterNet*, November 20, 2020, <https://www.alternet.org/2020/11/trump-supporters-2648997410>.

the good of the country, he released a written statement highlighting his achievements and thanking us citizens for letting him serve.

He came in to the presidency with three immediate political goals. First, to defeat Trump in 2020. Second, to bring unity to the United States of America after the attack on the us Capitol on January 6, 2021. Lastly, to attempt to unite the Democratic Party. Biden achieved one of the goals. He is to be applauded for defeating Trump, but he failed on the latter goals, and his exit from running for the Oval Office before the 2024 presidential election showed the disarray of the party.

Biden's decision to step aside for the sake of the nation put Democrats in a deep political crisis, especially the millions of Black voters who were pivotal to his victory in 2020. From jubilation at the idea of Harris becoming the first woman president to utter disappointment from Black people practicing respectability politics in a political party that has failed us, the powerful responses to Biden's decision reinforce the idea that Black people must take control of our own political destiny.

The Democratic Party is not our savior. Our coalitional turnout on their behalf since the late 1960s has only benefited them. The party has preyed on our determination to abolish white supremacy and our fixation on capturing individual economic, social, and political progress without the collective maturation of Black solidarity.

Biden did not orchestrate the enactment of progressive policies by leaning on Republicans or signing Executive Orders in his four years that would have benefitted his most loyal electoral base. He failed to influence the passage of the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act to ensure better policing practices and accountability, and the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act, which would establish new criteria for determining which states and political subdivisions must obtain preclearance before discriminatory changes to voting practices may take

effect.<sup>6</sup> After the 2020 presidential election, Republican-dominated state legislatures introduced a litany of restrictive voting rights measures — continuing these legislatures as laboratories for racist policies. According to the Brennan Center for Justice, in the 2021 legislative session, “More than 440 bills with provisions that restrict voting access have been introduced in 49 states.”<sup>7</sup> Both proposed bills were electoral staples of Biden’s campaign to appease Black people. As a result, Black people helped to elect yet another Democratic president with a unified government at the beginning of their first term that failed us.<sup>8</sup> Biden will forever stand as a pragmatic white moderate president who consistently aligned with the white majority, thereby neglecting the interests of “the broadest and most diverse” groups in the United States, particularly Black people in America.<sup>9</sup>

Political power lies in the hands of Black eligible voters. We cannot continue to “vote Blue, no matter who.” If there is no political action on our part during this time in American history, our legacy will continue to be documented as a group of Black people who have been governed and controlled by white decision-makers pulling the political and legislative strings under the auspice of a balanced two-party system.

The US governing bodies have never truly worked to facilitate an equitable economic, social, cultural, and political environment for Black people. Such progress has not manifested due to the structural inner workings of an American political system

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6 See the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act of 2021, H.R. 4, 117th Cong. (2021), <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/4>, and the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act of 2021, H.R. 1280, 117th Cong. (2021), <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/1280>.

7 “Voting Laws Roundup: December 2021,” *Brennan Center for Justice*, December 21, 2021, <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/voting-laws-roundup-december-2021>.

8 Since the 56th Congress, dating to Theodore Roosevelt, sixteen of twenty-one presidents have entered the presidency with a unified government.

9 For more information, see Joe Biden’s campaign website, archived at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20220714021702/https://joebiden.com/presidency-for-all-americans/>.

operating exactly as intended. As the great American novelist and activist James A. Baldwin once said, “[White America has] always told me it takes time.”<sup>10</sup> The time is now for Black people who vote along major party lines, and others outside of these socially constructed political labels, to establish political independence and embody and embrace progressive and radical ideas to create a better America for the Black community and culture.

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<sup>10</sup> *American Masters*, season 4, episode 4, “James Baldwin: The Price of the Ticket (1989),” dir. Karen Thorsen, <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0229488>.



## Introduction and Overview: A Framework for Change

The two major US political parties, the Democratic Party and the Republican Party, determine which candidates will be placed on the presidential ballot, regulate the eligibility of the voters, and craft the legislation eventually passed in the chambers of the US Congress. Historically, possessing these political powers has allowed each political party to act in detriment to the plight of Black people in America.

For Black people to combat this political structure that disadvantages our social conditions, we must exercise political independence as a formed Black voting bloc. This is our best opportunity to gain political power. Demanding that these parties address our Black interests through tangible resources and outcomes would finally lead to a Black Liberation movement. This strategic action would not dismantle the endemic nature of two-party control; however, it would allow more influence for Black voices to be heard and actions to be taken in this white-dominated style of democracy.

Many books containing Black knowledge inspiring liberation have argued that Black people in America must practice Black nationalism, Black separatism, or break from the presidential allure and two-party system to create our own political

party. From the early to mid-1900s, Blacks proposed the Afro-American Party, the National Liberty Party, the Freedom Now Party, the National Civil Rights Party, the Freedom Democratic Party, the Peace Freedom Party, and others as alternates to the two-party system. None of these newly formed political parties had the outward support of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. before his death. Even after the unsuccessful 1984 and 1988 presidential runs of Rev. Jesse Jackson, scholars theorized about “the creation of a third-party, an all-African American Party,” that would organize us into a cohesive voting bloc.<sup>1</sup>

Notwithstanding the creation of a third-party, Black scholar and political analyst Chuck Stone argued that in the achievement of Black liberation, we must rise to a position of massive political empowerment that does three things:

[C]ontrols the Black community, proportionately controls the decision-making apparatus of a white racist government, and guarantees Black survival. This can only be done by acquiring political power. There is no other recourse. [...] Political power is government control or the ability to decide who shall control.<sup>2</sup>

This book borrows from Stone’s foundational framework, which is similar to other influential Black leaders during the Civil Rights movement and beyond, who have voiced that Black liberation must originate from political empowerment. However, this text defines Stone’s organizational framework as follows:

— *Control the Black community*: Forgo our assimilative loyalty to the false constructs of partisanship and ideology, and extend our ability as a non-monolithic group to work

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1 Hurumia Ahadi, “An Independent Black Political Party: Posing an Alternative to Asses, Elephants and Rainbows,” *The National Black Law Journal* 11, no. 1 (1988): 119.

2 Chuck Stone, “Black Politics: Third Force, Third Party or Third-Class Influence?,” *The Black Scholar* 1, no. 2 (1969): 8.

together. Such political actions would expedite the ability to “ask” and “demand” a Black political agenda.

- *Proportionately control the decision-making apparatus of a white racist government:* Form a Black independent voting bloc to create political independence. Within this voting bloc, embrace a progressive ideological epicenter.
- *Guarantee Black survival:* (1) Exercise Black group consciousness and solidarity; (2) Rebuild and build our own neighborhoods and communities; and as stated; and (3) Form a Black independent voting bloc to translate voting power into political leverage to influence issues and concerns germane to the Black community and culture.

Stone concluded that to acquire Black power and ensure Black survival, we, as Black people, have to position ourselves to decide who shall control governmental outcomes.

The quest to build a Black Liberation movement is defined by the economic, social, and political actions of Black people in America. Collectively, we have to envision a world where our goal should be to unite to change and implement governmental policies and influence governmental outcomes to generationally improve the conditions within the Black community and culture. Such a movement is achieved by utilizing our voting strength to achieve legislative and judicial victories to disrupt the power structure of the white-dominant culture. Like the Civil Rights movement that empowered social and political change by calling for legislation to outlaw discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, and national origin, and to prohibit racial discrimination in voting, the impetus of this movement makes a declaration for a Black political agenda, a set of specific actions and policies, that advances Black people.

While the form and organization may vary based on the lived experiences of Black people, most movements begin by building group consciousness and solidarity. This solidarity connects us, making us part of a larger community with a shared vision. To

start a Black Liberation movement, it is imperative to organize and motivate Black people to work towards a collective ideological vision, formulate solution-based actions, and wield the potential of a Black independent voting bloc to move the group forward. These actionable steps are needed within the foundation of the movement to demand that political parties adhere to Black people's needs to enhance our human survival and well-being.

After the 2008 presidential election of the first Black president, Barack H. Obama II, such interest by scholars and activists in an independent party or Black independent voting bloc at the national level weakened. Obama captured the majority of Black eligible voters and even voters in other key electoral demographics. His election and presence conjured the idea of a post-racial America and dismissed for many Black people the need to rise to a position of massive political empowerment.

This form of thinking was premature among the masses of Obama followers. The marginal rise of Black Republicans during his presidency, the subsequent presidential election of Donald J. Trump, the 2020 summer Black Lives Matter protests to address racial justice, and the 2021 winter insurrection to preserve white supremacy, all prove that we are in the middle of a conspiring political shift. It is one that saw the pragmatic election of President Joseph R. Biden, Jr. and an immediate onslaught of restrictive voting measures introduced by Republicans to stop Black people from voting and to remove him from office after one term. Further, it is a political climate in which both major political parties are "farther apart ideologically today than at any time in the past 50 years."<sup>3</sup> This time in history is optimal for Black people to finally resume the political philosophy of Stone and others and make a conscious effort through the process of

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3 Drew Desilver, "The Polarization in Today's Congress Has Roots That Go Back Decades," *Pew Research Center*, March 10, 2022, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2022/03/10/the-polarization-in-todays-congress-has-roots-that-go-back-decades>.

political independence to work for the liberation of the Black population as a whole.

In the post-Civil Rights era, neither the Democratic Party nor the Republican Party has presented a Black political agenda with a goal to enact race-specific policies that lead to tangible resources and outcomes for Black people. Moreover, while we know that Black people are not a monolithic group in terms of partisanship, ideology, and class, we have not collectively demanded substantive representation from either political party.<sup>4</sup> Such demands must be merged with Black consciousness and group solidarity. In their book *Black Power*, Stokely Carmichael (later named Kwame Ture) and Charles Hamilton maintained that our show of group solidarity strengthens our bargaining position in electoral politics.<sup>5</sup>

The history of Black people's identification as a social group has relied on the generative powers of Black consciousness and solidarity, where individual Blacks are thought to share a conscious fate with the larger Black community. However, the strength of these tenets has not been fruitful in forging political or economic group success.<sup>6</sup> No one person or fraction of a group will rise above the collective welfare of that group, which is a point of enlightenment not wholly understood by the Black masses. We were bound into slavery together from 1619 to 1865. Enslaved Black people had no partisan or ideological affiliation. We were racially segregated into the Jim Crow nation, particularly the south, together from 1865 to the mid-1960s. This period continued to assert white people as superior to Black people even as we realigned from the Republican Party to the Demo-

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4 See Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, *The Concept of Representation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), and Jane Mansbridge, "Should Blacks Represent Black and Women Represent Women? A Contingent 'Yes,'" *The Journal of Politics* 61, no. 3 (1999): 628–57. Both offer a comprehensive discussion of the concept of political representation.

5 Kwame Ture and Charles V. Hamilton, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992).

6 William T. Hoston, "Black Solidarity and Racial Context: An Exploration of the Role of Black Solidarity in US Cities," *Journal of Black Studies* 39, no. 5 (2009): 719–31.

cratic Party. From the 1960s to the present, the dominant white society has always dealt with Black people as a group, despite our willingness to integrate and assimilate. Thus, as an organized people moving in a unified direction, forming a group or bloc is the only way to accomplish our goals. This is a precursor to cultivating a Black community and culture destined to amass political power and achieve Black liberation.

### **Racial-shed Moments in the Two-Party System**

Black people eligible to vote in the US have long had to choose a presidential candidate within the two-party system. The Voting Rights Act (VRA) of 1965 gave Black people an electoral voice. The mission of the VRA was to eliminate legal barriers that prevented Black people from exercising our right to vote guaranteed under the fifteenth amendment to the US Constitution. When this landmark piece of federal legislation was passed, the Black vote became a valuable asset for the Civil Rights establishment, political candidates, political parties, and the white political establishment to stage-manage for their electoral advantage.

Given the possession of this vote, after white men had a 400-year head start to shape the US in their image, each election cycle became a political tug-of-war between both parties to maintain their political dominance over racial and ethnic minorities. Found within both the Democratic and Republican strategies for racial hierarchy are narratives that resemble an anti-Black party platform. Democrats blindly frame the narrative that historical discrimination is the root of all Black people's problems, without addressing the ongoing negative structural and cultural factors born from racial injustice. On the other hand, Republicans blame our deficiencies on holding on to the past of slavery and wanting governmental handouts.

In each election cycle political candidates, political parties, and the white political establishment — which comprises party elites, moral entrepreneurs, and wealthy oligarchs — pander to Black eligible voters. From presidential to local elections, the race to capture the voting support of Black people from both

parties leads to campaign promises they will not fulfill. Both parties have utilized political deception to give the public image of addressing the policy concerns of Black people to mobilize our vote.

There is a long history of Black people in America serving as voters on both sides of the partisan passageway. From the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, which began the freeing of enslaved Black people, to the mid-1930s, Black eligible voters would cast our support for the Republican Party. In 1872 Black abolitionist Frederick Douglass endorsed the party at the Colored Men's National Convention in New Orleans by declaring, "The Republican Party is the ship; all else is the sea." During this post-Civil War period to the end of Reconstruction in 1877, we saw Black economic, social, and political progress, albeit small, under the Republican Party. In contrast, the Democratic Party opposed Radical Reconstruction and identified itself as the "white man's party," as it was viewed as a white supremacist organization that alienated Black people.<sup>7</sup>

The realignment of Black voters from the Republican Party to the Democratic Party came when the Republican Party refused to actively seek civil rights for Black people. In 1933, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt led the Democratic effort to mobilize Black voters. Through his New Deal programs, he worked to stabilize the economy and provide jobs during the Great Depression. As a result, in 1936, Black people began leaving the Republican Party. This starkly contrasted with how Black voters felt prior to this point. Before this time, the sentiment from Black voters was that "The Democratic Party is controlled by devils from below the Mason-Dixon line."<sup>8</sup> There was excitement during Roosevelt's second election over the economic

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7 Jane Elizabeth Dailey, *Before Jim Crow: The Politics of Race in Postemancipation Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

8 Leah Wright Rigueur, *The Loneliness of the Black Republican: Pragmatic Politics and the Pursuit of Power* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 13.

impact of the New Deal, which necessitated a partisan realignment to benefit Black people.

In the 1960s, the Republican Party welcomed a conservative white electoral base. To appease their new base, they developed an aversion to civil rights and committed to forms of Black voter disenfranchisement. New voting restrictions excluded nearly all Blacks from voting or holding elected office. The Party of Lincoln, which freed enslaved people and supported Black politicians during Reconstruction, had adopted a racist vision for America; a lily-white takeover made up of Southern Republicans who wanted to restrict leadership and voting rights to whites only.

The 1964 presidential election was a significant turning point. On one side was the challenger, the Republican senator Barry Goldwater, known as “Mr. Conservative.” Goldwater opposed the Civil Rights movement and believed the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to be unconstitutional, which was the writing on the wall for those straddling the partisan fence. On the other side was the incumbent, President Lyndon B. Johnson, who assumed office after the 1963 assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

Kennedy, a proponent of civil rights measures, promised King he would work to move the Civil Rights Act through the US Congress before his death. The Executive Actions of Kennedy, which addressed issues such as affirmative action and housing discrimination, showed Black people that the Democratic Party had finally deserted its support for segregation and white supremacy. Once Johnson defeated Goldwater in the 1964 presidential election, he signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 under his presidential leadership.

By the late 1960s, two-thirds of Black people had shifted to the Democratic Party. The 1968 presidential election of Richard M. Nixon completed the majority partisan changeover. Nixon’s commitment to the “Southern Strategy” increased white voter support by stoking their racial fears and made them believe that equal rights for Black people through the Civil Rights movement would compromise their white privilege. This fear awak-



ened the silent white majority of the middle and working-class who wanted to maintain a white racial hierarchy.

This strategy drew a deeper partisan line after the recommendations of Daniel Patrick Moynihan, a primary counsel to Nixon for Urban Affairs, who was previously the Assistant Director of Labor under the Johnson administration. Moynihan first wrote a report on Negro families, the notorious 1965 *Moynihan Report*, which was a controversial document intended to explain the causes of poverty in Black America.<sup>9</sup> While calling for governmental action, it presented as a culturally biased manifesto and described a “tangle of pathologies” that led to inequality for Black families. In 1970, Moynihan released a White House memo that stated Negroes had made “extraordinary progress” in the five years since his report and “the time may have come when the issue of race could benefit from a period of ‘benign neglect.’”<sup>10</sup> The Nixon administration spearheaded a plan to minimize issues prompted by the Civil Rights movement and uplift the concerns and issues of white women and immigrants.

The political concessions from the Democratic Party in the 1960s were owed to Black people. It was not a political favor nor a political show of goodwill. Even before the assassination of Kennedy in 1963, King had asked him to enact a “second Emancipation Proclamation,” which was a 75-page appeal to request a “national rededication to the principles of the Emancipation Proclamation and for an executive order prohibiting segregation.”<sup>11</sup> Kennedy declined this political “ask.”

9 Daniel Patrick Moynihan, “The Negro Family: The Case for National Action,” *United States Department of Labor*, March 1965, <https://www.dol.gov/general/aboutdol/history/webid-moynihan>.

10 Daniel Patrick Moynihan, “Memorandum for the President,” *The White House*, November 13, 1970, [https://www.nixonlibrary.gov/sites/default/files/virtuallibrary/documents/jun09/111370\\_Moynihan.pdf](https://www.nixonlibrary.gov/sites/default/files/virtuallibrary/documents/jun09/111370_Moynihan.pdf).

11 Martin Luther King, Jr., “An Appeal to the Honorable John F. Kennedy, President of the United States, For National Rededication to the Principles of the Emancipation Proclamation and for an Executive Order Prohibiting Segregation in the United States of America,” *Civil Rights Movement Archive*, May 17, 1962, <https://www.crmvet.org/info/emancip2.pdf>.

Kennedy occupies a complex history among Black people. He spoke out against segregation only because he understood the long-term capitalist benefits for the dominant white society, which increased their ability to control Black spaces in this country. In his pseudo-friendly relationship with King, Kennedy allowed the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and its director, J. Edgar Hoover, to monitor King and other Black leaders and organizations from 1956 to 1971 through their counterintelligence program (known as COINTELPRO). Government officials feared King and others, whom they believed could be a “Black Messiah” and would eventually unite Black people.<sup>12</sup>

Since the post-Civil Rights era, Black voters have remained steadfast within the Democratic Party.<sup>13</sup> For decades, Black people eligible to vote have been paramount to the electoral success of the Democratic Party. Since the 1970s, Democratic presidential candidates have garnered over 80% of the Black vote. Much is owed to the Civil Rights movement and to Jesse Jackson’s presidential campaigns of 1984 and 1988. The Black-white electoral split showed that the Republican Party depended solely on the white vote and a combination of racially conservative minorities.

Black people in America have led the electoral charge in presidential elections. From the Democratic presidential elections of Jimmy Carter (first elected in 1976), William Jefferson Clinton (first elected in 1992), Barack H. Obama (first elected in 2008), and Joseph R. Biden Jr. (first elected in 2020), Black voters have carried the Democratic Party. By and large, this made

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12 For more information, see J. Edgar Hoover, “The FBI Sets Goals for COINTELPRO,” *SHEC: Resources for Teachers*, <https://shec.ashp.cuny.edu/items/show/814>. In 1968, Hoover declared publicly that the Black Panther Party was the greatest threat to the internal security of the United States.

13 Katherine Tate, *From Protest to Politics: The New Black Voters in American Elections* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993); Paul Frymer, *Uneasy Alliances: Race and Party Competition in America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999); and Ismail K. White and Chyrl N. Laird, *Steadfast Democrats: How Social Forces Shape Black Political Behavior* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020).

them the more popular party across demographics for several decades.

Notwithstanding the multitude of factors contributing to Black people's continuing loyalty to the Democratic Party, White and Laird in their book *Steadfast Democrats* argued that a coalition of interests among Black people, not ideology, outweighs the allure of the Republican Party.<sup>14</sup> We are a conservative ideological group of people but less likely to self-identify as Republican.<sup>15</sup> There is a partisanship-ideological mismatch at the center of Black political behavior. Regardless of our ideological preference, Black eligible voters have uninterruptedly voted as a bloc for the Democratic Party. White and Laird label this voting predisposition as a "racialized social constraint," which is reinforced by in-group informational cues to leverage their political power in a two-party system.<sup>16</sup>

Throughout history, Black people's ideology has rested on a fluctuating scale, especially for those who have been indoctrinated by the institution of the Black church, which traditionally practices conservative beliefs and practices.<sup>17</sup> Yet there is heterogeneity in Black religious beliefs, which correlates to Black political attitudes.<sup>18</sup> This dispels the theory that all Blacks are liberal, a brainwashing schema pushed by the white masses to diminish our aptitude to think across the ideological spectrum.

In her writings, political scientist Tasha Philpot expresses how Black conservatism has a grounding in its influence on policy views.<sup>19</sup> Bartering on both sides of a two-party coin, this

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14 White and Laird, *Steadfast Democrats*.

15 Tasha S. Philpot, *Conservative But Not Republican: The Paradox of Party Identification and Ideology among African Americans* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

16 Philpot, *Conservative But Not Republican*, 26.

17 C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990).

18 Eric L. McDaniel, Maraam A. Dwidar, and Hadill Calderon, "The Faith of Black Politics: The Relationship between Black Religious and Political Beliefs," *Journal of Black Studies* 49, no. 3 (2018): 256–83.

19 Tasha S. Philpot, *Race, Republicans, and the Return of the Party of Lincoln* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007), and Philpot, *Conserva-*

type of conservatism influences how we view specific issues like same-sex marriages and immigration. When such issues are conflated with Black partisanship by proxy of ideology, there remains a grey area to their benefit to the Black community and culture. White and Laird indicate that our varied partisanship and ideologies impact our voting preferences. Yet, our ideology as a conservative belief system polarizes how Black Democrats and Black Republicans view concerns and issues.

Black people in America have a complicated racial history with political parties that intersect with the Black group dynamic. Centered in this complicated past is the façade of what the late civil rights icon Barbara Jordan called for, “an America as good as its promise.”<sup>20</sup> This America would push Black people, no matter the party, to register to vote under the auspice that we are entering the corridors of a representative democracy. The white political establishment’s goal is to make us believe that we are voting in an America that considers us “Americans.”

This myth was further debunked in early 2022 when Republican Senate leader Mitch McConnell, who worked tirelessly to sabotage the presidencies of Obama and Biden, made a malicious comment about voting access for Black eligible voters. Speaking to reporters with Republican leadership by his side after Republican-led state legislatures enacted restrictive voting bills and the us Congress failed to enact counteractive measures, McConnell malevolently said, “African American voters are voting in just as high a percentage as Americans.” The differentiation of “African-Americans” and “Americans,” which suggested that only whites are “Americans,” underscored literary icon Toni Morrison’s argument that “In this country, American means white. Everybody else has to hyphenate.”<sup>21</sup>

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*tive But Not Republican.*

20 The full quote, from Barbara Jordan, political icon, is: “What the people want is very simple. They want an America as good as its promise.” PJ Pierce, “*Let Me Tell You What I’ve Learned*”: *Texas Wisewomen Speak* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002), 16.

21 This quote was recorded in a January 29, 1992 interview with *The Guardian* documented in the exposé of Morrison after her death. See Elahe

In today's white America, choosing to turn away from the grip of the two-party system and claiming the power of political independence is our pathway. Both major political parties are driven by ideology, identity, demographics, and various coalitions, which mainly comprise socially constructed classes of human beings whose concerns and issues are prioritized over Black people.<sup>22</sup> Consequently, Black eligible voters are left to choose between two political parties that do not exist to best serve our human interests, values, and ideals.

### The Fierce Urgency of Now: Why This Book Matters

Since the 1960s, Black people's political loyalty to Democratic presidents and the party epitomizes an unhealthy political relationship. We have sacrificed democratic principles for far too long. Starting from the presidency of Barack H. Obama to Joseph R. Biden Jr., this book propels the argument for Black political independence. Neither president, whose Democratic wins came from the power of Black voters, committed to a Black political agenda to achieve a Black Liberation movement.

The first election of Trump serves as the centerpiece. This book centers his presidency in the discussion of Black liberation. Trump's presidency represented the symbolic embodiment of a deep racist set of American values in this country. His election to the Oval Office should have been the political demarcation for Black people in America — a final point of political enlightenment — to forge together as a collective group to improve our economic, social, cultural, and political outcomes and to proactively seek a Black Liberation movement outside of a two-party system. Unfortunately, it did not.

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Izadi, "Honoring Toni Morrison Through the Words She Shared With the World," *The Washington Post*, August 6, 2019, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/arts-entertainment/2019/08/06/honoring-toni-morrison-through-words-she-shared-with-world/>.

22 Khalilah L. Brown-Dean, *Identity Politics in the United States* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2019). Brown-Dean provides a comprehensive analysis of how identities shape American political development.

The pursuit of Black liberation cannot be told excluding Trump from the equation. Even after his initial exit from the Oval Office, he is the present-day puppet master still controlling the political behavior of Republican and Democratic congressional members and his electoral base of 74 million voters who work in concert to affirm the explicit presence of white supremacy. He is not the first political provocateur of *whiteness* in our history, but his first presidency reaffirmed white Americans with the overt ability to freely instill their version of the American dream again.

The political inaction to address Black interests, from Obama to Trump to Biden, and the major political parties they serve signifies the political breaking point for Black people to move away from the two-party system created under the guidance of the framers — but not the builders — of this country. The calamity of white America's determination to maintain racial order through denouncing the 2020 summer Black Lives Matter protests, championing the 2021 winter insurrection, and passing post-2020 presidential election restrictive voting measures, all reinforce this decision. Each point of political enlightenment continues to show that white America — that promotes *American whiteness* and the political system that makes Black eligible voters believe that at least one of the political parties within the two-party system cares about our human survival and well-being — has failed us time and time again.

Trump won the 2016 presidential election because he was white, was wealthy, ran as a Republican, was aided by Russia, and capitalized off the growing white racial resentment toward a changing minority political landscape that was set by the election of Obama. His time in the Oval Office overtly re-centered the social construct of *whiteness* when America had theoretically moved toward a post-racial democracy. Working in Trump's political favor, Obama's eight years as president only triggered what Carol Anderson calls "white rage and resentment," which lives within the makeup of white people in America, and is often displayed during intervals of Black progress as a practice

of racial balancing to preserve the structural empowerment of whiteness.<sup>23</sup>

Trump, who was elected to office after the first Black president in American history, was, as Ta-Nehisi Coates contends in his essay *The First White President*, elected solely because of whiteness. According to Coates:

To Trump, *whiteness* is neither notional nor symbolic but is the very core of his power. In this, Trump is not singular. But whereas his forebears carried *whiteness* like an ancestral talisman, Trump cracked the glowing amulet open, releasing its eldritch energies.<sup>24</sup>

One of the most disappointing outcomes of Trump's election in 2016 was that we, as Black people, are preconditioned to understand that white America would exercise their *whiteness* and elect such a president after Obama in order to prevent the changing minority political landscape. With the US Census Bureau predicting during the Obama administration that white people would no longer be the majority by 2043, Trump appealed to a shrinking white population.<sup>25</sup> By all accounts, white racial resentment forecasted a Trump presidential victory.

The social construction of whiteness has long been a structural barrier for Black people in America. It leads to whites' political and economic power to foster a societal and cultural environment that negatively ties the dynamics of structural discrimination and racism to Black progress. According to Andrew Hacker, in his exploration of race and class:

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23 Carol Anderson, *White Rage: The Unspoken Truth of Our Racial Divide* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2016).

24 Ta-Nehisi Coates, "The First White President," *The Atlantic*, October 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2017/10/the-first-white-president-ta-nehisi-coates/537909>. Author emphasis.

25 For more information, see "U.S. Census Bureau Projections Show a Slower Growing, Older, More Diverse Nation a Half Century from Now," *United States Census Bureau*, December 12, 2012, <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/population/cb12-243.html>.

America is inherently a “white” country: in character, in structure, in culture. Needless to say, Black Americans create lives of their own. Yet as a people, they face boundaries and constrictions set by the white majority.<sup>26</sup>

Understanding the inherent nature by which the white majority will work to protect this trace of lineage contextualizes the history of slavery, Jim Crow, segregation, voter disenfranchisement, and other atrocities and racial barriers that legitimize the importance of maintaining white dominance.<sup>27</sup>

Jonathan Metzl, in *Dying of Whiteness*, argues how Trump’s election and mere presence had a negatively profound impact on white society, especially on poor and working-class white communities who believed the presidency of Obama threatened their social class status.<sup>28</sup> Metzl and others have argued that the unconventional coalition of the poor and working-class regularly vote against their own interests.<sup>29</sup> This working-class group supports Republicans, which they believe will better their own economic status, which is found to be false. In fact, they are emotionally attached to their racial status more than their economic status; any entitlement that does not benefit them falls within the category of reverse racism.<sup>30</sup>

In general, the most loyal supporters of Trump and pontificators of white supremacy use their white fragility as a defensive response against having discussions on racism. Refusal to have such discussions personally insulates them from feeling white

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26 Andrew Hacker, *Two Nations: Black and White, Separate, Hostile, Unequal* (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 4.

27 Ira Katznelson, *When Affirmative Action Was White: An Untold History of Racial Inequality in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2005).

28 Jonathan M. Metzl, *Dying of Whiteness: How the Politics of Racial Resentment Is Killing America’s Heartland* (New York: Basic Books, 2019).

29 Ezra Klein, *Why We’re Polarized* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2020), and Thomas Frank, *What’s the Matter with Kansas? How Conservatives Won the Heart of America* (New York: Henry Holt, 2005).

30 David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London: Verso Books, 2007).



guilt and from having to dispute their white privilege.<sup>31</sup> They are reluctant to accept the ideas of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging to foster diverse and inclusive environments, as seen in the number of Republican-led state legislatures passing laws to halt DEI initiatives. Such ideas are also neglected in liberal spaces, as white allies in American society parade them as the solutions but arguably, at times, use the impelling force behind the terms to mask structural, institutional, and systemic problems and to avoid proactive approaches to building an equitable ecosystem.

Trump's dedication to *whiteness* and how it captivated his followers was witnessed with the racial reckoning on January 6, 2021. On that day, the sum of all oppressive systems devised to maintain whiteness worked accordingly. The attempted coup on the US Capitol Building to override the will of Black voters who elected Biden and Democrat vice-presidential candidate Kamala D. Harris further acknowledged the desire for white racial order in this country.

The two major political parties have drawn a hard political line for whom they include and exclude. Gone is the ideological-party metric spanning the 1960s through the 1990s, that included liberal Democrats and conservative Republicans together with liberal Republicans (e.g., Rockefeller Republicans and Reagan Democrats) and conservative Democrats (e.g., Blue Dog Democrats and Clinton Democrats). While the ideological term of "conservative" has remained with Republicans, Democrats have shed the term "liberal" over time as it began to have an undesirable effect on mobilizing a wide range of voters.<sup>32</sup> The modern criticism is that Democrats are either too far left (i.e., progressive or radical) or too moderate (i.e., centralist), which leads to conflict within the party and limits the policy imagination for the progress of racial and ethnic minorities. Conversely,

31 Robin DiAngelo, "White Fragility," *The International Journal of Critical Pedagogy* 3, no. 3 (2011): 54–70.

32 Jacob R. Neiheisel, "The 'L' Word: Anti-Liberal Campaign Rhetoric, Symbolic Ideology, and the Electoral Fortunes of Democratic Candidates," *Political Research Quarterly* 69, no. 3 (2016): 418–29.

Republicans are too far right (i.e., extreme or right-wing), insulating whiteness to work against racial and ethnic minorities.

### **Denouncing the Labels of Black Democrat and Black Republican?**

Black Democrats have spent decades allowing the Democratic Party to pander to the community and culture. This is mainly due to the incessant Democratic voting bloc patterns among Black eligible voters. Despite this unwavering allegiance, the party's intentional participation in unfulfilled agenda items for Black people, the practice of "competence downshifting," and taking the Black vote for granted, have all led to conservative and moderate white Democrats practicing methods of Black dismissal and white liberal racism. According to Dupree and Fiske, "competence downshifting" is when well-meaning white people appease us with political rhetoric, words of warmth and sympathy, and speak down to Black people to ingratiate themselves rather than helping to find solutions to the symptoms that continue to plague our negative structural and cultural conditions.<sup>33</sup>

The political realignment that brought Black people to the Democratic Party, thought to address our individual and collective group interests, stands secondary for a party that has placed the collective needs of Latinx Americans, Asian Americans, LGBTQ+ persons, and immigrants before the indebted interest owed to Black descendants of us slavery. Democrats are attempting to cater to Latinx, who represent 32 million eligible voters, while Republicans are trying to impede the growth of us immigrants. Since the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Voting Rights Act of 1965, Black policy demands have lessened, and we have allowed the political and economic competition of "who gets what, when, and how" to be controlled by white Democrats.

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33 Cydney H. Dupree and Susan T. Fiske, "Self-Presentation in Interracial Settings: The Competence Downshift by White Liberals," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 117, no. 3 (2019): 579–604.

They have prioritized the concerns of liberal-leaning Latinx over other groups to capture this voting pool with legislation to make them citizens and have access to the American Dream.

When Obama was elected to occupy the White House, most Black people believed his administration would enact substantive legislation or sign Executive Orders to advance Black progress. In January 2010, in his first term, during a White House press conference, he said that a “Rising tide lifts all boats” when asked about the high level of Black unemployment. Kennedy first presented the “rising tide” metaphor, and Republicans later adopted it for their benefit related to cutting taxes to help the rich get richer. This trickle-down theory did not encompass the harmful structural and cultural factors faced by Black people, which prompted criticism as Black leaders called for more race-specific initiatives such as those given to other social groups.

When the Black Lives Matter movement (BLM) was created in July 2013 after the deaths of Trayvon Martin and Michael Brown, to address the subjugation of and police violence against Black bodies under Obama’s presidency, it affirmed his symbolic presence over his actual representative power.<sup>34</sup> Obama did not empower Black eligible voters who placed him in the Oval Office with a transformative political agenda for the Black community.

Black Democrats wanted a greater return on their vote during his eight years in the presidential office, the same as they wanted from past Democratic administrations. Black presidential and vice-presidential candidates such as Charlotta Amanda Spears Bass, Shirley Chisholm, Reverend Jesse Jackson, Dr. Lenora Branch Fulani, Carol Moseley Braun, Reverend Al Sharpton, and Dr. Cynthia McKinney had all opened the political door for him. Therefore, Black Democrats believed that Obama should have felt an obligation to the community. In a *Black Enterprise* magazine interview months before his 2012 re-election, when

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34 Journalist Wesley Lowery provides an in-depth analysis of the BLM movement in *They Can't Kill Us All: Ferguson, Baltimore, and a New Era in America's Racial Justice Movement* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2016).

asked about supporting Black businesses, Obama said he was the president for “all Americans,” not just “the president of Black America.”<sup>35</sup> He proved to be the same political bedfellow as past white Democratic leadership who had not been transformative in addressing Black interests.

On the other side of the partisan aisle, the marginal increases of Black people in the twenty-first century who identify as Republicans are not the traditional staunch Black conservatives of yesteryear. Black leaders like the late Colin Powell, Ben Carson, Thomas Sowell, Tony Brown, Michael Steele, Larry Elder, Ward Connerly, Clarence Thomas, Alan Keyes, Herman Cain, and Condoleezza Rice (to name a few), and rank-in-file Blacks who voted for Republicans professed a respectable Black conservative tradition. In past decades, the elder group of modern Black Republicans who rose during the Reagan Era was committed to traditional conservative principles, and as a result, were placed in the untenable position of having to choose between their loyalty to the Black race or an ideological makeup that best represented their way of life. This group of Black Republicans was branded as race traitors, labeled by the derogatory terms “Black Uncle Toms,” “Sell-Outs,” and “Coons.” Black psychologist Amos N. Wilson, in *Blueprint for Black Power*, stated, “the Black neoconservative establishment is used as cannon fodder in defense of white racism and domination against both Black and white liberals and Black nationalists.”<sup>36</sup>

Black people voting for the Republican Party has always existed; however, there are now new factions of Black Republicans. Many align with the tenets of aged Black conservatism and see life through a post-Civil Rights lens that absolves white people of past racial injustices in America. For example, the younger movements *Gen Z GOP* and the *Black Conservative movement*,

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35 Derek T. Dingle, “Oval Office Interview with President Barack Obama,” *Black Enterprise*, August 6, 2012, <https://www.blackenterprise.com/president-obama-interview-small-business-unemployment-exclusive>.

36 Amos N. Wilson, *Blueprint for Black Power: A Moral, Political, and Economic Imperative for the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Afrikan World InfoSystems, 1998), 837.

have come forward as dedicated young Black Republican voters who visibly campaign on behalf of the party.<sup>37</sup> They believe that discrimination and racism alone cannot explain the social conditions of Black people and push back on the factual premise that these two hostile forces have impeded the plight of Blacks.

Other factions of Black Republicans seek societal clout and work in concert with the Republican establishment. These types of Republicans, considered Black grifters, are recruited and funded by white Republicans to place a Blackface on white supremacy. In a strategy called “racial distancing,” Black eligible voters who identify as Republican side with racially conservative and moderate white political candidates to promote their racially conservative messages, which leads to electoral success.<sup>38</sup> They align with manufactured movements such as “Blexit” and “WalkAway,” where Black progress is measured by repudiation of systemic and institutional discrimination and racism.

The term “Blexit,” or “Black Exit,” coined by Black economic strategist Me’Lea Connelly and the Bank Black movement,<sup>39</sup> was co-opted in 2016 by Black Republican Candace A. Owens, who has emerged as the new Black conservative movement leader.<sup>40</sup>

37 Maya King, “For Some Black Youth, It’s Time to Question Democratic Loyalties,” *Politico*, October 11, 2020, <https://www.politico.com/news/2020/10/11/gen-z-black-youth-conservatives-trump-421914>.

38 LaFleur Stephens-Dougan, *Race to the Bottom: How Racial Appeals Work in American Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020), and Leah Christiani, “When Are Explicit Racial Appeals Accepted? Examining the Role of Racial Status Threat,” *Political Behavior* 45 (2023): 103–23.

39 Ivy Brashear, “The Co-op That’s Keeping Community Money Out of Big Banks,” *Yes! Magazine*, December 4, 2018, <https://www.yesmagazine.org/issue/good-money/2018/12/04/black-owned-banks-keep-community-money-where-it-belongs>.

40 Once Democrat and liberal, Owens was represented by the NAACP in 2008 while a senior in high school. Owens and her family accused the Stamford Board of Education of not protecting her rights after white classmates threatened to kill Owens and called her “dirty.” The NAACP helped them secure a \$37,500 settlement against the Board. Now Owens calls them “one of the worst groups for Black people.” In 2015 Owens ran an anti-Trump website, *Degree180*. In late December 2015, before Owens left the “Democratic Plantation” and proclaimed her newfound allegiance to Donald J. Trump and the Republican Party, the site ran a story titled

Although there were three Black Republicans in the 117th congressional body (January 2021–January 2023), her political voice led the way. In April 2018, her popularity soared when liberal-turned-conservative rapper Kanye West tweeted, “I love the way Candace Owens thinks.”<sup>41</sup> Her perspective on Black community and culture has often crossed the line of spewing rhetoric that promotes Black tropes and enforces the falsehood of Black cultural pathology. White Republicans use Black people such as Owens as a pawn to promote the most demeaning anti-Black narratives.

The white conservative media has joined this effort as they have previously done with Black Republicans that unquestioningly support systems of oppression, highlighting what they perceive to be an anomaly.<sup>42</sup> Owens’s performative rhetoric to, first, college students through *Turning Point USA*, a college organization committed to fighting the “cultural war on college campuses,” and, later, her 5.8 million followers on Twitter and 5.4 million followers on Instagram shows her willingness to be used by white Republicans.

These groups of Black Republicans attempt to separate themselves from the structural and cultural factors affecting the Black community and culture and believe that concerns and issues affecting Black people are related to a victimhood mentality. They operate as non-white theatrical performers to portray a caricature of a Republican void, and white Republicans welcome them to display that there are Black people in America who uphold the same morals and values as a party filled with

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“Serious Question: Is Donald Trump a Social Experiment?” Documented by Julia Marnin, “Fact Check: Did Candace Owens Run a Liberal Blog Before Becoming a Conservative?,” *Newsweek*, March 1, 2020, <https://www.newsweek.com/fact-check-did-candace-owens-run-liberal-blog-before-becoming-conservative-1573008>.

41 C. Vernon Coleman, “Kanye West Likes The Way Right Wing-Media Personality Candace Owens Thinks,” *XXL Magazine*, April 21, 2018, <https://www.xxlmag.com/kanye-west-likes-the-way-candace-owens-thinks/>.

42 Shelby Steele, *A Dream Deferred: The Second Betrayal of Black Freedom in America* (New York: HarperCollins, 1999).

white extremists. They are a sign of cohesive group failure, and show our level of exploitability.

Black people of all partisan and ideological makeups are complicit in electing these presidential and party leaders who have been puppet masters. Our goal as Black people is to correct this problem. According to Paul Frymer in his book *Uneasy Alliances*, Democrats have “captured” our vote and unforgivingly abused our loyalty for decades.<sup>43</sup> Our vote share should not go to a political party that does not consider us a priority-minority, an egregious show of benign neglect.

The Democratic Party is a political party where white elites pull the ideological strings. Unfortunately, Black political leaders, including Obama, and other Black leaders, both past and present, have failed to demand policies to advance the economic, social, cultural, and political status of Black people. Most are influenced by the idea of “rising tide,” some by white acceptance, and others by profit over social change, but all move as puppets at the end of an invisible wire. The ideological machine within the party—thrust by moderates who criticize progressives—contributes to this ineptitude. In 1963, Dr. King forewarned us of this from a Birmingham jail when he wrote:

I have almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro’s great stumbling block in his stride toward freedom is not the white Citizens Councilor or the Ku Klux Klanner, but the white moderate, who is more devoted to “order” than to justice.<sup>44</sup>

The everlasting power of the Democratic puppeteer act plays out beneath the partisan layers and has contributed radically to slowing the progress of Black people in America.

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<sup>43</sup> Frymer, *Uneasy Alliances*.

<sup>44</sup> “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” *Bill of Rights Institute*, April 16, 1963, <https://billofrightsinstitute.org/activities/martin-luther-king-jr-letter-from-birmingham-jail-1963>.

In contrast, Black Republicans have abandoned their racial loyalty to the Black community and culture. Although it may appear convincingly easier to persuade Black Republicans with facts to leave the party, they have a never-ending loyalty propelled by the agenda of relevance and profit. According to Leah Wright Rigueur in an interview on the standing of Black Republicans, she argued these Republicans are caught in a political dilemma because, “Their real struggle is what do you do when you’re a political minority within your racial group, and a racial minority within your political group?”<sup>45</sup> In this conundrum, many Black people have reinvented themselves as Black Republican propagandists to the white Republican masses for white acceptance.<sup>46</sup> This defies Philpot’s finding in her book *Conservative But Not Republican* on how the number of Black conservatives open to recruitment by the Republican Party is limited.<sup>47</sup> Many Black conservatives are blindly following the Trump regime.

This demonstrates that most Black people in America maintain our allegiance to the Democratic Party and the Republican Party when we must view the two-party system as two un-Democratic countries motivated by their own structural and class interests.

## Outline of the Chapters

*What have Black people in America done in the twenty-first century to force the dominant white society to end the forms of structural, institutional, and systemic oppression that affect our human survival and well-being?*

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45 Afi Scruggs, “In a World Full of African American Democrats, Black Republicans Stand Alone,” *USAToday*, February 6, 2020, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2020/02/06/election-2020-black-republicans-stand-alone-ideological-island/2787551001>.

46 Harold Cruse, *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual: A Historical Analysis of the Failure of Black Leadership* (New York: Quill, 1984).

47 Ibid.



The above question precedes the call to action for both Black Democrats and Black Republicans to abstain from the partisan and ideological imprisonment of the two-party system and become an independent voting bloc willing to give our vote to a chosen party in a free partisan market that best represents our interests. I call for collective action to begin a Black Liberation movement rooted in this analysis of the intersections of race, partisanship, and ideology. As Black people in America, we should no longer solely operate through the prism of a two-party competitive system. Such a system cannot be viewed as the most efficient political structure for Black people to achieve political power. Leaving and practicing political independence is the catalyst for progressive change.

Operating under the premise that what has politically hindered the process of reaching a Black Liberation movement has been our assimilative loyalty to the false constructs of partisanship and ideology, the following questions are proposed as a guide throughout the book to resolve if our standing as a non-monolithic group can concede to working as a conscious collective group: Can Black people of all partisanship and ideologies capitulate to each other's interests and bond together for the betterment of the Black community and culture? Can the two groups who vote for major parties, and others outside of these socially constructed political labels, respectfully agree to disagree in order to find common ground for a Black Liberation movement?

In addition to addressing the powerlessness of Black people who remain loyal to the two-party system and flawed structure of American democracy, this book makes the case that it is of great consequence to analyze the intra-group relations within the Black community and culture. Beyond the partisan and ideological scopes, attention to intra-group dynamics is needed to understand the behaviors and actions of Black people. From an ancestral standpoint, we should be bound together by the threads of Black consciousness and solidarity.

Neither partisan affiliation nor ideological makeup should intervene amongst a racial group whose historical mission is

to gain equal treatment and equity in the us. In this societal climate, Black people on all sides of the political, partisan, and ideological coin are experiencing the grave concerns of economic inequalities, educational deficiencies, health disparities, racial injustices, and voting rights restrictions no matter our treatment toward each other.

It must be stated that this book is not a comprehensive study of all forms of Black ideologies, politics, and movements. It does not argue for the creation of a third party. Its lens is solely rooted in political independence for all Black people willing to engage in the political process for the betterment of the Black community.

Chapter Two, “Comparing the Presidencies of Obama and Trump: A Rising Tide Does Not Lift All Boats,” juxtaposes the presidencies of Barack H. Obama and Donald J. Trump. The two men were political opposites. It argues that Obama strived to create a multicultural America filled with racial harmony, while Trump wanted to distinguish the white-Black divide. As the puppet master in the political game of “trade-offs,” Trump made political concessions for the Black community but never cared about the plight of the Black electorate in his first presidency. He only cared about the benefit of the Black vote.

Chapter Three, “A Black Political Agenda,” calls for presidential nominees and the leaders of the political parties to adhere to the political “asks” and “demands” of Black people wanting the United States government to yield to a progressive Black political agenda. Black people of all partisanship and ideologies have expressed our concerns about America’s future. Introducing recommendations formulated from a focus group of Black politicians to address Black people’s concerns, an argument is built that expects at least one of the two major political parties would want to introduce and enact substantive legislation on Black people’s behalf or risk losing our vote support in upcoming midterm and presidential elections.

Chapter Four, “The Black Vote: Race and the Ideal of Progressivism,” makes the argument that Black eligible voters should adopt a progressive ideological position as the epicenter

of our independent voting bloc. This ideological center must be embraced for the human survival and well-being of the Black community and culture. This center is in stark contrast to the fluctuating ideologies that Black people have historically espoused while continuing to vote Democrat, which have had a negative outcome on our advancement as a community.

Chapter Five, “January 6, 2021: A Day of Racial Reckoning,” describes how the events on that day and the subsequent response from the benefactors of whiteness encapsulates the held ideals that Black people’s vote, our place in the United States, our willingness to concede forgiveness, and our readiness to assimilate into white America do not matter. Days like January 6 are placed in plain view to impede our progress and show how white America is afraid of our ability to impact the political landscape of the us.

Chapter Six, “Strategies Toward Liberation for Black People in America,” offers three large-scale strategies for the Black community and culture. Such strategies operate from the premise that the group, as a whole, is willing to concede that the group’s identification with one another is dependent on the generative power of Black group consciousness and solidarity and is willing to do what is in the best interest of the larger Black community. Only then can a Black Liberation movement be achieved.



## Comparing the Presidencies of Obama and Trump: A Rising Tide Does Not Lift All Boats

It was Democratic President John F. Kennedy who first said, “A rising tide lifts all the boats,” in a speech on August 17, 1962, in Pueblo, Colorado, on the Fryingpan–Arkansas Project, as he advocated on behalf of the public works project. He told the crowd:

What I preach is the interdependence of the United States. We are not 50 countries — we are one country of 50 states and one people. And I believe that those programs which make life better for some of our people will make life better for all of our people. A rising tide lifts all the boats.<sup>1</sup>

Kennedy referenced “A rising tide raises [or lifts] all boats” several times during his presidential reign before Republicans co-opted the phrase for their own political benefit. The Regan administration is on record misquoting Kennedy:

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<sup>1</sup> Donald Lazere, “Arthur Laffer and Kennedy’s Rising Tide,” *History News Network*, <https://www.historynewsnetwork.org/article/arthur-laffer-and-kennedys-rising-tide>.

No American is ever made better off by pulling a fellow American down, and every American is made better off whenever any one of us is made better off. A rising tide raises all boats.<sup>2</sup>

By this account of “A rising tide lifts all boats,” if the Republican boat is lifted, the Democratic boat will sink. In stark contrast to this position, Kennedy’s words, either disingenuous or not, called for citizens to see the benefit of helping each other for the betterment of the United States.

He received 78% of the Black vote. An advocate for civil rights, Kennedy was slow to consider sweeping policy change to address Black interests, which decades later has led many to reassess his contribution to Black progress. From his election to the presidential office until his assassination on November 22, 1963, Kennedy’s primary focus was on foreign relations, despite Black people facing significant racial discrimination in the us. From the sit-in movement to the Freedom Rides to the March on Washington in 1963, Black people had organized and protested to create political momentum for policy accommodations from the Kennedy administration. However, he urged Martin Luther King Jr. and other southern organizers to stop protesting, which became a consistent point of contention between the two leading to the FBI’s monitoring through the counterintelligence program. Kennedy knew that protesting was one of Black America’s political methods to lift the boat of equality. Subsequently, his slow policy response to protests showed that the impetus behind the “A rising tide lifts all boats” metaphor was a farce.

Since gaining the voting support of Black eligible voters in the 1960s, no Democratic president has ever set and upheld a political agenda for Black people in America. Each presidential administration has prioritized the concerns and issues of every other racial and ethnic group over Black people, fearful

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2 Arthur B. Laffer, Stephen Moore, and Peter J. Tanous, *The End of Prosperity: How Higher Taxes Will Doom the Economy — If We Let It Happen* (New York: Threshold Editions, 2009), 42.

of our imprint on American society. If politicians of all levels addressed the concerns and issues of Black people, there would be a trickle-down effect on other racial and ethnic minorities and disadvantaged groups.

Why have the masses of Black people not demanded a Black political agenda from presidential administrations in the twenty-first century? While Black leaders have advocated for such in the past, no one person or group has been able to mobilize a majority to outline the best interests of Black people in America. At the turn of the twentieth century, civil rights leaders such as A. Philip Randolph were pioneers in advocating for Black interests by placing political pressure on US presidents. In 1941, when Randolph asked President Franklin D. Roosevelt in their behind-closed-doors meeting to ban discrimination in governmental employment, he had to propose it as a demand followed by a threat to March on Washington.

Randolph was known for his ability to organize Black people. In 1925, he led the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, which was the nation's first successful, Black-led labor union. Therefore, when he announced a Black-led protest to march on Washington DC, Roosevelt responded with Executive Order 8802, which created the Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC). The apocryphal story behind the interactions between Randolph and Roosevelt in their closed-door meeting was that the president said to him, "You've convinced me [of its importance]. I agree with what you've said. Now go out and make me do it."<sup>3</sup>

Throughout history, Randolph and other Black leaders have demanded that sitting presidents and presidential candidates address the concerns and issues of Black people. During the Civil Rights movement, a Black Power movement emerged to promote that Black people independently practice economic, social, and cultural prosperity methods without the control of a white-dominated society to achieve the goal of liberation. For

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3 Peter Dreier, "Go Out and Make Me Do It," *HuffPost*, November 9, 2009, [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/go-out-and-make-me-do-it\\_b\\_281631](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/go-out-and-make-me-do-it_b_281631).

more than a decade into the late 1970s, the Civil Rights movement, along with the Black Power movement under the leadership of the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense and the Nation of Islam and the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, both stood strong to advocate for Black pride, economic empowerment, and political power for Black people.

Despite the various efforts by Black individuals and leadership groups of the 1960s and 1970s, demand for societal change slowed as white America's resistance to change for Black people increased, stagnating Black progress. At the national level, the legacies of Shirley Chisholm, Jesse Jackson, and Al Sharpton, who all made national waves in the 1970s, 1980s, and 2000s, are applauded in Black American history. Each ran for president on behalf of Democrats and offered a vision for the party. However, this combustion of political synergy at all governmental levels did not break through the structural, institutional, and systemic barriers to move the needle for Black liberation.

While efforts in the past have advocated for change, in my opinion the closest to starting a movement from the turn of the century to the present has been the Nation of Islam, with the Honorable Minister Louis Farrakhan, conducting the Million Man March (1995), and the annual State of the Black Union conferences (SOTBU) in the early 2000s hosted by Tavis Smiley. Prior to the election of President Barack H. Obama, the SOTBU was essential to the larger Black community. Black leaders gathered to address Black concerns and issues not often discussed in the mainstream. In 2006, with experts, activists, and religious leaders, Smiley outlined a Black political agenda in the book, *The Covenant with Black America*.<sup>4</sup> The conference ended in 2010 when Obama was into his first term as president, and factions of the Black community and culture believed we were headed into a post-racial America and a Black political agenda was no longer needed.

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4 Tavis Smiley, ed., *The Covenant with Black America* (Chicago: Third World Press, 2006).



As symbolic as the presidency of Obama was, after two presidential terms, the first Black man to lead the us government was asked by many in the Black community: *What did he do for Black people?* Our wait for a Black Liberation movement was overshadowed by Obama's pledge to create a multicultural America filled with racial harmony, an America that would never come to fruition under the reign of white supremacy and now shown more than ever in the Trump era. Obama's failings were outshined by Black people's "unrepentant love affair" with him,<sup>5</sup> the Black symbolism of his presidency, his model Black family, and the liberal media bias. But beyond this symbolic love affair, we must continue to ask: *What did he do for Black people?* This question resonated loud enough to allow Donald J. Trump to say he had done more for Black people than Obama.

The remainder of this chapter juxtaposes the presidencies of Barack H. Obama and Donald J. Trump. While the two men were political opposites in their approach, Trump was strategic in his explicit and implicit racial appeals to the white and Black communities with the following understanding: First, his election to the Oval Office came after twice electing the nation's first Black president. Trump campaigned directly to those who harbored feelings of white racial resentment and sought a passage-way back to the tradition of *whiteness*. According to political analyst Van Jones, Trump's election resulted from a "white-lash" against a Black president.<sup>6</sup>

Second, in the end, Trump campaigned to his Black supporters that the Obama administration lacked accountability for the structural and cultural factors still affecting the Black community. His suggestions that Obama was "the most ignorant president in our history" and many of his legislative initiatives

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- 5 Michael Eric Dyson, "Barack Obama, the President of Black America?," *The New York Times*, June 24, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/26/opinion/sunday/barack-obama-the-president-of-black-america.html>.
- 6 Dave Urbanski, "'This Was a White-Lash Against a Black President': Angry Van Jones Decries Trump Election," *Blaze Media*, November 9, 2016, <http://www.theblaze.com/news/2016/11/09/this-was-a-white-lash-against-a-black-president-angry-van-jones-decries-trump-election>.

did not benefit the Black community, the latter resonating with Black voters.<sup>7</sup> Obama's unwillingness to use Executive Orders, or any unilateral political action, sealed his fate as a progressive president. This created distrust among members of the Black community who believed he would challenge the inbuilt institutional and systemic discrimination and racism entrenched in this country's systems of oppression.

Throughout his first presidency, Trump's utilization of the white savior complex led him to boast about political wins for the Black community — many with political strings attached — but wins in his eyes, nonetheless. Trump proclaimed on the 2020 campaign trail, "I've done more for the Black community than any president since Abraham Lincoln...Nobody can dispute it...It's true."<sup>8</sup> Such a proclamation allows us to ask the same question of Trump: *What did he do for Black people?*

## **Obama or Trump: Which President Advocated for Black People?**

### *Barack Hussein Obama II*

The presidential runs of Chisholm, Jackson, and Sharpton paved the way for the presidency of Obama. On November 4, 2008, the majority of Black people in America were overwhelmed with joy as they witnessed the election of Obama, then senator of Illinois, as this country's first Black president. He was elected to the Oval Office as the 44th president of the United States, obtaining 53% of the popular vote and 365 Electoral College votes. His election and presence were to serve as a symbolic transformation of America's past racial hierarchy and one of the most significant triumphs for Black people in the history of this country.

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7 Louis Nelson, "Trump: Obama is 'The Most Ignorant President' in History," *Politico*, July 27, 2016, <https://www.politico.com/story/2016/07/trump-calls-obama-ignorant-226287>.

8 Bloomberg Quicktake, "Trump: I've Done More For The Black Community Than Any President Since Abraham Lincoln," *YouTUBE*, October 10, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gCeydSqYxSM>.

In his memoir, *A Promised Land*, Obama wrote, “For millions of Americans spooked by a Black man in the White House, [Trump] promised an elixir for their racial anxiety.”<sup>9</sup> Despite Obama believing that white people were “spooked by a Black man in the White House,” he was elected to two presidential terms. The paradox of this statement is “Yes,” some white people were spooked by the election of a Black man, but “Yes,” other white eligible voters who voted on behalf of Obama knew he was no real threat and not going to facilitate a societal and cultural climate for a Black Liberation movement.

When Obama was elected, his presence in the Oval Office was finally supposed to address the symbolic “Negro question”: With a Black person elected as president, can Black people in America finally move toward the ideal of creating a Black Liberation movement? Before running for president, working toward such a movement was the religious premise of the sermons that Barack and Michelle Obama would hear every Sunday at the Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago. Their pastor, Jeremiah Wright, used the pulpit to preach the message of “Black Liberation Theology,” which advocated for marginalized Black people.

As seen from Wright’s sermon video clips, he called for a Black Liberation movement in America. In the controversial “God Damn America” sermon, Wright condemned America and said, “God Damn America, for treating [Black people] as less than human.”<sup>10</sup> The white masses decontextualized this sermon and others, and they were shown to the public to paint Obama as a radical anti-American leftist and to negatively turn off white voters. On the 2008 campaign trail, Obama visited Wright’s home and asked him to stop preaching until after the presidential election. Wright refused. And as a result, Obama made the conscious decision to distance himself from his long-

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<sup>9</sup> Barack Obama, *A Promised Land* (New York: Crown, 2020), 672.

<sup>10</sup> Michael Ambinder, “The Full Wright Transcript,” *The Atlantic*, April 28, 2008, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2008/04/the-full-wright-transcript/52865>.

time pastor, mentor, and friend. In response to the national criticism of his association with Wright, Obama delivered the speech “A More Perfect Union,” in which he concentrated his thoughts on race and racism in the US. In the speech, Obama indicated that he could not completely break from Wright, but he did. This distancing from Wright was the tale-tell for forecasting Obama’s pledge to Black progress.

While still associated with Wright, Obama began to shape his early vision of “Transformative Politics,” which was a brand of politics conceived in law school when he was the first Black president of *The Harvard Law Review*.<sup>11</sup> At the local and state levels in Illinois, Obama advocated for Black interests, first, as a community organizer in the Altgeld Gardens public housing project in Chicago in the mid-1980s. He was a tireless worker for this majority-Black housing development, where residents struggled financially, lived in dilapidated units, and faced the constant fear of intra-racial violence.

Moreover, Randy Burnside and Kami Whitehurst, in their study of Obama’s legislative record, show that, as an Illinois state senator from the 90th to 93rd sessions, his name was attached to more than 500 bills, with the bulk focused on the policy areas of social welfare, healthcare, education, and criminal justice reform.<sup>12</sup> The authors found that “Senator Obama was the main sponsor on 236 bills introduced in the Senate and more than 40% of these bills were devoted to social welfare issues.”<sup>13</sup> In the Illinois Assembly, Obama fancied himself as a staunch liberal who was racially conscious of the needs of the Black community and culture.

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11 With the help of a friend, Robert Fisher, Obama drafted a 250-page manuscript that had the working title of “Transformative Politics.” See Timothy Shenk, “Obama’s Lost Manuscript is Also a Lost Path to a Left Populism,” *History News Network*, October 7, 2022, <https://www.historynewsnetwork.org/article/obamas-lost-manuscript-is-also-a-lost-path-to-a-le>.

12 Randolph Burnside and Kami Whitehurst, “From the Statehouse to the White House?: Barack Obama’s Bid to Become the Next President,” *Journal of Black Studies* 38, no. 1 (2007): 75–89.

13 *Ibid.*, 82.

As he climbed the political ladder from state to national politics, Obama went from a racialized to a deracialized governing strategy to widen his voter net. In his 2004 Democratic National Convention keynote address, Obama stated:

There is not a liberal America and a conservative America. There is the United States of America. There is not a Black America and white America and Latino America and Asian America; there is the United States of America.<sup>14</sup>

This address catapulted him to national prominence, and in the process, he lost the internal battle of representing Black interests and adopted the “A rising tide lifts all boats” metaphor as a campaign and governing strategy. His presidential campaign slogans of “Hope” and “Change You Can Believe In” did not materialize for the Black community.

Once elected to the Oval Office with a unified government in place, Obama was able to enact several legislative initiatives. His most significant legislative accomplishments that fell within the margins of Black interests were the American Recovery Reinvestment Act (ARRA), the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA), and the Fair Sentencing Act (FSA). Even with a partisan advantage, he extended an olive branch to Republicans during this period. After the 2010 midterm elections, Republican lawmakers scoffed at the majority of his initiatives with a Republican-led US Congress.

At the forefront of Obama’s first presidential term, he attempted to address valence issues shared by all people in America, such as employment, education, and health care. Regardless of his efforts, factions of the Black community were not satisfied and did not believe he had helped to improve the economic, social, and cultural conditions of Black people. According to a 2013 Pew Research Center study, Black people were mixed about our progress since Obama was elected. Only

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14 CNN, “Obama’s 2004 DNC Keynote Speech,” *YouTube*, July 27, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ueMNqdB1QIE>.

26% of those surveyed believed our situation had improved in the preceding five years. Almost as many (21%) indicated our situation was worse with Obama in office. An overwhelming 51% believed our situation was about the same for Black people in this country in the preceding five years.<sup>15</sup>

“The Obama Effect,” a term conceived in 2008 after his presidential victory, which inferred that his election and presence would have a positive economic, social, and political effect on Black Americans, had not come to fruition.<sup>16</sup> In his first presidential term, when he possessed partisan leverage, Obama should have generated more legislative influence on Black interest bills and signed more Executive Orders; however, he chose not to. More success could have been achieved if he had made Black interest issues a policy priority, although it would have been an uphill battle. The tide shifted in the 2010, 2012, and 2014 election cycles, when Republicans gained control of both chambers of Congress, making Obama a certified lame-duck president.

Obama employed “a rising tide lifts all boats” political philosophy but later found this false. To his detriment, he cut funding to effective governmental programs intended to help Black people. Obama intentionally abstained from race concerns until white law enforcement officers were captured via cell phone footage murdering unarmed Black people at a torrential pace. He was thrust into discussing these racial controversies publicly after social unrest from the Black Lives Matter movement and the larger Black community.

Criticisms of Obama manifested from the time he was running for presidential office in 2008 until and after he exited the White House. West accused Obama of political minstrelsy

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15 See the report “King’s Dream Remains an Elusive Goal; Many Americans See Racial Disparities,” *Pew Research Center*, August 22, 2013, <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2013/08/22/kings-dream-remains-an-elusive-goal-many-americans-see-racial-disparities/>.

16 William T. Hoston, *Black Masculinity in the Obama Era: Outliers of Society* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 109.

and called him a “Rockefeller Republican in Blackface.”<sup>17</sup> Each argued that “Obama-symbolism” was the culprit of thwarting our ability to properly critique the ex-president. West argued that during Obama’s time, “Black elite leadership” tried to fit into “a neoliberal world,” rubber-stamping the belief that a rising tide would “lift all boats.”<sup>18</sup> Therefore, Black leaders were reluctant to condemn Obama to be accepted by the status quo.

In 2016 Michael Eric Dyson criticized Obama’s legacy for his refusal to influence Black interest bills and policy to benefit Black people on the *Breakfast Club Morning Show* by asking the panel, “what public policy do you have to address those issues [related to Black people in America]?”<sup>19</sup> He later defended Obama’s refusal by suggesting, “There was an implicit bargain. White folks said we will put you in [the presidential] office if you don’t remind us we’re white.”<sup>20</sup> Dyson suggested that Obama adopted a white institutionalist approach to Black policy concerns, where his political and legislative energy was to be directed toward other marginalized groups in the US due to already having Black support.<sup>21</sup>

Opponents of Obama’s presidency amplified the words of West and Dyson. Many asked: Where was Obama’s political

17 Free Speech TV, “Cornel West Calls Obama ‘A Rockefeller Republican in Blackface,’” *YouTube*, November 9, 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VBYP5fHLjM4>.

18 Cornell West, “Cornel West Doesn’t Want to Be a Neoliberal Darling,” interview by Audie Cornish, *The New York Times Magazine*, November 29, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/29/magazine/cornel-west-doesnt-want-to-be-a-neoliberal-darling.html>.

19 Breakfast Club Power 105.1 FM, “Michael Eric Dyson Interview at The Breakfast Club Power 105.1 (02/05/2016),” *YouTube*, February 5, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OtmDIPvYlik>.

20 Ibid.

21 Even West and Dyson disagreed on *how* to criticize the Obama administration. In a 10,000-word essay for the *New Republic*, Dyson lambasted West and argued that “political disappointment in a politician’s behavior rarely provokes such torrents of passion, such protracted, dastardly, and sadly, such self-destructive hate.” Michael Eric Dyson, “The Ghost of Cornel West,” *The New Republic*, April 19, 2015, <https://newrepublic.com/article/121550/cornel-wests-rise-fall-our-most-exciting-black-scholar-ghost>.

courage? How did Black people go from the idea of a “Black post-racial America” being forced upon us to screaming “Black Lives Matter” in the streets of cities across the us? And how did Obama produce more gains for other marginalized class groups than Black people in his eight years in the presidential office?

The white political establishment that cherry-picked the 88th-ranked us senator to become the president of the United States knew what they were doing.<sup>22</sup> With the backing of a financial investor, Goldman Sachs, for his 2008 presidential campaign, Obama was positioned as a “King” chess piece on the political board — the piece that appears to be the most powerful but is limited in movement. The conservative factions of Wall Street controlled Obama. He saved the auto industry and banks during the 2009 bailout of American corporations, which did not eventually economically trickle down to Black people during his presidency. Obama left the Oval Office, never strongly advocating for policies to close the racial wealth gap.

Popular Black psychologist Umar Johnson publicized in a 2016 *Breakfast Club Morning Show* interview Obama’s snub of Black policy concerns, using the LGBTQIA+ group as an example:

Obama has ignored Black folk[s]. In fact, we are the only so-called minority population in the country for which he has done nothing nor has spoken significantly for our issues.

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22 The white political establishment is mainly made up of wealthy white donors. Of the two major political parties, Republicans have more top billionaire donors, for example, Richard Uihlein, Ken Griffin, Jeff Yass, and Tim Mellon to name a few. On the Democratic side, George Soros leads the pack of billionaire donors, followed by Samuel Bankman-Fried. Of the top six donors for 2022, Bankman-Fried donated to both political parties. In November 2023, Bankman-Fried was convicted of fraud in a multibillion-dollar crypto ring and sentenced to twenty-five years in prison. During the Obama era, The Koch brothers, Charles and David, and their political network spent hundreds of millions of dollars supporting Republican candidates. In 2010, they orchestrated the Tea Party takeover of the us Congress, spent an estimated \$400 million in the 2012 campaign cycle, and helped to fund the Republican shift of the us Senate in 2014. In all, they have shaped policies for decades.



Compare us to LGBT[QIA+]. They got three laws under Obama. Three! That is unprecedented. How many laws did Black people get under Obama to protect us from police genocide? Or even to improve the schools or to reduce incarceration? Zero!<sup>23</sup>

Part of Johnson's position was a distinction without a difference, as Black people are a part of the larger LGBTQIA+ community. Lost in his argument was that LGBTQIA+ activists and organizations collectively pressured the Obama administration to act on behalf of the community. In contrast, not all Black politicians, activists, and organizations held him accountable regarding Black interests.

The president of the Coalition of African-American Pastors (CAAP), Rev. Bill Owens, took a more pointed position after Obama supported civil rights protections under Title IX for transgender people. Owens said it was "an affront to the Black community and a theft of Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s legacy."<sup>24</sup> He went on to expound:

Black Pastors will not allow the homosexual and transgender community to rob Black Americans of their battle for civil rights!

If the Rev. Martin Luther King were alive to see this today, he would be angered in the same way that Jesus was angered when he turned over the tables of the money changers.<sup>25</sup>

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23 Breakfast Club Power 105.1 FM, "Umar Johnson Interview with The Breakfast Club (7-18-16)," *You Tube*, July 20, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SaUMQDjsAto>.

24 Susan Berry, "Black Pastors Slam Obama Admin's Equivalence of Gender Identity Ideology with Black Civil Rights," *Breitbart*, May 13, 2016, <http://www.breitbart.com/big-government/2016/05/13/black-pastors-slam-obama-admins-equivalence-of-gender-identity-ideology-with-black-civil-rights>.

25 *Ibid.*

Missing from the balance of his criticism is that Black LGBTQIA+ people had a significant role in the Civil Rights movement. The most notable example is Bayard Rustin, who was a senior advisor to King and chief organizer of the 1963 March on Washington.<sup>26</sup> Despite being kept in the shadows of the movement, he proved instrumental in what is considered the most influential non-violent protest ever held in the US.

Joseph R. Biden, Jr., vice president at the time and an LGBTQIA+ ally, was the moral conscience for Obama on LGBTQIA+ rights and protections. Despite opposing same-sex marriage and only being in favor of civil unions early in his presidency, Obama described the marriage equality movement as “the fastest set of changes in terms of a social movement that I’ve seen.”<sup>27</sup> During his eight years in the presidential office, the Obama administration was a strong advocate of the LGBTQIA+ community.

The prioritization of other marginalized groups, even those that included Black people, led a portion of Black eligible voters to lose faith in the Obama administration. Despite Obama garnering 96% of the Black eligible vote in 2008 and 93% of the Black eligible vote in 2012, a trend had already begun with Black turnout declining for Democrats. This was even more evident in the 2016 presidential election as Black turnout for Hillary R. Clinton against Trump dropped to 89%. Trump captured 8% of the Black vote. This was another sign that Black eligible voters had grown tired of Obama and the Democratic Party.

Throughout his time in the Oval Office, Obama never shied away from being called the “first Black president.” Nevertheless, in retrospect, he never fully embraced the responsibilities of the label. We all know he was not the first Black person to be qualified for office, only the first to be supported by white America.

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26 Steven Thrasher, “Bayard Rustin: The Man Homophobia Almost Erased from History,” *BuzzFeed*, August 27, 2013, <https://www.buzzfeed.com/steventhrasher/walter-naegle-partner-of-the-late-bayard-rustin-talks-about>.

27 Sam Levine, “Obama Admits His Daughters Helped Change His Position on Marriage Equality,” *HuffPost*, April 23, 2016, [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/obama-same-sex-marriage\\_n\\_571b9da4e4b0d0042da96ea5](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/obama-same-sex-marriage_n_571b9da4e4b0d0042da96ea5).

While his election and presence as a Black man in the Oval Office is arguably the greatest single symbolic achievement in Black American history, his actual power had no transformative effect on the Black community and culture.

### Donald John Trump

The 2016 election and presence of Donald J. Trump in the Oval Office was a watershed moment in the annals of American history. His presidency, which many viewed as an anomaly, was not. This electoral victory was a symbolic representation of *whiteness*. From the beginning, his nomination was a huge departure for the Republican Party, which had not nominated a politically inexperienced presidential candidate in the modern era.

Before running for presidential office, Trump presented himself as a wealthy business mogul. His resume appeared to be one full of successes until a closer examination. He was a white, privileged daddy's boy whose life was constantly spiraling beneath the surface. From being a poor academic student in college, a Vietnam draft dodger, married and divorced multiple times, and having five children with three ex-wives, to being accused of sexual misconduct 26 times since the 1970s, associated with four bankruptcy filings, a failed businessman who strong-armed small companies, and a reality TV star known for telling people "You're Fired" to being a Russian asset. One of Trump's most malicious actions was when he took out a 1989 newspaper ad calling for the death penalty of five innocent Black boys, now known as *The Central Park Five*, who had been wrongly convicted of an assault on a white female jogger.<sup>28</sup>

On July 26, 2015, during Trump's presidential campaign run, former Keith Ellison (D-MN), now the 30th Attorney General of Minnesota, predicted on ABC's "This Week" that Trump would

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28 Andrew Kaczynski and Jon Sarlin, "Trump in 1989 Central Park Five Interview: 'Maybe Hate is What We Need,'" *CNN*, October 10, 2016, <https://www.cnn.com/2016/10/07/politics/trump-larry-king-central-park-five/index.html>.

win the 2016 presidential election. Ellison's claim was met with bursting laughter from the expert political panel. The show's host, George Stephanopoulos, thought Ellison was providing a "hot take" in explaining Trump's appeal to white voters, but Ellison knew the power of *whiteness* and insisted that Trump had "momentum" — a type of momentum he had seen solidify an electoral victory for white candidates.<sup>29</sup>

Trump lied on the 2016 campaign trail and said Obama was not a US citizen. He then fooled white people into believing that Obama intentionally created a national racial divide when Black people knew that Obama ran a deracialized political campaign and advocated for a race-neutral political agenda. Trump's disdain for Black people did not stop him from attempting to leverage policies benefitting the Black community for our vote support. From the time he told Black eligible voters on the campaign trail, "You're living in your poverty, your schools are no good, you have no jobs, 58% of your youth is unemployed, what the hell do you have to lose?," he was on a mission to mobilize Black voters.

Despite appeals to Black eligible voters ahead of the 2016 presidential election, his administration sought to deter nearly 3.5 million Black voters from 16 battleground states by targeting them with negative Clinton ads on Facebook.<sup>30</sup> He wanted Clinton supporters to stay home on election day. Trump was selective about the type of Black voters he wanted to mobilize. He wanted those on the partisan fence and leaning toward the ideological right who had given up on the Democratic Party.

Trump adopted the Republican slogan, "Make America Great Again," made famous by the Reagan administration,

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29 Harrison Jacobs, "The Frontrunner to Become the Next DNC Chair Warned Trump Could Win in July 2015 — and Was Laughed At," *Business Insider*, November 11, 2016, <https://www.businessinsider.com/keith-ellison-trump-win-2016-11>.

30 Dan Sabbagh, "Trump 2016 Campaign 'Targeted 3.5m Black Americans to Deter Them from Voting,'" *The Guardian*, September 28, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/sep/28/trump-2016-campaign-targeted-35m-black-americans-to-deter-them-from-voting>.

and carved his political persona from Alabama governor and Democratic presidential hopeful George Wallace. Governor Wallace opposed desegregation and challenged Kennedy's intent to enforce desegregation in public spaces. He stated, "The President [John F. Kennedy] wants us to surrender this state to Martin Luther King and his group of pro-communists who have instituted these demonstrations."<sup>31</sup>

Instead of centering all of his negative 2016 campaign energy on Black people, Trump pivoted to undocumented immigrants by conflating Mexicans with criminality. He claimed:

When Mexico sends its people, they're not sending their best. [...] They're sending people that have lots of problems, and they're bringing those problems. They're bringing drugs, they're bringing crime, they're rapists, and some, I assume are good people.<sup>32</sup>

He then vowed to build a "big, beautiful wall" along the US–Mexico border to keep undocumented immigrants out of the US.

In the first 100 days of Trump's first presidential reign, he signed thirty-two Executive Orders and twenty-nine bills into law. He signed more Executive Orders than any president since Harry Truman and more bills than the previous five presidents in office.<sup>33</sup> His most insidious political and legislative actions targeted Hispanic Americans, Muslim Americans, and immigrants. Trump then warned Black Lives Matter protestors who became active under the Obama administration not to become

31 Therlee Gipson, *Struggle for Equality* (Lulu Publishing, 2018), 9.

32 C-SPAN, "Donald Trump Presidential Campaign Announcement Full Speech (C-SPAN)," *YouTube*, June 16, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=apjNfkysjBM>.

33 In total during his presidency Trump signed ninety executive orders, including twenty-eight presidential memoranda and thirty proclamations. See Rebecca Harrington, "Trump Signed 90 Executive Actions in His First 100 Days — Here's What Each One Does," *The Business Insider*, March 3, 2017, <https://www.businessinsider.com/trump-executive-orders-memorandum-proclamations-presidential-action-guide-2017-1>.

“violent disrupter[s]” on the White House government website and empowered then-Attorney General Jeff Sessions to undo the criminal justice policies under the Obama administration that provided equitable justice for Black people. The rest of his actions were glorified press releases and rollbacks of legislation from the Obama administration.

Impeachments contributed to the stain of Trump’s presidency. Of the many egregious acts of the first Trump administration, his collusion with Russia to win the 2016 presidential election compromised the integrity of an American democracy, for which he was impeached. The Obama administration obtained confidential knowledge of Russia’s efforts to help Trump win, according to what is known as *The Mueller Report*,<sup>34</sup> which could have given Clinton even more electoral support, but the Obama administration played Russian roulette with an already flawed democracy. Trump was impeached again following the attempted coup on January 6, 2021 at the US Capitol Building. Each time the vote fell along partisan lines, with Democrats voting in favor of impeachment and Republicans voting against.

During his first presidency, Trump employed a form of dog-whistle politics, which explicitly signaled those who harbored feelings of white racial resentment. From David Duke in Louisiana, who is a white nationalist and former Imperial Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK), to the Proud Boys, Boogaloo Bois, The Oath Keepers, the Three Percenters, and a host of others: all are groups and individuals that awaited the “whistle” from Trump to maintain white racial order in this country. In 2017 at the “Unite the Right” rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, when white supremacists counter-protested the removal of the Robert E. Lee confederate statue, Trump called them “very fine people.”<sup>35</sup>

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34 Robert S. Mueller, *Report on the Investigation into Russian Interference in the 2016 Presidential Election* (Washington, DC: The Justice Department, March 2019), <https://www.justice.gov/archives/sco/file/1373816/>.

35 Jordyn Phelps, “Trump Defends 2017 ‘Very Fine People’ Comments, Calls Robert E. Lee ‘a great general,’” *ABCNews*, April 26, 2019, <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/trump-defends-2017-fine-people-comments-calls-robert/story?id=62653478>.

During a 2020 presidential debate, Trump refused to denounce the Proud Boys unequivocally, but instead, dog-whistled them to “stand back and stand by.”<sup>36</sup> This led to a massive increase in the group’s membership.<sup>37</sup>

In relation to the Black community, he displayed how out of touch he was with the community when he enlisted Omarosa Manigault Newman, a reality-TV personality who appeared on his show, *The Apprentice*, as an assistant, to consult on Black community affairs. She was heavily disliked by Black Democrats and Black Republicans alike. After her ungraceful exit from the White House, she called Trump a racist and rumored that she recorded him using the word “Nigger.”<sup>38</sup> The Trump administration smeared her as a disgruntled former White House employee.

Trump called himself the modern-day Abraham Lincoln. Several positive outcomes for Black people can be attributed to his administration. First, jobs for Black people increased under Trump. The Black unemployment rate fell to 5.9% in May of 2018, which was the lowest since 1972.<sup>39</sup> Second, he signed the First Step Act, a bipartisan bill to shorten federal drug sen-

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36 Ted Hesson and Kristina Cooke, “Explainer: President Trump Asked the Proud Boys to ‘Stand By.’ Who Are They?,” *Reuters*, September 30, 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-election-extremists-explainer/explainer-president-trump-asked-the-proud-boys-to-stand-by-who-are-they-idUSKBN26L3Q1>.

37 According to Marcus Childress, an investigator for the January 6 US House Select Committee, membership of the group increased. Jeremy Bertino, a member of the Proud Boys, said membership tripled after Trump’s comment. For a portion of his testimony from June 9, 2022, see PBS News-Hour, “Watch: Jan. 6 Committee Offers New Details of Proud Boys, Oath Keepers Involvement in Capitol Attack,” *YouTUBE*, June 9, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lc4baoSeuGw>.

38 David Smith, “Omarosa Says Trump Is a Racist Who Uses N-Word — and Claims There Is Tape to Prove It,” *The Guardian*, August 11, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/aug/10/omarosa-trump-book-the-apprentice-memoir>.

39 For more information, see “Employment and Wages, Annual Averages 2019,” *US Bureau of Labor Statistics*, <https://www.bls.gov/cew/publications/employment-and-wages-annual-averages/2019/home.htm>.

tences. The bill was supposed to be a step to reduce the overall impact of mass incarceration. However, this sentencing reform bill — meant to address racial disparities set by the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986 under the Reagan administration, and the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 under the Clinton administration — was passed but not truly implemented.

The bill sounds good in theory; however, lack of congressional oversight has allowed the Bureau of Prisons (BOP) the discretion of not granting credit for time served. According to the BOP:

[F]ederal inmates can earn up to 54 days of good time credit for every year of their imposed sentence rather than for every year of their sentenced served. For example, this change means that an offender sentenced to 10 years in prison and who earns the maximum good time credits each year will earn 540 days of credit.<sup>40</sup>

The First Step Act bill proved hollow, with the BOP not giving prisoners the credits they had earned. The bill itself has a clause that states the credits did not have to be implemented until 2022, which made one believe that Trump passed the bill to mobilize Black voters rather than partake in meaningful criminal justice reform. To the Trump administration's credit, through the coronavirus relief bill, they allowed Democrats to restore Pell Grants to prisoners, which was banned in the 1994 Crime Bill co-authored by Biden.

Trump claimed he economically rescued Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), but that was false. He signed The FUTURE Act in December of 2019. The Act allots yearly funding of \$255 million to STEM funding at minority-serving institutions, including approximately \$85 million designated to HBCUs. He is to be applauded for his efforts, but Trump did not

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40 See "An Overview of the First Step Act," *Federal Bureau of Prisons*, <https://www.bop.gov/inmates/fsa/overview.jsp>.



rescue these schools and failed to adequately address the severe underfunding of HBCUS. Michael Lomax, the president and CEO of the United Negro College Fund (UNCF), said that the funding designated for all the HBCUS in the US is not enough to solve the “HBCU paradox.”<sup>41</sup>

On the 2020 campaign trail, Trump introduced the *Platinum Plan* to Black eligible voters. It identified the four pillars of Trump’s commitment to Black Americans (i.e., Opportunity, Security, Prosperity, and Fairness). The two-page plan was designed to “increase access to capital in Black communities by almost \$500 billion.” In addition, it would develop three million new jobs for the Black community, create 500,000 Black-owned businesses, and commit to working on a Second Step Act, among other things.<sup>42</sup> Even with his efforts to invalidate millions of Black eligible votes ahead of the election, during a “Black Voices for Trump” event in Atlanta, Georgia, Trump promised these things if Black people “vote[d] Republican over the next four years.”<sup>43</sup>

After losing the 2020 presidential election, Trump left the White House holding on to the idea that he was the best president for Black America. The increased percentage of racial and ethnic minorities casting votes in his favor, particularly the Black vote rising from 8% in 2016 to 12% in 2020, does lead us to question whether his policies mattered more to some minority voters than the implicit racial messages broadcasted throughout his first reign.

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41 Sara Weissman, “Despite Passage of FUTURE Act, HBCUS Still ‘Woefully Underfunded,’ Says UNCF President,” *Diverse Education*, March 3, 2020, <https://www.diverseeducation.com/demographics/african-american/article/15106380/despite-passage-of-future-act-hbcus-still-woefully-underfunded-says-uncf-president>.

42 See the Trump administration’s “The Platinum Plan: President Trump’s Pillars,” *Donald J. Trump*, [https://cdn.donaldjtrump.com/public-files/press\\_assets/president-trump-platinum-plan-final-version.pdf](https://cdn.donaldjtrump.com/public-files/press_assets/president-trump-platinum-plan-final-version.pdf).

43 Jill Colvin, “Trump Woos Black Voters with ‘Platinum Plan’s’ Long List of Promises,” *ABC13 Eyewitness News*, September 26, 2020, <https://abc13.com/trump-500-billion-black-voters-platinum-plan/6577561>.

## Conclusion

Did the first Trump administration work harder than the Obama administration to give more access to the American Dream for Black people in America? Or, were his actions a political ploy to gain a margin of Black voters who could secure victory in 2020? Trump was the puppet master in the political game of “trade-offs.” He never cared about the plight of the Black electorate. He only cared about the benefit of the Black vote.

Trump only valued white people and disparaged all other racial and ethnic minority groups. He pulled political strings to coerce his white Republican base to view economic, social, and political progress as a zero-sum game, and as a result, his election to the presidential office was advantageous to their societal and economic positioning. Ironically, Trump adopted the political philosophy of Democratic President Lyndon B. Johnson who once said, “If you can convince the lowest white man he’s better than the best colored man, he won’t notice you’re picking his pocket.”<sup>44</sup> To this end, Trump’s strategy to promote white racial resentment for his electoral gain worked.

In the middle of the presidencies of Obama and Biden, the first presidency of Trump displayed that those agents of the white political establishment operate for the economic, social, cultural, and political benefit of the white masses. Only one of the three presidents was the most transformative for the constituency that elected him. That was Donald J. Trump. While his unapologetic approach to re-centering *whiteness* garners the most criticism, in the reversal of roles, we, as Black people in America, wished that Obama would have been more progressive and pushed for a Black Liberation movement while in office.

Obama was not a Black messiah for the Black community and culture. He was an eloquent Mister amongst a sea of white

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44 Bill D. Moyers, “What a Real President Was Like,” *The Washington Post*, November 12, 1988, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/opinions/1988/11/13/what-a-real-president-was-like/d483c1be-doda-43b7-bde6-04e10106ff6c>.

gentlemen who ascribed to accepting his election and presence but not his politics. He remains an exceptional Black man who came up under the Black liberation teachings of Rev. Jeremiah Wright and was once totally committed to the human survival and well-being of the Black community. Unfortunately, Obama was eventually commandeered by the need for acceptance from the white political establishment.



## A Black Political Agenda

A Black agenda is needed to address the political concerns and issues of Black people in America. Such an agenda must fervently deal with valence issues, namely voting rights, education, health care, and jobs, among others. However, beyond these politicized essential human needs, there is a rank-and-file competition to receive tangible benefits in each policy area. Equally critical are the demands to close the racial wealth gap, end police brutality, and reverse mass incarceration. Each issue requires political and social reform, which neither major political party has yet to deliver despite acknowledging the harmful laws and policies, hidden in the crevices of structures, institutions, and systems, that have disproportionately impacted Black people.

In this chapter, I urge presidential nominees and party leaders to consider the political “asks” and “demands” of Black people rather than continuing the “business as usual” policies and the fallacy of the “rising tides” metaphor. Additionally, I introduce recommendations formulated from a focus group of Black politicians to address Black people’s concerns (see Appendix). It is expected that at least one of the two major political parties would want to introduce and enact substantive legislation on Black people’s behalf or risk losing our vote support in upcoming presidential elections. As it stands, Black people of

all partisanship and ideologies have expressed concerns about America's political future.

### Addressing the Most Urgent Concerns of Our Time

The question, *what concerns and issues most influence what Black people in America should ask for in a political agenda*, is critical to a Black Liberation movement. In short order, Black eligible voters who have been loyal to the Democratic Party for decades want political and legislative quid pro quo (i.e., the Latin term for "something for something"; "a favor for a favor"). Our votes should come with a political "ask," which is a political request in return for our vote support. Our vote support should return Executive Orders, laws, policies, programs, and benefits to the Black community and culture. But, instead of setting the agenda with Black interest bills for our vote support, the party has advanced its own political agenda.

What are Black interest bills? Historically, social scientists have provided measures of group interests that are generalizable to all racial and ethnic groups, based on socioeconomic indicators such as unemployment, poverty rates, levels of income, and educational levels.<sup>1</sup> However, in the case of Black people, specific measures are vital to consider when defining "Black interests." The legacy of slavery, Jim Crow, the disenfranchisement of Black voters, and different economic, social, and political factions among Black people are important in deciphering "Black interests." These factors form the foundation for determining what legislative and policy areas are important to Black people.

The following section reviews some of the most urgent Black concerns and issues and provides recommendations for presidential nominees and party leaders. Beginning with the valence issues of education, health care, and job development, I then

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1 J. Sargent, "Black Interest and Representation," paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Washington, DC, 1991, and Carol M. Swain, *Black Faces, Black Interests: The Representation of African Americans in Congress* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993).

venture to the high-priority topics of Black-interest issues that Republicans and many conservative and moderate Democrats in the chambers of the US Congress bear malice toward, which are closing the racial wealth gap, ending police brutality, and reversing mass incarceration.

## Education

The nexus of an authentic Black Liberation movement that ensures all Black people's human survival and well-being in America must first address the policy issue of education. Unquestionably, access to quality education is needed and must be used as an instrument for Black liberation. There can be no liberation without full access to education. Throughout history, our goal as Black people has always been to teach our children the critical information needed to obtain residual knowledge.

Trump's presidency will have a lasting effect on the education system. From his declaration for "patriotic education," a white-washed brand of education, the false or misleading propaganda around critical race theory (CRT) was built.<sup>2</sup> Republicans have used CRT as a fear-mongering tactic to make white voters believe that educational principles in this country are at stake.<sup>3</sup> This fear-mongering led local and state officials in conservative areas to ban books and limit the curriculum in public schools. Conservative propaganda surrounding education has reinforced the fact that our Black children are not always exposed to individuals who believe in educational equality for all US citi-

2 CRT, which is an academic-leaning body of legal scholarship seen through the prism of race, argues that laws, regulations, rules, and procedures adversely affect Black people in America. It is a forty-year-old theory, created in the 1980s by the distinguished legal scholar Derrick A. Bell; this new controversy surrounding it generated racial tension among white Americans, helping to secure Republican victories.

3 A recent study found that, of 5.6 million courses at higher education institutions, just 0.08% mention critical race theory, structural racism, systemic racism, or diversity, equity, and inclusion. Andrew Jack, "Study Casts Doubt on 'Wokeness' of US University Courses," *Financial Times*, May 13, 2024, <https://www.ft.com/content/0f423c77-3d1c-4a7a-ade0-58a5674466fc>.

zens.<sup>4</sup> Racist teachers and those with low expectations of Black students reside in classrooms around the US. As we witness the growth of minority populations, it is disconcerting that 82% of American public school teachers are white, and a large share of them occupy posts at urban schools.<sup>5</sup>

Such statistics remind us of El-Hajj Malik el-Shabazz's quote, "Only a fool would let his enemy teach his children."<sup>6</sup> There is an acute Black teacher crisis in public and private schools. The number of Black teachers has declined since the late 1980s, officially marking the end of pedagogical progressivism—a pedagogical approach exercised by Black teachers to support movements toward liberation and social justice.<sup>7</sup> This racial imbalance exposes Black children to white teachers with little to no training in culturally relevant pedagogy and cultural familiarity. Having just one Black teacher early in a Black child's educational development makes them more likely to apply to college.<sup>8</sup> Black public-school teachers are needed now more than ever.

Educators have always argued that the best education starts at home. This is the first building block for academic achievement and would help close the disparity between our Black children and their white counterparts. When this option is unavailable, we must be consciously mindful of the types of schools

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- 4 For example, Florida enacted the Stop W.O.K.E. Act, which prohibits the instruction of materials that would make white students feel discomfort about the racial history of the United States. For more information, see: "Stop W.O.K.E. Act," *Ron DeSantis 46th Governor of Florida*, <https://www.flgov.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Stop-Woke-Handout.pdf>. Other Republican states have introduced similar legislation.
- 5 See "Racial/Ethnic Enrollment in Public Schools," *National Center for Education Statistics*, <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/cge>.
- 6 El-Hajj Malik el-Shabazz, "The Ballot or the Bullet," *American Radio Works*, April 12, 1964, <http://americanradioworks.publicradio.org/features/blackspeech/mx.html>.
- 7 Michael Hines and Thomas Fallace, "Pedagogical Progressivism and Black Education: A Historiographical Review, 1880–1957," *Review of Educational Research* 93, no. 3 (2023): 454–86.
- 8 Scott Gershenson et al., "The Long-Run Impacts of Same-Race Teachers," *EdWorkingPaper* (2019): 19–43.



we place our children in, from primary to secondary education, and the body of educators present at these institutions. As we have learned from history, the post-civil rights mentality that espouses the need for our children to go to white schools to best succeed in life is a misplaced ideology. On the other hand, if our children have to go to predominantly white schools, we must be committed to reinforcing critical Black pedagogy in the home from the primary to secondary stages to provide them with residual knowledge. Beyond high school, we should encourage them to attend one of the more than 100 Historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUS) across the US.<sup>9</sup>

In a Black political agenda, Black people should demand an investment that would help close the achievement gap and ensure academic success for Black students. To achieve high-quality education, presidential nominees must be willing to: (1) Federally fund educational programs that invest in adolescent development; (2) Increase the pay of teachers to mobilize more racial and ethnic minorities to the sector; (3) Mandate cultural competency training from K-12; (4) Federally fund states to ensure that all children have equal access to well-constructed school facilities, innovative curriculum plans, and materials needed in school; (5) Eliminate standardized tests in public schools; (6) Mandate school districts to implement vocational training in schools that include courses on financial literacy; (7) End the conversion of public libraries into disciplinary centers for troubled children<sup>10</sup>; (8) Provide free community college

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9 This book encourages Black students to only attend an HBCU where at least 90% of the student population is Black, and 95% of combined administrators, staff, and faculty members are Black. The chosen institution should not have a majority-white Board of Trustees or Governors, a white president, a white provost, nor any white deans. As HBCUS have experienced a renaissance following the Black Lives Matter movement, attending one for Black students will help build a stronger sense of self-efficacy. See “Historically Black Colleges and Universities,” *National Center for Education Statistics*, <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=667>.

10 In 2023, Houston school superintendent Mike Miles eliminated twenty-eight librarian positions and converted the spaces into disciplinary centers under his reform program, New Education System (NES).

education to all US citizens; (9) Increase the amount of the Pell Grant, which currently only covers 30% of college costs at most public universities; (10) Cancel all current student loans held by public companies and those consolidated with private companies<sup>11</sup>; and (11) Eliminate interest in perpetuity on new and old federal student loans.

For Black people, there has always been a fine line between educational success and generational failure, especially in environments where academic aspirations are not emboldened. We must remember that Black people were prohibited from learning how to read and write until 1866. Those caught teaching us how to read and write would receive a \$100 fine and 39 lashes. From 1866 into the 1900s, a harsh reality on the type of formal education Black people needed came under debate. Led by the differing educational philosophies of W.E.B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington, Black people decided, for our own personal gain, which philosophy would be the conduit for economic success. Du Bois believed we should fight for our educational rights and attend schools that were restricted to white people to gain life success. Supporters of Du Bois argue that now, in the twenty-first century, Black children should go to college, not as a sole means to receive a well-paying job opportunity, but also to gain residual knowledge, develop discipline, and think critically in a globally competitive environment.

On the other hand, Washington believed attending vocational schools and learning a trade would guarantee economic independence, a much-needed option in today's world where anti-Black hiring discrimination remains a persistent feature in the American social context. Further, Washington argued that the function of educational training at colleges and universi-

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11 According to the Education Data Initiative, student loan debt was \$1.727 trillion at the end of 2023. By October 2024, the Biden administration had cancelled more than \$175 billion in student loan debt relief for more than 4.8 million borrowers. This is more than any previous presidential administration. For more information, see: Melanie Hanson, "Student Loan Debt Statistics," *Education Data Initiative*, July 15, 2024, <https://educationdata.org/student-loan-debt-statistics>.

ties would ultimately be to train Black people to work under the rulership of the dominant white society, and our own community should not stigmatize those who chose a trade over college. He preached that we should first master all things in our own communities before branching to assimilate, and eventually acculturate, into new socio-economic environments. While their philosophies differed, both men wanted to see Black people prosper as the outcome.

## Health Care

One of Obama's signature legislative achievements was the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010 (ACA). This legislation aimed to make health care more accessible and affordable to US citizens. When it was signed into law on March 23, 2010, more than 47 million US citizens were without health care. It still stands as the country's largest expansion of health insurance since the 1960s creation of Medicare and Medicaid.<sup>12</sup>

Even with the ACA's perceived benefits, the legislation has been met with over 70 attempts to be repealed by Republicans. In 2013, partisan differences over the policy led to a government shutdown. Many labeled the act "ObamaCare," arguing that it was a "socialist" piece of legislation. However, since its passage, this public health policy has provided an affordable option for uninsured people and increased Medicaid enrollment for racial and ethnic minorities that needed such governmental assistance.<sup>13</sup> To date, forty states have agreed to expand Medicaid under Obamacare. Two of the largest Republican states of resistance, Texas and Florida, contain more than 3.5 million individu-

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12 On July 30, 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed legislation that established the Medicare and Medicaid programs.

13 From 2013 and 2017, the medical coverage gap between Blacks and whites declined from 11.0 to 5.3 percentage points. Ajay Chaudry, Adlan Jackson, and Sherry A. Glied, "Did the Affordable Care Act Reduce Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Health Insurance Coverage?" *The Common Wealth Fund*, August 21, 2019, [www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/issue-briefs/2019/aug/did-ACA-reduce-racial-ethnic-disparities-coverage](http://www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/issue-briefs/2019/aug/did-ACA-reduce-racial-ethnic-disparities-coverage).

als who lack health insurance. In these states, the uninsured rate of Black and Latinx people continues to be higher than that for white Americans.

In 2011, at the onset of its passage, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) identified that 18.8% of Black people under 65 years old did not have health insurance coverage. Under ACA, Black people experienced significant gains in health insurance coverage and were better informed about health care services to address specific health needs. However, during Trump's first presidency, he signed an Executive Order to direct federal agencies to dismantle the ACA "to the maximum extent permitted by law."<sup>14</sup> He ultimately sought for the US Congress to repeal and replace the ACA but was unsuccessful. Unfortunately, the ACA will likely continue to face repeals by Republicans for the foreseeable future even with Republicans not finding a viable solution.

Under a Black political agenda, we must demand free health care for all. The law should provide comprehensive and longitudinal primary coverage. Additionally, it is imperative to eliminate all co-pays, premiums, and deductibles, as well as to make prescription drug prices affordable. Providing free health care for all is essential to fostering a healthy and productive society. The financial benefit would be eliminating exorbitant medical bills. Such bills are reported to be one of the major causes of US bankruptcies.

Furthermore, to gain better health care outcomes, we must pinpoint the causes of death for Black people. Behind heart disease and cancer, COVID-19 was the third leading cause of death for Black people in 2020 at the end of the Trump presidency. The rise of cases of novel coronavirus disease (2019-nCoV), also called COVID-19, in the early stages of the global pandemic re-established that there was a Black health crisis in the United States. Data from states and cities showed how this deadly

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<sup>14</sup> Sarah Kliff, "Trump's Executive Order on Obamacare, Explained by Two Health Policy Experts," *Vox*, January 20, 2017, <https://www.vox.com/2017/1/20/14343332/trump-obamacare-executive-order>.

virus, which attacks the respiratory system, disproportionately impacted Black communities. In the first three months, the weekly case rate per 100,000 Black people was 36.2, compared to 12.5 for white people.<sup>15</sup> According to the CDC, in early 2022, Black people “account for a slightly higher share of deaths compared to [our] population share (14% vs. 13%).”<sup>16</sup> In all, COVID-19 further exposed the long-standing racial disparity in health coverage for Black people.

An early myth surrounding COVID-19 was that Black people could not contract it due to the melanin in our skin pigment. When other racial groups were being diagnosed, this egregious myth and unscientifically founded rumor was festering in urban centers and lowered our level of awareness. On *The Daily Show*, host Trevor Noah discussed the nature of structural racism in health care and COVID-19’s impact, running several clips that made this false claim.<sup>17</sup> The virus, itself, did not discriminate. It did not know skin color. It “fairly” affected all races and ethnicities despite some Black people believing it was a “plan-demic.”

The initial low reporting rate was not due to the inability to contract the virus. More accurately, this was due to the lack of data collection at every level of government, including diagnostic tests, denial of doctors in emergency room visits, and Black people who were advised to stay home unless they suffered severe symptoms and required emergency assistance. There must be language in health care bills that mandate providers take health equity training to address the health concerns of Black people. These stated health inequalities are not new

15 For more information, see the Black Coalition Against COVID website, <https://blackcoalitionagainstcovid.org/>.

16 Nambi Ndugga, Latoya Hill, and Samantha Artiga, “COVID-19 Cases and Deaths, Vaccinations, and Treatments by Race/Ethnicity as of Fall 2022,” *KFF*, November 17, 2022, <https://www.kff.org/coronavirus-covid-19/issue-brief/covid-19-cases-and-deaths-by-race-ethnicity-current-data-and-changes-over-time>.

17 @TheDailyShow, *Twitter*, April 8, 2020, 9:54PM, <https://twitter.com/thedailyshow/status/1248081700246052864>.

structural problems seen within Black communities but must be dealt with in our proposed political agenda.

Once a COVID-19 vaccine was manufactured, Black people remained hesitant to take a vaccine shot due to governmental mistrust.<sup>18</sup> Harriet A. Washington, in her essential book, *Medical Apartheid*, chronicles how Black people in America have been the subjects of medical experiments for centuries.<sup>19</sup> This contemporary climate of medicine shows no difference for some Black people, who do not trust the white establishment of medical professionals and the lengths they would go through to preserve white humanity over Black humanity. From the start of the pandemic to present day, vaccine hesitancy among Black people has decreased. Those initially hesitant gained trust in the vaccine.<sup>20</sup> Even with our mistrust of the government, we cannot allow vaccine hesitancy in the future to lead to death.

## Job Development

Black people in America continue to experience systematically higher unemployment rates, lower-paying jobs, and more significant job instability than our white counterparts. As stated, according to the 2019 *US Bureau of Labor Statistics* (BLS), jobs for Black people increased under Trump; however, some of that progress was a residual of the Obama administration.<sup>21</sup> In addition to increasing employment for Black people, by 2019 the US Census Bureau showed that Trump helped elevate the

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18 It is important to note that Dr. Kizzmekia Corbett, a Black scientist, was at the forefront of the development of the vaccine. She was a part of the National Institutes of Health's team that worked with Moderna.

19 Harriet A. Washington, *Medical Apartheid: The Dark History of Medical Experimentation on Black Americans from Colonial Times to the Present* (New York: Doubleday Books, 2006).

20 Tasleem J. Padamsee et al., "Changes in COVID-19 Vaccine Hesitancy Among Black and White Individuals in the US," *JAMA Network Open* 5, no. 1 (2022): e2144470.

21 For more information, see "Employment and Wages, Annual Averages 2019," *US Bureau of Labor Statistics*, <https://www.bls.gov/cew/publications/employment-and-wages-annual-averages/2019/home.htm>.

median Black household income to \$46,073 (from \$42,447) and decrease the poverty rate to 18.8% (down 2%).<sup>22</sup> The poverty rate still remained highest among Black people. Overall, increased employment opportunities led to this upward trend.<sup>23</sup>

Before Trump exited the White House, the pandemic adversely affected the economy, and millions of us citizens lost jobs. From January 2020 to April 2020, more than 22 million us citizens lost their jobs. By April 2020, the United States' labor force participation rate had declined more than 60%. Black and Hispanic workers were hit the hardest. When examining job loss by gender, Black and Hispanic women lost more jobs than their male counterparts. According to the BLS, 5.4 million women of color lost their jobs in the first ten months of the pandemic.<sup>24</sup> Much of this job loss was in the hospitality sector. In December 2020 alone, 82,000 Black women and 31,000 Hispanic women had lost their jobs.<sup>25</sup> In the last week of Trump's first presidency, over 900,000 us citizens filed for unemployment benefits. President Joseph R. Biden promised his infrastructure plan would create millions of jobs, but did not address gender inequities in the types of jobs available to Black and Hispanic women.

In a Black political agenda, Black people must demand that presidential nominees persuade the us Congress to: (1) Introduce legislation to create policies to promote direct job creation at Fortune 500 companies, as public and private employ-

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22 John Creamer, "Inequalities Persist Despite Decline in Poverty for All Major Race and Hispanic Origin Groups," *United States Census Bureau*, September 15, 2020, <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2020/09/poverty-rates-for-blacks-and-hispanics-reached-historic-lows-in-2019.html>.

23 Jessica Semega et al., "Income and Poverty in the United States: 2019," *United States Census Bureau*, September 2020, <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2020/demo/income-poverty/p60-270.html>.

24 Claire Ewing-Nelson, "All of the Jobs Lost in December Were Women's Jobs," *National Women's Law Center*, January 2021, <https://nwlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/December-Jobs-Day.pdf>.

25 Tayyeba Irum, "Hospitality Industry Drives us Job Losses in December 2020 Amid COVID-19 Spike," *S&P Global*, January 8, 2021, <https://www.spglobal.com/marketintelligence/en/news-insights/latest-news-headlines/hospitality-industry-drives-us-job-losses-in-december-2020-amid-covid-19-spike-62034297>.

ers need to be incentivized to hire Black employees; (2) Allot a living wage in the form of a set minimum wage above \$15 per hour that increases yearly to account for inflation; (3) Federally fund more Black-owned businesses, specifically small, micro, and solo businesses that operate for profit with the potential to expand and hire Black employees; (4) Federally fund more job corps-like programs through non-profit organizations that feed into national job search databases; (5) Federally fund apprenticeship networks; (6) Federally fund pilot study programs at the local and state levels to identify deficient demand jobs to increase the pool of quality jobs; (7) At the local and state levels, mandate businesses seeking funding to require that 50% of their employees are racial and ethnic minorities, at least 30% being Black employees; and (8) Incentivize those same businesses to hire HBCU graduates.

Business ownership is key. The reality is that when we create and own more businesses, it increases our ability to hire. Our population size of 14.4% should be reflected in every form of industry or sector, but it is not. Before the global pandemic, the BLS predicted our participation in the labor force to only grow by two million from 2016 to 2026.<sup>26</sup> Our projection over the next ten years will be lower than the past four decades. The primary way to circumvent this is to create businesses where we own and control our economic destiny.

The aforementioned valence policy initiatives can be funded in multiple ways. First, legislation must be crafted to rewrite the tax code. Considering the fact that a millionaire like Trump only paid \$750 in federal income tax in 2016 when running for president<sup>27</sup> and Jeff Bezos, the billionaire owner and CEO of Amazon, paid no federal income tax for the company in 2017 and 2018,

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26 Emily Rolan and Mitra Toossi, "Blacks in the Labor Force," *US Bureau of Labor Statistics*, February 2018, <https://www.bls.gov/careeroutlook/2018/article/blacks-in-the-labor-force.htm>.

27 Ross Buettner, Susanne Craig, and Mike McIntire, "The President's Taxes: Long-Concealed Records Show Trump's Chronic Losses and Years of Tax Avoidance," *The New York Times*, September 27, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/09/27/us/donald-trump-taxes.html>.



the wealthy have manipulated the current tax code.<sup>28</sup> The correct course of action would be to introduce legislation to install a progressive estate tax to keep the wealthy from paying little to no taxes and raise the corporate tax rate to 40%.<sup>29</sup> Both Bernie Sanders (I-VT) and Biden have called out Amazon for not paying their fair share in taxes. When we rewrite the tax code and raise taxes for the wealthy, these monies can fund progressive legislation.

Second, we can cut military spending by at least 70% and reappropriate monies. For example, the US government spent \$300 million a day for nearly 20 years after they invaded Afghanistan post-9/11. According to Neta Crawford, co-director of the *Costs of War project* at Brown University, the 9/11 War on Terror cost approximately \$8 trillion.<sup>30</sup> At the end of the war, billions of rainy-day dollars, which are surplus governmental revenue, were frozen. Instead of committing these monies to reparations in the form of tangible resources, the Biden administration wanted to give \$3.5 billion of assets belonging to Afghanistan's central bank to 9/11 victims.<sup>31</sup>

In early 2022, the US Congress passed a \$1.5 trillion omnibus spending bill to deliver \$13.6 billion in emergency aid to victims of Ukraine affected by the invasion of Russian troops, to arm and equip the people of Ukraine;<sup>32</sup> the rest was used to support the

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28 In 2018, Amazon paid zero taxes on \$11.2 billion of profit. In 2017, zero taxes on \$5.6 billion of profit.

29 In 2017, Republicans cut the corporate tax rate from 35% to 21%.

30 Neta C. Crawford, "The U.S. Budgetary Costs of the Post-9/11 Wars," *The Watson Institute*, September 1, 2021, [https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/files/cow/imce/papers/2021/Costs%20of%20War\\_US.%20Budgetary%20Costs%20of%20Post-9%2011%20Wars\\_9.1.21.pdf](https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/files/cow/imce/papers/2021/Costs%20of%20War_US.%20Budgetary%20Costs%20of%20Post-9%2011%20Wars_9.1.21.pdf).

31 Jonathan Stempel, "Sept. 11 Victims Cannot Seize Afghan Central Bank Assets — U.S. Judge," *Reuters*, February 21, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/legal/sept-11-victims-cannot-seize-afghan-central-bank-assets-us-judge-2023-02-21>.

32 Before the war between Russia and Ukraine, the United States government gave Ukraine \$1 billion in March 2021 and pledged another \$1 billion for security assistance, in addition to allotted monies. The Biden administration knew Ukraine could not defeat Russia in war without compromising the global economy; however, they continued to fund the country and

us military against foreign enemies. His administration knew Ukraine could not defeat Russia in war without compromising the global economy; however, they continued to fund the country and financially supported Ukrainian refugees entering the us with supplemental security income benefits from Biden's Additional Ukrainian Supplemental Appropriations Act.

Democrats compromised with Republicans' decision to fund this war and lost \$15.6 billion in COVID-19 funding, which had been logrolled into the initial legislation. Political compromise by Democrats gave them a near 7% increase for domestic initiatives. Former House Speaker Pelosi (D-CA) decided to remove COVID-19 funds from the bill after pushback from other moderate Democrats within her own caucus. This serves as proof that Democrats could work out funding compromises with Republicans, but they chose to prioritize war funding over initiatives that could have been spent on Black interests.

The Biden administration asked the us Congress for \$55 billion by the end of June 2022 and remarked that democracy "is not cheap."<sup>33</sup> This made it the largest foreign aid package to be approved by Congress in more than two decades. By mid-2024, his administration and Congress had directed more than \$175 billion in assistance to Ukraine.

Such political funding to international relations reinforces the statement from the late hip-hop icon, Tupac A. Shakur, who expressed that the us government has "money for wars but can't feed the poor."<sup>34</sup> For centuries, "War for Profit" driven by the military-industrial complex has been an economic and political refuge for the white political establishment to profit from and

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financially supported refugees entering the us with supplemental security income benefits from Biden's Additional Ukrainian Supplemental Appropriations Act.

33 Biden's remarks on S. 3522, the "Ukraine Democracy Defense Lend-Lease Act Of 2022" can be found at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2022/05/09/remarks-by-president-biden-at-signing-of-s-3522-the-ukraine-democracy-defense-lend-lease-act-of-2022>.

34 Tupac A. Shakur, "Keep Ya Head Up," on *Strictly 4 My N.I.G.G.A.Z.* (Inter-scope, 1993).

control the masses. Such spending on senseless wars must go to reparations for Black people in America.

### Closing the Racial Wealth Gap

Neither Obama nor Trump made any substantial effort to close the racial wealth gap. The Biden administration made a declaration to reinvest in communities of color to build wealth at the same rate as white households.<sup>35</sup> In a Black political agenda, Black people must demand that presidential nominees: (1) Sign a series of Executive Orders that fund national economic development programs vis-à-vis “targeted universalism,” which would lead to setting universal economic goals for Black people. Such programs must have the ability to exceed the current Black-white wealth gap of \$11.2 trillion; and (2) Sign an Executive Order — not just conduct a pilot study, such as *H.R. 40: Commission to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African-Americans Act* — that provides reparations for Black descendants of slavery.<sup>36</sup>

According to a December 2014 *Pew Research Center* study, toward the end of Obama’s presidency, white households in America had thirteen times the wealth of Black households, compared to eight times the wealth in 2010.<sup>37</sup> This marked the largest gap since the 1980s and placed another Black eye on the Obama administration. As the median income of Black households declined, his administration did nothing to address this

35 “Fact Sheet: Biden-Harris Administration Announces New Plan to Build Black Wealth and Narrow the Racial Wealth Gap,” *The White House*, June 1, 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/06/01/fact-sheet-biden-harris-administration-announces-new-actions-to-build-black-wealth-and-narrow-the-racial-wealth-gap>.

36 H.R. 40 would establish a federal commission to examine the impact of slavery and provide recommendations for reparations; however, the bill does not authorize payments.

37 Rakesh Kochhar and Richard Fry, “Wealth Inequality Has Widened Along Racial, Ethnic Lines Since End of Great Recession,” *Pew Research Center*, December 12, 2014, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/12/12/racial-wealth-gaps-great-recession>.

grave concern. Even more egregious is that after leaving the White House, Democratic politicians pointed to a 2017 *Prosperity Now/Institute for Policy Studies* study to exhibit a failure in the Obama administration that showed that the median wealth for Black people will fall to \$0 by 2053.<sup>38</sup> However, Obama spent his final days in office catering to white neoliberals to set the political deck to elect Hillary R. Clinton as his successor, instead of signing an Executive Order pinpointing this concern.

According to data compiled from the Federal Reserve's 2019 *Survey of Consumer Finances*, the median Black household was worth only \$24,100, compared to the median white household, which was worth eight times that at \$188,200. Economist William Darity Jr. argues that this gap is far greater if we compare Black and white wealth at the mean. To close the Black-white wealth gap, Darity's research found "the chasm ranges from \$54,700 a person to \$280,300 a person. [...] That amounts to a total of \$11.2 trillion."<sup>39</sup> As a result, reparations programs are explicitly needed for Black people who are descendants of slavery. The total cost of the Afghanistan war alone would have covered three-fourths of reparations.

For decades, the books of Claud Anderson, *Black Labor, White Wealth*, and *Powernomics* have laid the blueprint for financial literacy and Black economic success.<sup>40</sup> Anderson, an economic strategist who advocates for Black empowerment, suggests, "Unless African-Americans put together a coherent educational and economic strategy, they risk becoming a per-

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38 Dedrick Asante-Muhammad et al., "The Road to Zero Wealth: How the Racial Wealth Divide Is Hollowing Out America's Middle Class," *Institute for Policy Studies*, September 2017, [https://ips-dc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/The-Road-to-Zero-Wealth\\_FINAL.pdf](https://ips-dc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/The-Road-to-Zero-Wealth_FINAL.pdf).

39 William Darity Jr., "The True Cost of Closing the Racial Wealth Gap," *The New York Times*, April 30, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/30/business/racial-wealth-gap.html>.

40 Claud Anderson, *Black Labor, White Wealth: The Search for Power and Economic Justice* (Bethesda: PowerNomics Corporation of America, 1994), and Claud Anderson, *PowerNomics\*: The National Plan to Empower Black America* (Bethesda: PowerNomics Corporation of America, 2001).

manent underclass.”<sup>41</sup> This quote translates to the perspective that economic power and the continued presence of racism go hand in hand when we consider how structural, institutional, and systemic discrimination and racism continue to have a stranglehold on the economic foundation of the Black community.

Using the Civil Rights movement as a starting point, there has been minimal economic mobility for Black people in the last 50 years or more. The Black–white wage gap is basically the same today as it was in the 1950s. These gaps remain primarily due to structural discrimination and racism coupled with intra-family transfers and inheritances. Without the passage of substantive legislation and the Federal Reserve pushing for policies that level the playing field, such as mandating full employment of workers that attaches wage growth, the gap will persist.

In many ways, Black people need to be intentional about balancing income distribution and helping to close the racial wealth gap to increase the net worth of our community. For instance, we need to circulate the dollar within the Black community for more extended periods of time. Between customers and businesses, studies show that our dollar circulates within the Black community for only six hours, in comparison to 17 days in the white community, 20 days in the Jewish community, and 28 days in the Asian community.<sup>42</sup> Circulation helps to fund Black businesses, which increases the ability to hire Black employees and increases the potential for economic growth. In contrast, the lack of circulation further widens the racial wealth gap.

Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, Black people have seen an increase in our consumer buying power. In 2021, our buying power reached \$1.7 trillion, and it continues to

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41 Detroit PBS, “PowerNomics | 1995 Detroit Black Journal Full Episode,” *You Tube*, October 17, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kuNv6MUYXbk>.

42 Kamryn Marshall, “The Black Dollar Doesn’t Circulate Like It Should,” *The Famuan*, October 1, 2020, <http://www.thefamuanonline.com/2020/10/01/the-black-dollar-doesnt-circulate-like-it-should>.

climb.<sup>43</sup> Instead of circulating the majority of our money back into the Black community, only two cents of every dollar a Black person spends goes to Black-owned businesses.<sup>44</sup> Thus, as our consumer buying power has increased, we have become consumers of more goods sold by white people and other racial and ethnic minorities than Black-owned businesses. Black people continue to spend and every other community rejoices in our economic irresponsibility and non-commitment to Black goods and services. More disappointingly, the biggest market for the Black dollar is spent on material goods that depreciate over time such as cars, jewelry, clothing, beauty products, and entertainment as opposed to tangible investments such as businesses, real estate, etc. that maintain economic value.

Moving forward, our development of businesses and buying power must equate to economic growth. The Black dollar must consciously circulate within the Black community for 30 days or more. This is a big ask for the Black community, but it can be done through group economics and making an intentional effort to buy Black. It would require us rebuilding and building our own neighborhoods and physical communities, as will be discussed in Chapter 6. Black people must collectively fight for homeownership and business ownership within our community to make sure dollars are circulated appropriately.<sup>45</sup> Our

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43 CNBC Television, "Black Spending Power Reaches Record \$1.6 Trillion, But Net Worth Falls," *YouTube*, February 1, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bOD1yrPfeLo>.

44 See "Black Impact: Consumer Categories Where African Americans Move Markets," *Nielsen*, February 2018, <https://www.nielsen.com/insights/2018/black-impact-consumer-categories-where-african-americans-move-markets/>.

45 In 2022, the National Association of Realtors (NAR) released a report showing homeownership for Black people is lower (43.4%) than it was in 2010 (44.2%), nearly 30 percentage points less than white people (72.1%) in the United States. Available at: <https://www.nar.realtor/newsroom/u-s-homeownership-rate-experiences-largest-annual-increase-on-record-though-black-homeownership-remains-lower-than-decade-ago>. Biden oversaw a federal rule that could raise buyers' monthly mortgage payments with good credit scores by over \$60 a month. This rule provides favorable terms to Black and Hispanic people who have insufficient savings to use

communities need to regain the infrastructural essentials of banks, schools, churches, hospitals, and grocery stores, which were relinquished to white America when we sought integration. Only then, as a striving community, with forms of reparations, will we move to close the racial wealth gap.

### Ending Police Brutality

The death of George P. Floyd Jr. was the boiling point of civil unrest for Black people in America.

*9 minutes and 29 seconds.* That was the amount of time that white law enforcement officer, Derek Chauvin, held his knee on Floyd's neck. Floyd, a Black man, at the age of 46, died on the concrete pavement in front of an audience of bystanders. His death was filmed via cellphone by 17-year-old Darnella Frazier, and subsequently, the entire world was able to see his murder. According to transcripts of the police bodycam footage, he uttered more than twenty times that he "could not breathe" under the duress of police restraint. This situation mirrored that of Eric Garner, who was choked to death in 2014 by a white law enforcement officer, Daniel Pantaleo, after being accused of selling loose, untaxed cigarettes. Floyd was accused of using a counterfeit \$20 bill at a local convenience store. In both videos, the men can be heard gasping, "I can't breathe! I can't breathe!" Afterward, both of their Black bodies went lifeless.

For once, a Black man's death placed the us and the criminal justice system on trial. What is more, Black people demanded swift justice from white America because we were tired of the senseless deaths of Black men and women. Floyd's death, and many others, led to the summer 2020 Black Lives Matter protests to address racial injustice. In the middle of a global pan-

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as a down payment on a home and who tend to have lower credit scores. In 2023, the average credit score in white communities was 727, compared with 667 in Hispanic communities and 627 in Black communities, according to data analyzed by FinMasters.com. Milica Aleksandric, "The Average Credit Score by Age, Race, State, and Income (2024)," *FinMasters*, February 15, 2024, <https://finmasters.com/average-credit-score/#gref>.

demic, tens of thousands of people of all racial demographics filled the streets around the country. Protests emerged in more than 140 US cities.

White reactionary politics were on full display. The fifty largest US public corporations had collectively pledged \$50 billion to address systemic racism during this period. Two years later, only \$4.2 billion was allocated. This period saw corporations, along with WNBA and NBA players who had recently resumed playing during the pandemic, also participate in the protests. The NBA had gained much leverage in their protests. On the verge of forcing a corporate melee among owners who were finally willing to adhere to the demands of Black players, it was Obama who convinced the players to end their protest — a decision that played into the hands of white moderates and conservatives.

Instead of conceding the vile actions of Chauvin, the Trump administration projected the message that Black Lives Matter protests were linked to looting and violence. According to a report by The Movement for Black Lives, governmental agencies targeted protestors and handed down severe criminal charges.<sup>46</sup> Even some Democrats aligned with Republicans to demonize protestors instead of working on their side to address complaints of harassment from federal agencies.<sup>47</sup> Adding to

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46 Mudassar Toppa and Princess Masilungan, “Struggle for Power: The Ongoing Persecution of Black Movement by the U.S. Government,” *The Movement for Black Lives*, August 2021, <https://m4bl.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Struggle-For-Power-The-Ongoing-Persecution-of-Black-Movement-by-the-U.S.-Government.pdf>.

47 The US government is targeting Black organizers, activists, and protestors. For example, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and Department of Homeland Security (DHS) are monitoring alleged Black identity extremists, as shown in the “Race Paper.” This nine-page document created by the DHS Office of Intelligence and Analysis, a unit specializing in predictive intelligence, covers efforts by governmental authorities to monitor domestic terrorism driven by race-related “extremist” ideologies. The DHS sent a memo to police agencies across the country in 2016 warning them about a Black “day of rage.” For more information on the “Race Paper,” see “ACLU, Color of Change, Free Press Call for Release of DHS ‘Race Paper,’” *ACLU*, May 30, 2018, <https://www.aclu.org/news/aclu-color-change-free-press-call-release-dhs-race-paper>.



the opposition of protestors were disinformation networks on social media showing images of looting and violence to incite an emotional response from Republicans and conservatives. However, in the end, a study by the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) found that 93% of Black Lives Matter protests had been peaceful.<sup>48</sup>

The summer of 2020 will forever serve as the impetus to address the historic racial fault line in American policing. From the deaths of Trayvon Martin to Sandra Bland to George Floyd, much debate has been made about criminal justice reform. Democrats finally had the leverage to influence meaningful legislation. Karen R. Bass (D-CA) authored the bill. Democrats introduced the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act of 2021, a comprehensive bill to address the culture of policing, correct inequitable practices, and hold law enforcement officials more accountable. The bill passed in the Democratic-led House in March of 2021 but received opposition in the evenly divided US Senate. After failing to pass the bill on the US Senate floor, Bass wrote in a statement, “We now call on President Biden and the White House to use the full extent of their constitutionally-mandated power to bring about meaningful police reform.”<sup>49</sup> This is also the Black political agenda for presidential nominees in the future.

The George Floyd murder and the countless others throughout history at the hands of white law enforcement officers show us that Black people in America must fight for legislation that holds these officers who sacrifice Black bodies accountable. The jury’s conviction of Chauvin was a symbolic victory—a rare moment in the fight for racial justice, an anomaly to the Black experience in the United States. According to the Mapping Police Violence database, from 2013 to 2022, 98% of murders by

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48 Roudabeh Kishi and Sam Jones, “Demonstrations and Political Violence in America: New Data for Summer 2020,” *ACLED*, September 3, 2020, <https://acleddata.com/2020/09/03/demonstrations-political-violence-in-america-new-data-for-summer-2020>.

49 @RepKarenBass, *Twitter*, September 22, 2021, 11:26PM, <https://x.com/Rep-KarenBass/status/1440895223970865152>.

law enforcement officials had not resulted in them facing charges.<sup>50</sup>

In the continued fight for racial justice in the criminal justice system, legislation must be enacted to nullify the following: (1) Qualified immunity, which protects law enforcement officials from civil suits when the family does not get justice for the official's actions against a Black plaintiff; and (2) Protection against "reasonable force," which fails to address how much force is considered reasonable when a law enforcement officer is using force in encounters with Black bodies. Focusing on the disparities in these two areas, and others, are essential to prosecute, convict, and receive compensation as a necessary component of police accountability.

Black people know that Black lives matter the most to Black people only. This was shown in full display when white America embraced the Blue Lives matter countermovement to support law enforcement officers, even those who were publicly guilty in the eyes of Black America. This movement drew a false correlation between racial identity and a public service job whose employees were murdering unarmed Black people. It further encouraged white law enforcement officers to act as judge, jury, and executioner. Black people represented 25% of those killed by law enforcement in 2022 and 23.5% in 2023<sup>51</sup>; the hope is that the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act will eventually pass. In 2022 and 2023 the United States set a record for the number of murders by law enforcement officials.<sup>52</sup> We can no longer be met with legislative and judicial roadblocks that protect law enforcement officers and make us Black liabilities in white America.

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<sup>50</sup> "Police Violence Map," *Mapping Police Violence*, <https://mappingpoliceviolence.us>.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> According to the mapping police violence database, at least 1232 people were murdered in 2023, 1202 people in 2022, 1148 in 2021, 1160 in 2020, and 1098 in 2019.

## Reversing Mass Incarceration

The presidential administrations of Ronald W. Reagan and William J. Clinton are largely to blame for the mass incarceration of Black people. In a bipartisan effort, both administrations helped to contribute to the fact that there are now more incarcerated Black men than were enslaved in 1850. Michelle Alexander, civil rights activist and author, noted in 2011 that, “More African American men are in prison or jail, on probation or parole than were enslaved in 1850, before the Civil War began.”<sup>53</sup>

In 2022, there were 2.3 million human beings in the American criminal justice system. Black people, who are 14.4% of the population, made up nearly 40% of those incarcerated.<sup>54</sup> According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the complete picture shows that another 840,000 people in the US are on parole, and another 3.6 million are on probation.<sup>55</sup> Controlling for the social construct of race, 38% of people on parole and 28% on probation are Black. In 2018, Black people were nearly four times more likely to be on parole and 2.6 times more likely to be on probation than white Americans.<sup>56</sup>

The “War on Drugs” declared by the Reagan administration in 1982 was made synonymous with the “War on the Black Community.” Reagan signed into law the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986.<sup>57</sup> This led to mandatory-minimum prison sentences for

53 “Michelle Alexander: More Black Men Are in Prison Today Than Were Enslaved in 1850,” *HuffPost*, October 12, 2011, [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/michelle-alexander-more-black-men-in-prison-slaves-1850\\_n\\_1007368](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/michelle-alexander-more-black-men-in-prison-slaves-1850_n_1007368).

54 E. Ann Carson, “Prisoners in 2022 – Statistical Tables,” *US Department of Justice*, October 15, 2024, <https://bjs.ojp.gov/document/p22st.pdf>.

55 Wendy Sawyer and Peter Wagner, “Mass Incarceration: The Whole Pie 2020,” *Prison Policy Initiative*, March 24, 2020, <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/pie2020.html>.

56 Danielle Kaeble and Mariel Alper, “Probation and Parole in the United States, 2017–2018,” *Bureau of Justice Statistics*, August 2020, <https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/ppus1718.pdf>.

57 For more information, see US Sentencing Commission, “The National Legislative and Law Enforcement Response to Cocaine,” in *Special Report to Congress: Cocaine and Federal Sentencing Policy*, Chapter 6, February 1995,

crimes involving crack versus powder-cocaine, the infamous 100-to-1 ratio. Under this act, five grams (about one-sixth of an ounce) of crack-cocaine was equivalent to 500 grams (about a pound) of powder-cocaine, both warranting the same mandatory minimum sentence of five years behind bars.<sup>58</sup> Coupled with aggressive law enforcement policies, this sentencing law had a disproportionately negative effect on the Black community, particularly Black males.

When Reagan was elected to the Oval Office in 1980, the total prison population was 329,000.<sup>59</sup> By the time his presidency ended in 1988, the population had almost doubled to 627,000<sup>60</sup> and the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986 was the reason. Drug arrests were directly linked to over-policed Black communities and the arrest of Black people. Both Republicans and Democrats were on board as each party took a tough-on-crime approach to the drug epidemic during the 1980s and 1990s. In 2010, under the Obama administration's Fair Sentencing Act, we witnessed the process of addressing the racial bias in federal sentencing. It dismantled the previous 100-to-1 ratio to 18-to-1. From 1986–2010 almost 82% of those convicted for federal crack-cocaine offenses were Blacks compared to only 8% of whites.

In 1994, the Clinton administration signed the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act at the behest of Biden and the Democrats. During a 1993 hearing on the US Senate floor, Biden, then a senator and chair of the US Senate Judiciary Committee, warned of “predators on our streets” who were “beyond the pale,” and cautioned that we “have no choice but to take them

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<https://www.ussc.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/news/congressional-testimony-and-reports/drug-topics/200205-rtc-cocaine-sentencing-policy/ch6.pdf>

58 Ibid., 65.

59 For more information, see US Department of Justice, “Prisoners in 1980,” *US Bureau of Justice Statistics*, May 1981, <https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/p80.pdf>.

60 For more information, see US Department of Justice, “Prisoners in 1988,” *US Bureau of Justice Statistics*, April 1989, <https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/p88.pdf>.

out of society.”<sup>61</sup> He advocated for a tough-on-crime bill called the Biden/Hatch Crime Bill, which became the 1994 Crime Bill.

In the speech, he said:

We must take back the streets. It doesn't matter whether or not the person that is accosting your son or daughter, or my son or daughter, my wife, your husband, my mother, your parents—it doesn't matter whether or not they were deprived as a youth. It doesn't matter whether or not they had no background that would enable them to [...] become socialized into the fabric of society. It doesn't matter whether or not they're the victims of society.<sup>62</sup>

Biden's speech pathologized the Black community even as his own son, Hunter Biden, became a user of crack-cocaine. What followed was the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994, drafted by Biden and enacted by Clinton, which included judicial measures leading to mandatory minimum sentencing disparities, from establishing a federal “three-strikes” law, to building more prisons and funding states to hire 100,000 additional law enforcement officers.

According to a 1994 *Gallup survey*, 58% of Black people supported the Crime Bill, compared to 49% of white people.<sup>63</sup> Black US congressional members like James Clyburn and Black mayors in majority-Black cities supported the bill. Clyburn expressed, “Crack cocaine was a scourge in the Black community [...] And that's why yours truly, and other members of the Congressional Black Caucus, voted for that 1994 crime bill.”<sup>64</sup>

61 Joe Biden C-span, “Joe Biden in 1993 Speech Warned of ‘Predators on Our Streets,’” *CNN*, March 5, 2019, <https://www.cnn.com/videos/politics/2019/03/05/joe-biden-tough-on-crime-speech.cnn>.

62 Ibid.

63 Rashawn Ray and William A. Galston, “Did the 1994 Crime Bill Cause Mass Incarceration?,” *Brookings*, August 28, 2020, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/fixgov/2020/08/28/did-the-1994-crime-bill-cause-mass-incarceration>.

64 Evan Osnos, “Can Biden's Center Hold?,” *The New Yorker*, August 23, 2020, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2020/08/31/can-bidens-center-hold>.

This bill, combined with the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986, led to an era of mass incarceration that disproportionately incarcerated Black men.

In 1997, following Clinton's reelection to a second presidential term, there were 1.6 million drug arrests in the us.<sup>65</sup> Though Clinton was hailed by Black elitists, members of the Congressional Black Caucus, and the Black community as the "nation's first Black president," his bill and Biden for it orchestrated a massive system of social and racial control. According to Alexander in *The New Jim Crow*:

Today mass incarceration defines the meaning of Blackness in America: black people, especially black men, are criminals. [...] The temptation is to insist that black men "choose" to be criminals; the system does not make them criminals. [...] African-Americans are not significantly more likely to use or sell prohibited drugs than whites, but they are *made* criminals at drastically higher rates for precisely the same conduct.<sup>66</sup>

While Trump's First Step Act and Biden's signing of an Executive Order not to renew the Department of Justice's contracts with privately owned prisons were promising with respect to lowering the prison population, more is needed.<sup>67</sup> Biden's decision to cut ties with for-profit firms that earn revenue from prison contracts was a step in the right direction. The economic business and competitive marketplace of private prisons further

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65 See Christopher J. Mumola, "Substance Abuse and Treatment, State and Federal Prisoners, 1997," *US Department of Justice*, January 1999, <http://csdp.org/research/satsfp97.pdf>.

66 Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (New York: The New Press, 2010), 197.

67 Joseph R. Biden Jr., "Executive Order on Reforming Our Incarceration System to Eliminate the Use of Privately Operated Criminal Detention Facilities," *The White House*, January 26, 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/01/26/executive-order-reforming-our-incarceration-system-to-eliminate-the-use-of-privately-operated-criminal-detention-facilities>.

compromised the criminal justice system. While less than 9% of those incarcerated are held in private prisons, a racial model drove the intent of their construction. These prisons are overrun with people of color. For example, Montes, Mears, and Stewart in their study of racial and ethnic divides in privatized punishment found that Black male and Black female offenders were more likely to be placed in private prisons than our white counterparts.<sup>68</sup>

In sum, ending mass incarceration and stopping the warehousing of Black people is three-fold. First, future presidential nominees and lawmakers must commit to totally reforming drug policies and eliminate mandatory minimum sentencing guidelines. Policies like the First Step Act and the Reverse Mass Incarceration Act, which incentivize states to reduce prison populations,<sup>69</sup> would work if truly implemented to offset the incarceration rate. When prisoners are released, we must ensure they are released into community supervision programs that help them transition back into society to counteract the recidivism rate. In addition, these individuals' criminal records should be expunged to take advantage of employment opportunities, get into schools, and vote in elections.

Second, the Black community must work as a conscious unit to stop the "school to prison" pipeline. As mentioned, hiring more Black teachers in the public school system is crucial. This is imperative in breaking the school-to-prison pipeline for Black students by providing a male role model to whom they can relate and provide guidance. We also need to be more active in addressing the overzealous approaches in our school systems

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68 Andrea N. Montes, Daniel P. Mears, and Eric A. Stewart, "Racial and Ethnic Divides in Privatized Punishment: Examining Disparities in Private Prison Placements," *Justice Quarterly* 37, no. 5 (2020): 930–54.

69 Lauren-Brooke Eisen, director of the Justice Program at the Brennan Center for Justice, NYU School of Law, has advocated for this legislation for nearly a decade. Different Democratic leaders have sponsored the legislation. For more information, see Lauren-Brooke Eisen and Inimai Chettiar, "The Reverse Mass Incarceration Act," *Brennan Center for Justice*, 2015, [https://www.brennancenter.org/sites/default/files/publications/The\\_Reverse\\_Mass\\_Incarceration\\_Act%20.pdf](https://www.brennancenter.org/sites/default/files/publications/The_Reverse_Mass_Incarceration_Act%20.pdf).

and call for the reform of “zero tolerance” policies. Last, we, as Black people, must be even more protective of our Black children. Our guidance and support are needed more than ever in an American society where we are witnessing firsthand white people in the roles of modern-day slave patrols, overseers, unhooded extremists, and “Karens” who work to criminalize and incarcerate Black people.

## Conclusion and Implications

White people in America shaped a historic political agenda that did not include “Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness” for Black people; a phrase that the framers of the constitution initially constructed as “Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Property.” When Thomas Jefferson removed “Property” and replaced it with “Happiness,” this ambiguous term overshadowed the significance of pursuing wealth in the US. As a slave owner, Jefferson knew the importance of pursuing wealth, having owned over 600 enslaved people in his lifetime.

White politicians throughout history have enacted policies to foster a Darwinistic environment that best benefits white people and have intentionally tried to make Black people in America dependent on faulty structural and institutional systems. These systems have inevitably affected our long-term economic and material wealth, limiting all possibilities of truly achieving their constructed ideal of the American Dream. Newly freed Black people never received the promise of “40 acres and a mule and \$100,” which would have been a share of the wealth we generated from centuries of slave labor.<sup>70</sup> It is the same labor that helped to build the wealth infrastructure for white people in America. After the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln, his successor, President Andrew Johnson, reneged on the prom-

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<sup>70</sup> William T. Sherman, “In the Field: Savannah, Georgia, Special Field Orders, No. 15, January 16, 1865,” in *Should America Pay? Slavery and the Raging Debate on Reparations*, ed. Raymond A. Winbush (New York: HarperCollins, 2003), 325–27.



ise from Union General William Tecumseh Sherman to provide nearly four million freed Black slaves land to create an economic base. According to economists today, that land would be worth approximately \$3.1 trillion.<sup>71</sup>

Economically, Black people have been set back multiple generations compared to white Americans, and we continue to face wealth inequality in addition to racial capitalism that remains to stratify social and racial classes. Even more than 50 years later, we are, as Martin Luther King said, still living “on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity.”<sup>72</sup> The 2020 US Census showed that 19.5% (8.5 million) of Black people in America live below the poverty line compared to 8.2% for white people.<sup>73</sup> The burden of poverty lingers to disadvantage the economic fate of a significant faction of Black people in America.

Black people’s goal must be to hold presidential nominees and party leaders accountable to establish a Black political agenda that places forms of legislation that lead to Black economic self-sufficiency at the forefront. This is most significant for Black progress and can subdue structural and cultural factors that affect our community. To accomplish this goal, our collective action must be the bridge to a type of Black voting behavior that holds economic growth to the same height as social justice. Both economic and social issues need to work hand-in-hand to balance income distribution and close the racial wealth gap. Such legislation, combined with forms of reparations, can economically elevate poor and working-class Black people.

Despite the factual basis of the racial wealth gap, Republicans and conservatives, in general, still assert the ideas of

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71 Catarina Saraiva, “Four Numbers That Show the Cost of Slavery on Black Wealth Today,” *Bloomberg*, March 18, 2021, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-03-18/pay-check-podcast-episode-2-how-much-did-slavery-in-u-s-cost-black-wealth>.

72 “Read Martin Luther King Jr.’s ‘I Have a Dream’ Speech in Its Entirety,” *NPR*, January 16, 2023, <https://www.npr.org/2010/01/18/122701268/i-have-a-dream-speech-in-its-entirety>.

73 Creamer, “Inequalities Persist Despite Decline in Poverty.”

“hard work” and “pulling yourself by the bootstraps” as the sole requirements in an American capitalist society to improve the economic condition of Black people. According to a 2017 survey conducted by the University of Chicago, 55% of white Republicans agreed with the statement that Blacks “just don’t have the motivation or willpower to pull themselves up out of poverty.”<sup>74</sup> In comparison, 26% of white Democrats agreed with the statement. However, with “hard work,” it is dishonest to prime the Black psyche to think that hard work alone will balance income distribution and close the racial wealth gap for the Black masses. White America has painted the picture that “hard work” for all Black people is “tied” to positive outcomes and guarantees economic success while simultaneously working to impede our economic progress.

Moreover, white Republicans know that far more white people have benefited proportionally from welfare programs in the us, but they have spread the disinformation that racial and ethnic minorities have burdened the us welfare system. Black Republicans have totted the same ideological narrative related to hard work and job opportunities, and have mimicked the Republican mantra that Black people abuse the welfare system. They preach these messages void of conscious coalition-building with Black Democrats. For example, the following are quotes from three prominent Black Republicans that have the same theme:

One hundred years after slavery, the Black community was doing better. We were going up, up, up. Then, suddenly, they socialized our community via welfare policies and the Black

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<sup>74</sup> Aaron Blake, “Republicans’ Views of Blacks’ Intelligence, Work Ethic Lag Behind Democrats At a Record Clip,” *The Washington Post*, March 31, 2017, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2017/03/31/the-gap-between-republicans-and-democrats-views-of-african-americans-just-hit-a-new-high/>.

community started going down, down, down. (Candace Owens<sup>75</sup>)

When more Americans prefer freebies to freedom, these great United States will become a fertile ground for tyranny. (Allen West<sup>76</sup>)

A brief stint on welfare convinced me I needed to get an education so I could get a ‘good’ job. It never occurred to me as I was studying, working, and rearing my children that the world was stacked against me or that it owed me a better break because of my race, impoverished roots, female gender, or family status. (Carol Swain<sup>77</sup>)

While the theme of “hard work” should be consistent, these statements paint a rosy picture of Black economic self-sufficiency and exclude the past and current racial injustices that Black people face. Acknowledging this racial injustice does not lead to Black people buying into “laziness” and “victimhood,” but admits that economic, social, cultural, and political marginalization has hindered Black progress. Republicans have sold the “lazy” narrative for decades, and Trump himself made the claim, “Laziness is a trait in Blacks.”<sup>78</sup>

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75 Shane Croucher, “Candace Owens Tells Fox Host Laura Ingraham That Black Communities Were Better Off for First 100 Years after Slavery,” *Newsweek*, June 12, 2019, <https://www.newsweek.com/candace-owens-fox-news-laura-ingraham-slavery-better-off-1443513>.

76 Kevin Cirilli, “West Warns of ‘Freebies’ over Freedom,” *Politico Now Blog*, March 14, 2013, <https://www.politico.com/blogs/politico-now/2013/03/west-warns-of-freebies-over-freedom-159303>.

77 Carol Swain, “From Rural Poverty to Ivy League Professor: Carol Swain’s Life Lessons,” *1776 Unites*, July 20, 2020. <https://1776unites.org/essays/from-rural-poverty-to-ivy-league-professor-carol-swains-life-lessons>.

78 Ben Mathis-Lilley, “‘Laziness Is a Trait in Blacks,’ 1991 Book Quotes Trump as Saying,” *Slate*, July 20, 2016, <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2016/07/trump-complained-about-blacks-inherent-laziness-1991-book-says.html>.

Using Black Republicans and many Black Democrats to push this ideology further leads to “silence and exclusion” for a group perceived falsely as not working as hard as others. This calculated in us losing our Black conscious center. Black people played into an assimilative construct formulated by white America to accept other races and ethnicities as partners in the fight for economic, social, and political justice, while creating a “crab mentality” amongst each other. America’s racist tradition to keep the Black masses in divisions, alas, like in the mythical Willie Lynch letter of 1712, diverted our attention away from the culprits who enslaved us. As a result, many Black people in America have bought into a mental slavery mindset where we believe that we all are viewed differently by white people, and thus, any collective action to establish an agenda for our own Black Liberation movement is not necessary.

How does a racial group who was once considered property, non-humans, a tradable commodity, now believe that they are equal in a us that uplifted a human being like Donald J. Trump? Race comes first when we are put under white America’s microscope, regardless of class status or material wealth. Black people are fighting wealthy white people who make up the white political establishment — inside the chambers of the us Congress are millionaires and on the outside are billionaires who contribute to the establishment to ensure infinite wealth and white racial order. Trump is a part of the wealthy elite. From 2016 to 2020, he exhausted tax-payer dollars and increased the national debt to \$27 trillion. It is these political and economic elites and their allies who wield power and influence that do not want Black people to be economically self-sufficient, and who do not give thought to meaningful legislation to close the racial wealth gap. This underpins W.E.B. Du Bois’s quote, “To be a poor man is hard, but to be a poor race in a land of dollars is the very bottom of hardships.”<sup>79</sup>

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79 W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: A.C. McClurg & Co., 1903), 12.

Black people in America must be steadfast in our commitment to demanding a Black political agenda that begins with formulating legislation to close the racial wealth gap. This political bargaining, along with the commitment of both political parties, would ultimately provide Black people with the means for capitalistic survival. Such an agenda would need progressive whites and other racial and ethnic minorities, but as I will propose in Chapter 6, withholding our Black voting bloc would be our best strategic option.



## The Black Vote: Race and the Ideal of Progressivism

Black eligible voters singlehandedly won the 2020 presidential election for the Democratic Party. They elected Joseph R. Biden Jr. as the nation's 46th president during a time in history when Donald J. Trump posed the greatest danger to democracy that this country had ever observed. Our vote mattered, and our vote decided the election. Despite the disparate practices of voter suppression lobbied against Black voters, our political power was evident even in an election that was not "free and fair."

The transition of presidential power from Trump to Biden on January 20, 2021, will be retold for generations. One of the highlights for most Black people was the election of Kamala D. Harris as the 49th vice president of the United States. Harris is the second Black person, the first Asian, the first woman, and the first person from a Historically Black College and University to be named "Madam Vice President." Witnessing the election of Harris brought great joy to the Black community and culture.

After being elected, both took to Twitter:

America, I'm honored that you have chosen me to lead our great country. The work ahead of us will be hard, but I prom-

ise you this: I will be a President for all Americans — whether you voted for me or not. (President-Elect Biden<sup>1</sup>)

We did this — together. (Vice President-Elect Harris<sup>2</sup>)

On November 7, 2020, four days after Election Tuesday, media outlets called the election for the Biden-Harris campaign as they broke the 270 Electoral College barrier (EC: 306-232). In his campaign speech that night, President-elect Biden acknowledged Black eligible voters who “stood up again for [him].”<sup>3</sup> Biden credited Black eligible voters for “always [having his] back,” and he always promised to have ours as he pounded his fist emphatically on the podium as the crowd cheered in excitement.<sup>4</sup>

The Biden-Harris ticket increased Black voter turnout, which in 2016 had declined for the first time in twenty years.<sup>5</sup> Ninety-two percent of Black Democrats cast their ballot for them. Controlling for the social constructs of race and gender, 91% of Black women voted for Biden-Harris compared to 88% of Black men. Black voters in majority-Black cities such as Atlanta, Detroit, Milwaukee, and Philadelphia ultimately swung the vote in Biden’s favor to win the presidential election.

The Biden-Harris win was not the blue tidal wave that the polls had predicted. They won with a majority blend of Black, Latinx, young, and white voters with college degrees. Biden

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- 1 @JoeBiden, *Twitter*, November 7, 2020, 10:52AM, <https://twitter.com/JoeBiden/status/1325118992785223682>. The tweet is quoted in Natalia Colarossi, “Joe Biden’s Tweet after Winning the Election Becomes His Most Popular Ever,” *Newsweek*, November 7, 2020, <https://www.newsweek.com/joe-bidens-tweet-after-winning-election-becomes-his-most-popular-ever-1545782>.
  - 2 @KamalaHarris, *Twitter*, November 7, 2020, 4:15PM, <https://twitter.com/KamalaHarris/status/1325200108649017349>.
  - 3 “Read the Full Text of Joe Biden’s Speech after Historic Election,” *ABC News*, November 7, 2020, <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/read-full-text-joe-bidens-speech-historic-election/story?id=74084462>.
  - 4 *Ibid.*
  - 5 Black voter turnout fell to 59.6% in 2016, after reaching a record-high 66.6% in 2012.



obtained 51.3% of the vote (81,286,924) and Trump 46.9% (74,222,960). Vote support for the Republican Party grew by four million eligible voters. The less-educated white voters supported Trump in large numbers.

Most national polls had Biden ahead before the presidential election. Only Expert.ai, which based their poll on “an analysis of the emotions being expressed on social media,” predicted the race to be much closer. Using an artificial intelligence technique called “sentiment analysis,” the company broke down text documents into positive, negative, or neutral categories. The company predicted the Democratic nominee, Biden, to be only a few percentage points ahead of Trump, 50.2% to 47.3%, narrower than the national polls’ double-digit lead.<sup>6</sup>

Many political factors contributed to Trump keeping pace with Biden, from political messaging, insufficient use of campaign advertising, voter suppression, and the white majority’s silent, unwavering support for Trump. One would believe that after the death of George Floyd and the summer 2020 Black Lives Matter protests, progressive messaging would fully resonate with Democratic voters. However, a growing base of progressives within the Democratic Party — ready for economic, social, and political reform of the voting system, the criminal justice system, and outdated policies and bills — were met with resistance from conservative and moderate Democrats.

The Democratic Party faced internal conflicts regarding its political messaging in 2012, 2016, and 2020. Part of the split in messaging came from Bernie Sanders (I-VT), a two-time presidential hopeful, who called for progressive Democrats to campaign for comprehensive political and social reform. Sanders, an Independent, was the clear frontrunner against Trump in 2020 before Biden entered the election and gained support from moderate Democrats.

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6 Jeremy Kahn, “The Polls Are Wrong. The U.S. Presidential Race Is a Near Dead Heat, This A.I. ‘Sentiment Analysis’ Tool Says,” *Fortune*, October 14, 2020, <https://fortune.com/2020/10/14/polls-trump-biden-presidential-race-artificial-intelligence>.

Sanders and Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) set the political tone on the campaign trail. Each took a staunch progressive stance on policies and was devoted to unseating Trump. In a 2018 private meeting at Warren's apartment, the two had outlined their plan for the upcoming election.<sup>7</sup> The unison of their message centered around the ideal of progressivism. Their only disagreement was how Sanders did not believe a woman could win the 2020 presidential election. Supporters of the progressive movement, especially "The Squad," a congressional group of young, multiracial progressives, believed Sanders to be the best opponent to run against Trump.

While Sanders and Warren had already framed the policy issues before Biden entered the race, his entrance was needed to help move the party to an ideological center in order to gain more voter support. While Biden at first failed to gain political momentum on the campaign trail, James Clyburn (D-SC) endorsed Biden in opposition to Sanders. Clyburn's endorsement came with a political "ask," which was to pick a Black woman as his vice president and nominate the first Black woman on the US Supreme Court. While important in the annals of history, these political symbols resonated with Black eligible voters more than comprehensive political and social reform.

The election of the Biden-Harris ticket was a tremendous feat but not substantial enough in the race against time to have a Black Liberation movement. Biden was elected as the pragmatic candidate for conservative and moderate Democrats and neo-liberals to maintain an American capitalist system and preserve the status quo. In the end, moderate Democrats helped Biden win the presidential nomination because he was not Sanders, and the majority of the US voting public helped him win the general election because he was not Trump.

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7 MJ Lee, "Bernie Sanders Told Elizabeth Warren in Private 2018 Meeting That a Woman Can't Win, Sources Say," *CNN*, January 13, 2020, <https://www.cnn.com/2020/01/13/politics/bernie-sanders-elizabeth-warren-meeting/index.html>.

In this chapter, I maintain that Black eligible voters should adopt a progressive ideological position as the epicenter of our independent voting bloc. Such an ideological center must be embraced for the human survival and well-being of the Black community and culture. This is in stark contrast to the socially conservative and moderate ideology that most Black people have historically espoused while continuing to vote Democrat, which has had a negative outcome on our advancement as a community. To truly begin a Black Liberation movement that works to counterbalance the overall status of Black people in America, we should incorporate into our politics a form of progressivism that advocates for more economic, social, and political equality. From the bottom-up, individual Black people should share a conscious fate with the larger Black community to champion the ideas of equality and equity without hidden agendas.

Seen from the electoral outcome of the 2020 presidential election, the youth of Generation Z and Millennials are banding together to lead the way to create movements to redefine the economic, social, and political landscape. Comprised of 65 million eligible voters, this bloc is charting the political path for progressivism. Just as important, most of the growth that will happen in the 65 and older age category will be racial and ethnic minorities. With Generation Xers and Baby Boomers evenly split in the 2020 presidential election and becoming older, the future will be Black(er), Brown(er), younger, and more progressive.

Moreover, white moderates and conservatives are either sabotaging the Democratic Party or leaving and becoming Independents. Before resigning from the 2024 presidential race, Biden was the last of a dying breed, the old guard of moderate Democrats, as he was elected as the oldest sitting president in history at 78 years old. The conservative and moderate Democratic political machine that led Black people to advocate against our best interests is winding down. We must embrace progressive policies and initiatives for a greater democracy and society where Black eligible voters define the political climate in the United States.

## The Ideal of Progressivism

On the Democratic ideological spectrum, the terms “moderate” and “progressive” are closely related. Each holds similar policy preferences that are important to the Democratic Party and its constituents. However, they prioritize concerns and issues differently. Moderate Democrats, or centralist Democrats, are fiscally conservative and believe that coalition-building and practical politics are the best governing strategy. Critics of the “moderate” tag argue that “the *moderate* category seems less an ideological destination than a refuge for the innocent and the confused.”<sup>8</sup> These Democrats are non-ideological in nature. They practice a form of politics and governing style that places them between liberalism and conservatism.<sup>9</sup>

On the other hand, progressive and younger Democrats desire comprehensive political and social reform and call out politicians who stand in the way of substantive change for us citizens. Critics of this label suggest that “progressive” is ambiguous. They believe that it is no different than being identified as “liberal.” In their minds, American political life must rest on a liberal-conservative scale, which creates levels of ambiguity for Black eligible voters who survey conservative and vote Democrat.

However, the ideologies of progressive and liberal are not synonymous. The measurable difference is that “progressives” believe that the government should be accountable for closing the equity gap in the quality-of-life indicators that help preserve an individual’s human survival and well-being. For example, ensuring that citizens are registered to vote in local elections, believing they can trust the government, self-reporting their perception of the crime rate, whether they perceiving racism as a problem, and whether or not citizens believe they have a

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8 Donald R. Kinder and Nathan P. Kalmoe, *Neither Liberal nor Conservative: Ideological Innocence in the American Public* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), 71.

9 Rosalee A. Clawson and Zoe M. Oxley, *Public Opinion: Democratic Ideals, Democratic Practice* (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2020).

good quality of life. In stark contradiction, while “liberals” may exhibit similar positions and priorities, their endorsement of capitalism and the notion that all us citizens have equal access to economic, social, and political resources distinguish the two ideologies, a distinction that flourished under the Clinton administration when it embraced neoliberal policies.

The shaping of the “progressive” concept under Sanders led others to operationalize how they view this political belief system. For example, Sanders, who is a self-proclaimed “democratic socialist,” presented lofty policies in his presidential platforms, such as Health Care for All, College for All, Jobs for All, Housing for All, Justice and Safety for All, Free Child-Care and Pre-K for All, and other “All’s” that were not well received from the middle to the right of the Democratic Party. His proposed 2020 policies would have cost more than \$40 trillion in government spending over the span of a decade.<sup>10</sup> Opponents of Sanders’s policies, including Democrats and Independents, questioned whether his agenda could be passed in the us Congress and implemented into action. Many Democrats, for example, had grown accustomed to the neoliberalism permeating the party and sought to challenge Sanders.

The landscape of the Democratic Party changed under the Clinton administration, which adopted many of the Reagan era’s neoliberal policies and assured voters the president would be financially responsible and limit governmental spending. Neoliberals of the party applauded Clinton, who represented the interests of the professional class and returned robust budget surpluses in his two terms in the presidential office. This philosophy continued into the Obama administration. However, progressives pressured the first Black president to break this neoliberal cycle and represent the needs of the poor and working-class.

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<sup>10</sup> For more information, see “How Does Bernie Pay for His Major Plans?,” *Bernie Sanders*, <https://berniesanders.com/issues/how-does-bernie-pay-his-major-plans>.

This influential ideological subgroup has risen under the leadership of Sanders. When Sanders was poised to become president in 2016, members of the Democratic establishment blocked his campaign and went to court to have the Green Party of the United States removed from ballots in key swing states. This paved the way for Hillary R. Clinton to become the presidential nominee to run against Trump in an open election. Members of the Democratic National Committee (DNC) conspired through emails to persuade reporters to create false narratives about Sanders. Mark Paustenbach, a committee communications official, wrote, “Wondering if there’s a good Bernie narrative for a story, which is that Bernie never ever had his act together, that his campaign was a mess.”<sup>11</sup> These emails were subsequently leaked and posted on WikiLeaks.<sup>12</sup> This collusion from Democrats in the primaries opened the door for Trump.

In 2020, the Democratic establishment again derailed Sanders’s campaign and the Green Party, and Biden became the challenger to run against Trump. The same was done ahead of the 2024 presidential election as Democratic lawyers challenged third-party candidate’s efforts to get on the ballot in fear of taking away votes from the Biden-Harris ticket in swing states.

Once Biden was elected, many Black eligible voters expected him to be more progressive by raising minimum wages, forgiving all student loans, and committing to free community college education. He made promises to progressive Democrats in the US Congress and to a base of progressive voters on the campaign trail. Having the most progressive agenda that a Democratic nominee had ever had in the history of this country, Biden insisted to progressives that he would find ways to fund these policies without accumulating long-term debt.

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11 “The 4 Most Damaging Emails From the DNC WikiLeaks Dump,” *ABC News*, July 25, 2016, <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/damaging-emails-dnc-wikileaks-dump/story?id=40852448>.

12 *Ibid.* “WikiLeaks is a non-profit media organisation and publisher of leaked documents. [...] It has published classified documents and other media provided by anonymous sources.” *Wikipedia*, s.v. “WikiLeaks,” <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/WikiLeaks>.

On the campaign trail, Trump criticized Biden's supposed shift in ideology by calling him a "puppet of left-wing extremists."<sup>13</sup> When Biden clinched the Democratic presidential nomination, in a private call to receive Sanders's endorsement, he said to Sanders, "I want to be the most progressive President since [Franklin D. Roosevelt]."<sup>14</sup> Roosevelt's agenda was more progressive than the three Democratic Presidents that served prior to Biden — Jimmy Carter, William Jefferson Clinton, and Barack H. Obama. Sanders carried Biden's message to his progressive followers.

Cori Bush (MO-1), a progressive Democrat and member of "The Squad," encouraged Biden to abandon his moderate ways to be an effective president for the new generation of voters. Her position declared that if Biden did not uphold campaign promises, the Democratic Party would lose Black eligible voters for the 2022 midterm elections and the 2024 presidential election. Yet from his first inauguration to the 2022 State of the Union Address, progressive Democrats could see that there would be no paradigm shift within the party. Those who thought progressives could vote for Biden and receive Sanders were wrong.

In Biden's 2022 State of the Union Address, he pivoted from any progressive agenda attempting to reset the political message within the party to capture conservative and moderate white Democratic voters who threatened to leave. His speech alienated Black eligible voters and progressives alike, who had placed him in the Oval Office. His move to the ideological center was calculated, and followed the script of Democratic political experts.

Should Black people have been surprised by Biden's shifting political message away from progressive policies? How could Black people, in general, have expected Biden to be politically faithful to us? Biden's career in the US Senate was marred with

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13 Associated Press, "Trump: Biden Is 'Puppet of Left-Wing Extremists,'" *Yahoo!*, August 17, 2020, <https://www.yahoo.com/video/trump-biden-puppet-left-wing-210742826.html>.

14 Evan Osnos, "Can Biden's Center Hold?," *The New Yorker*, August 23, 2020, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2020/08/31/can-bidens-center-hold>.

controversial policies that negatively affected the Black community and culture. As discussed in Chapter 3, his support of the 1994 Crime Bill adversely impacted how white people in America viewed Black people—as diabolical. When he was questioned about the bill near the end of his Vice-Presidency in the Obama administration, Biden defended its purpose, and continued to do so until his 2020 presidential run. In a 2016 *CNBC* interview, he said regarding the 1994 Crime Bill, “By and large, what it really did, it restored American cities.” While critics were blaming the 1994 Crime Bill as a contributing factor to the excessive incarceration rate of Black men, in the interview Biden’s defense was how the real problem was “institutional racism.”<sup>15</sup> The statement alone showed his ignorance about the complexity of institutional racism in the United States.

In the same interview, he pointed to the bill’s action to hire 100,000 additional law enforcement officers in communities nationwide. His stance was that community policing was the best strategy to address crime. He had no regard for the racial imbalance of white law enforcement officers who patrol areas with a high concentration of Black residents. Also, he did not address the police brutality of white law enforcement officers, how those sworn to serve and protect instead used excessive force in encounters with Black people.

In 2020, on the campaign trail at a Martin Luther King Jr. breakfast, Biden retreated from past comments and admitted, “I haven’t always been right. I know we haven’t always gotten things right, but I’ve always tried.”<sup>16</sup> He stated how the decision to support both the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986 and the 1994 Crime Bill “trapped an entire generation.” Biden concluded, “There’s something we have to admit—not you—we, white

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15 John Harwood, “Institutional Racism the Problem, Not ’94 Crime Bill: Biden,” *CNBC*, April 19, 2016, <https://www.cnn.com/2016/04/19/institutional-racism-the-problem-not-crime-bill-biden.html>.

16 Brendan Cole, “Joe Biden Scrutinizes Own Career at Martin Luther King Day Event: ‘I Haven’t Always Been Right...But I’ve Always Tried,’” *Newsweek*, January 22, 2019, <https://www.newsweek.com/joe-biden-scrutinizes-own-career-martin-luther-king-day-event-i-havent-always-1299620>.



America, has to admit, there's still a systematic racism and it goes almost unnoticed by so many of us."<sup>17</sup>

Although Biden's decision to remain at the ideological center should have been no surprise, supporters of the Biden-Harris ticket believed that Harris could have persuaded him to engage more with progressive Democrats. Before joining the ticket, Harris was a US senator from California and an early presidential hopeful. In mid-2019, before exiting the presidential race, Harris was polling 4th, trailing Joe Biden, Bernie Sanders, and Elizabeth Warren.<sup>18</sup> Despite having a checkered background as a deputy district attorney and as Attorney General of California,<sup>19</sup> her race, gender, and background complemented the Democratic ticket.

During a 2019 presidential debate, before being on the same political ticket, Harris challenged Biden on his criminal justice record and opposition to integration when he was in the US Senate. In one heated exchange, she questioned Biden about working with segregationists in the South and his role in opposing federally mandated busing in the US Senate during the 1970s and 1980s. According to Harris:

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17 John Haltiwanger, "Biden Played Key Role in Pushing us to Take Hardline Stances on Crime in 1990s, and Now He's Apologizing as 2020 Looms," *Business Insider*, January 22, 2019, <https://www.businessinsider.com/biden-apologizes-for-pushing-hardline-laws-on-crime-immigration-in-1990s-2019-1>.

18 Li Zhou, "Kamala Harris's Decline in the Polls, Explained," *Vox*, December 3, 2019, <https://www.vox.com/2019/11/20/20953284/kamala-harris-polls-2020-election>.

19 It is important to note that Harris's "Smart on Crime" approach as San Francisco's District Attorney and the state's Attorney General had a negative impact on Black and Brown people. In her 2009 book *Smart On Crime*, Harris stated her primarily race-neutral and tough stance on crime: "[I]nitiatives [...] help us deliver the justice and fairness our Constitution demands. But make no mistake: Any effort to excuse or ignore criminal behavior leads to more criminal behavior." Kamala Harris and Joan O'C. Hamilton, *Smart on Crime: A Career Prosecutor's Plan to Make Us Safer* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2009), 84.

There was a little girl in California who was part of the second class to integrate her public schools, and she was bused to school every day. And that little girl was me.<sup>20</sup>

Biden defended his position on busing and stated, “Everything I’ve done in my career, I ran because of civil rights. I continue to think we have to make fundamental changes in civil rights.”<sup>21</sup>

Biden’s moderate beliefs conflicted with progressive ideas. He never embraced comprehensive political and social reform. For instance, Biden never supported the phrase “Defund the Police,” but he demanded justice for unarmed Black deaths and indicated how monies should be redistributed to social service programs. Although used for decades, this phrase became more common after George Floyd’s death, which meant cutting police department budgets and allocating funds to other governmental agencies and community organizations. Despite the political propaganda surrounding the phrase, for many in the Black community, it did not originally mean to abolish the public order and safety of policing.

The summer 2020 Black Lives Matter protests called for the presidential candidates on the campaign trail to defund the police amid police brutality happening in Black communities nationwide. However, true to his ideological centrism, in January of 2022, before the annual US Conference of Mayors, Biden said, “We shouldn’t be cutting funding for police departments. I propose increasing funding.”<sup>22</sup> In fact, he encouraged local and

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20 McKenzie Sadeghi, “Fact Check: Kamala Harris Was Part of the Second Integrated Class in Elementary School,” *USAToday*, August 16, 2020, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/factcheck/2020/08/16/fact-check-school-district-has-confirmed-harris-part-busing/5589754002>.

21 Ayesha Rascoe, “‘That Little Girl Was Me’: Harris, Biden Clash Over Busing in Democratic Debate,” *NPR*, June 28, 2019, <https://www.npr.org/2019/06/28/736824783/that-little-girl-was-me-harris-biden-clash-over-busing-in-democratic-debate>.

22 “Remarks by President Biden at the U.S. Conference of Mayors 90th Annual Winter Meeting,” *The White House*, January 21, 2022, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2022/01/21/remarks-by->

state jurisdictions to use surplus COVID-19 monies to expand their police forces.

He doubled down in the 2022 State of the Union Address by stating:

We should all agree: The answer is not to defund the police. The answer is to fund the police with the resources and training they need to protect our communities.<sup>23</sup>

Biden's comments sent a clear message to non-progressive whites at the expense of the Black vote. Almost two years after the murder of George Floyd, Black people were still waiting on police reform while Biden was virtue signaling to conservative and moderate Democrats ahead of the 2022 midterm elections to show good political favor to them via not supporting "Defund the Police." House Democrats even sponsored and passed the Invest to Protect Act of 2022 (360-64), a bipartisan piece of legislation that would allot \$300 million to local law enforcement over a five-year period.<sup>24</sup> Democrats claimed this was political cover before the midterm contests; however, their commitment to a Blue Lives Matter agenda showed their lack of concern for Black bodies after the death of George Floyd.

Cori Bush took to Twitter after the 2022 State of the Union Address and criticized Biden by saying, "All our country has done is given more funding to police. The result? 2021 set a record for fatal police shootings...Defund the police. Invest in our communities."<sup>25</sup> Biden's statement on funding law enforcement officers drew bipartisan applause but countered his pledge

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president-biden-at-the-u-s-conference-of-mayors-90th-annual-winter-meeting.

23 "Read Joe Biden's Full 2022 State of the Union Address," *PBS*, March 1, 2022, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/read-joe-bidens-full-2022-state-of-the-union-address>.

24 The US Senate passed their own version of the bill, which a Democrat also sponsored.

25 @CoriBush, *Twitter*, March 1, 2022, 9:45PM, <https://twitter.com/CoriBush/status/1498866983835783171>.

to Black people when he said he understood “the urgent need for reform” for the Black community.<sup>26</sup>

Standing in support of the Invest to Protect Act of 2022 was US senator, Tim Scott (R-SC), who was the Senate’s only Black Republican in the 117th congressional body. He went to the Senate floor to ask Democrats to work on a similar bipartisan bill to give law enforcement more resources. In his delivery, Scott stated:

After years — and I do mean years — of Democrats touting unpopular defund the police policies, they have finally seen the light. Maybe it’s the light on their sinking polling numbers. And they are now voicing support for funding our men and women in uniform.<sup>27</sup>

Bush’s and Scott’s comments showed the political differences between Black Democrats and Black Republicans regarding perceptions of policing in the US. Despite these differences, one would expect Scott to recognize through his comments the importance of police accountability in the murder of unarmed Black people. Instead, his partisan loyalty outweighed any conscious commitment to hold law enforcement officials more accountable.

### **Intra-Party Conflict in the Democratic Party**

After the 2020 presidential win, the Democratic Party was met with criticism from conservative and moderate Democrats who believed the path to victory could have been a landslide if it were not for progressive and far-left Democrats. Despite the Biden-Harris ticket winning by 7.1 million votes, Democrats lost 13

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26 Eric Bradner, Sarah Mucha, and Donald Judd, “Biden Says He Doesn’t Support Defunding Police,” *CNN*, June 8, 2020, <https://www.cnn.com/2020/06/08/politics/joe-biden-defund-the-police/index.html>.

27 “Senator Tim Scott Responds to Biden ‘Defund’ Pivot,” *Tim Scott*, March 3, 2022, [https://www.scott.senate.gov/media-center/press-releases/\\_senator-tim-scott-responds-to-biden-defund-pivot](https://www.scott.senate.gov/media-center/press-releases/_senator-tim-scott-responds-to-biden-defund-pivot).

seats in the US House. Democratic turnout was high in the 2018 midterm elections; thus, the party forecasted a blue tidal wave for the 2020 election cycle. Eligible voters who cast their votes for the Biden-Harris ticket did not do so for Democratic House candidates.

Barack Obama blamed progressive Democrats. He said on the Snapchat political show *Good Luck America* that political candidates lose voters' support with "snappy" slogans like "Defund the Police." Pushing back on Obama, I will point out that during his tenure in office he lost nearly 1000 Democratic seats at all levels of government with candidates mimicking his campaign slogans.<sup>28</sup> His comments on the phrase highlighted how unprogressive he was as the first Black president. Black people can counter and argue that you only lose white racists who agree with white law enforcement officers occupying Black communities when you invoke the phrase "Defund the Police" as a policy solution. Obama, more than anyone, knew the goal of the phrase was not to cut the overall budget of law enforcement funding but to incorporate a mandate to hold law enforcement accountable.

Other top Democratic politicians also considered the phrase hurtful to the electoral support for candidates. Former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) shunned the idea as well. In a 2022 interview on ABC's *This Week* after Democrats lost seats, Pelosi said, "[Defund the Police is] not the position of the Democratic Party."<sup>29</sup> The most vigorous Black congressional pushback came from Clyburn. The person who had endorsed Biden among the moderate ranks on the campaign trail dissented to the progressive phrase "Defund the Police," even during and after observing the death of George Floyd and the treatment of protestors in the summer of 2020. Amid the summer protests, Clyburn said, "We

28 "Democrats Lost Over 1,000 Seats Under Obama," *Fox News*, December 27, 2016, <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/democrats-lost-over-1000-seats-under-obama>.

29 David Cohen, "'Defund the Police' Is Not the Policy of the Democratic Party, Pelosi Says," *Politico*, February 13, 2022, <https://www.politico.com/news/2022/02/13/pelosi-defund-police-democrats-00008449>.

need the police. We want the police. They have a role to play.” He believed “sloganeering” could compromise the Black Lives Matter movement and adversely affect the upcoming presidential election.<sup>30</sup>

Clyburn, who emerged during his time in congressional office as an advocate of status quo politics, received criticism from activists and progressive Democrats. Progressives, including “The Squad,” rejected these allegations. “The Squad” was made up of House Reps. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York (NY-14), Ilhan Omar of Minnesota (MN-5), Rashida Tlaib of Michigan (MI-13), Ayanna Pressley of Massachusetts (MA-7), Cori Bush of Missouri (MO-1), and Jamaal Bowman of New York (NY-16).<sup>31</sup> This ensemble of legislators advocated for “Defunding the Police.” In a Twitter post, Omar wrote:

The “defund the police” movement, is one of reimagining the current police system to build an entity that does not violate us, while relocating funds to invest in community services.

Let’s be clear, the people who now oppose this, have always opposed calls for systematic change.<sup>32</sup>

Progressive Democrats argued that white racial resentment within both political parties was the reason for the dissension around the message. Ocasio-Cortez contended via Twitter:

So the whole “progressivism is bad” argument just doesn’t have any compelling evidence that I’ve seen.

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30 Matthew Brown, “Democratic Whip James Clyburn: ‘Defund the Police’ Cost Democrats Seats, Hurt Black Lives Matter Movement,” *USAToday*, November 8, 2020, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2020/11/08/james-clyburn-defund-police-cost-democrats-seats-hurt-black-lives-matter/6216371002>.

31 In 2024, Bowman overwhelmingly lost the Democratic Party nomination to Westchester County Executive George Latimer.

32 @IlhanMN, *Twitter*, June 8, 2020, 7:19PM, <https://twitter.com/ilhanmn/status/1270148561536274439>.

When it comes to “Defund” & “Socialism” attacks, people need to realize these are racial resentment attacks. You’re not gonna make that go away. You can make it less effective.<sup>33</sup>

She blamed the Democratic election consultants, who did not exhaust digital mobilization and grassroots campaigning in key swing states, as the reason for Democrats losing 13 seats in the US House. Ocasio-Cortez maintained, “Almost all [Democrats] had awful execution on digital. DURING A PANDEMIC.”<sup>34</sup>

A closer look at the campaign flaws of Democrats from a 2020 study by the progressive group Way to Win shows how Democrats spent more money (\$21.8 million) than Republicans (\$6.2 million) on TV ads encouraging “bipartisanship” support and “working across the aisle.” Republicans spent most of their money (\$51 million) on TV ads that presented the words “extremist” and “radical” to describe Democrats. Such rhetoric is shocking, considering the attempted coup on January 6, 2021. Republicans were describing themselves. In total, Republicans spent more than \$87 million on TV ads with one or more of the following words: “AOC,” “Ocasio,” “Pelosi,” “Socialism,” “Socialist,” “Defund,” and others.<sup>35</sup>

On the digital campaign front, Democrats failed to keep up with Republicans. Ocasio-Cortez pointed out, “Some campaigns spent \$0 on digital the week before the election. Others who spent did so in very poor ways.”<sup>36</sup> After Hillary R. Clinton lost to Trump in 2016, Obama aides warned the Democratic Party to invest in digital campaigning and better message distribution. Before the 2020 presidential election, Trump advertised

33 @AOC, *Twitter*, November 6, 2020, 7:03AM, <https://twitter.com/aoc/status/1324698828944138243>.

34 @AOC, *Twitter*, November 6, 2020, 6:45AM, <https://twitter.com/aoc/status/1324694301234921474>.

35 More information on the 2020 *Way to Win* post-election report can be found at “Data to Win: How 2020 Shapes 2022,” *The Plan to Win*, <https://plantowin.info/datatowin>.

36 @AOC, *Twitter*, November 6, 2020, 6:48AM, <https://twitter.com/AOC/status/1324695068628930560>.

ads on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and other digital platforms. This forced the Biden campaign to keep pace with digital and tv ads. In comparing the Trump and Biden campaigns, Laura Edelson, a researcher at New York University who tracks political advertising on Facebook, said, “[It’s] like a supercar racing a little Volkswagen Bug.”<sup>37</sup> In addition to Trump’s aggressive digital campaign, a 2021 National Intelligence report titled *Foreign Threats to the 2020 US Federal Elections* revealed how he received online help from the Russian Federation. Even after the election, Russian actors online posing as US citizens promoted messages questioning the 2020 presidential election results.<sup>38</sup>

All of this distracted us from the main concern about Democrats surrounding the 2020 presidential election, which was that the Democratic Party had a lackluster political strategy. Their intra-party conflicts were projected onto a national stage, and the messaging did not resonate with conservative and moderate Democratic voters. The only unifying force in 2020 was removing Trump from the Oval Office, but the divisions within the party lingered. Moving forward, the Democratic establishment knows that a realignment is needed within the party, one that could flourish in upcoming political cycles if progressives take the mantle — the prospects for which are dim at present.

## Conclusion and Implications

Prior to the 2020 presidential election, Black people on all sides of the political, partisan, and ideological spectrum were experiencing the grave concerns of COVID-19, voting suppression,

37 Matthew Rosenberg and Kevin Roose, “Trump Campaign Floods Web with Ads, Raking in Cash as Democrats Struggle,” *The New York Times*, October 20, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/20/us/elections/trump-campaign-ads-democrats.html>.

38 For more information, see “National Intelligence Council Intelligence Community Assessment: Foreign Threats to the 2020 US Federal Elections,” *Office of the Director of National Intelligence*, March 10, 2021, <https://www.dni.gov/files/ODNI/documents/assessments/ICA-declass-16MAR21.pdf>.



racial injustice, and economic inequality. These structural and cultural conditions called for a progressive approach to turn the tides of the Black community and culture. Biden's campaign promises had strong progressive overtones that led Black eligible voters to believe he would move from the ideological center to the left to accommodate Black people's interests in America. But once elected, progressives who called for him to be the modern-day Democratic President Lyndon Johnson lost faith that he would become the great white savior for all as he had campaigned to be.

In this chapter, I called for Black eligible voters to adopt a progressive ideological position as the epicenter of our independent voting bloc. This coherent belief system must be driven by the pledge to consciously identify solutions to the most germane concerns and issues facing the Black community. From valence issues to the high-priority topics of Black interest issues, as discussed in Chapter 3, activists of all sorts, organizers, and politicians must advocate for political and social reform.

We need a progressive threat that does not include Bernie Sanders or Jill Stein as its leaders but is led by a conscious collective of Black people working city-by-city and state-by-state.<sup>39</sup> Black people who poll as a conservative ideological group but vote Democrat have to embrace progressivism. As a people, how can we advocate for "progress" but be reluctant to call ourselves "progressives"? Thus, a progressive threat, which does not compromise Black progress, must be established outside of the two-party system. Our progressive approach should be radical in nature, but we must be organized, coherent, and our politi-

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39 Stein was the Green Party's nominee for president of the United States in the 2012, 2016, and 2024 elections. Ahead of the 2024 election, Stein was critical of the Biden administration and the Democratic party. Reports found that Stein's campaign was receiving funding from a GOP-linked Political Action Committee, aiming to weaken the Democratic vote. See Adam Wren, "GOP-Aligned Super PAC Works to Boost Stein in Georgia," *Politico*, October 30, 2024, <https://www.politico.com/live-updates/2024/10/30/2024-elections-live-coverage-updates-analysis/boosting-stein-00186430>.

cal “asks” and “demands” should align. Different from the past progressive movements of Black Lives Matter and #MeToo, this type of progressivism must be policy driven where we are in lockstep to attempt to advance the most progressive legislation we have seen in our lifetime, as discussed in Chapter 3, by laying out policy approaches at each level of government.

For the Black independent voting bloc, a progressive ideological position would help to move us forward in addressing educational disparities, health inequalities, gender discrimination, a broken criminal justice system, joblessness, closing the racial wealth gap, and voting rights. Thus, we seek a presidential candidate who will devise a policy platform in the primary election phase that incorporates issues of Black interest, reflecting our shared values. To transform this country into a nation that affirms the value of Black people, we must align with a candidate and ideological position to combat the tenets of institutional and systemic discrimination and racism that disrupt our fundamental rights afforded under the US Constitution. Moreover, our vision of progressivism must be inclusive, recognizing how various racial and ethnic groups are marginalized to gain their vote support, as discussed in Chapter 6.

In sum, significant points in US history, from the election of Trump to the summer 2020 Black Lives Matter protests, the 2021 winter insurrection, and the pragmatic election of Biden, are societal and cultural markers that should precede a new Progressive Era in the US, albeit under the shadow of a second Trump presidency. While not totally our responsibility, Black people in America must work to be social reformers to frame the US that we would like to reside in. Instead of the majority of Black eligible voters working to turn “Red” states to “Blue” states, as Stacey Abrams heroically did in Georgia in the 2020 presidential election, Black eligible voters must declare once and for all that we can work as a voting bloc to influence the national political agenda and promote progressive legislation to facilitate a political climate that could turn one, or both, major political parties to “Black.”

Black people should be politically fatigued with every four years of the Democratic Party searching for a consistent political message and a presidential candidate to carry that said message. Besides Obama, from the turn of the twenty-first century Democrat's presidential choices have been recycled politicians. None have been transformative. Thus, our commitment to political independence to cultivate a progressive brand of politics would circumvent this vexation and obstruct the potential of white Democrats and Republicans who wish to continue to control our political destiny.

The 2020 presidential election displayed how both political parties were afraid of a changing political landscape that had embraced progressivism. Both Biden and Trump exhibited the classic technique of smoke-and-mirrors politics. Biden proposed on the campaign trail to support progressive policies, only to be elected and remain nailed to the center of the Democratic ideological spectrum. Meanwhile, he knew moderate Democrats held the swing vote for the passage of progressive Democratic initiatives; thus, the failure of these initiatives could be blamed on others. Trump, on the other hand, took extraordinary steps to employ any and every political move to sway Republican voters and those on the fence to believe that progressive politics was fiscally irresponsible and unfavorable for us citizens.

After losing the presidential election, the idea of a changing political landscape led by progressives provoked fear among Trump and his supporters. Instead of Trump conceding to Biden before the inauguration, on January 2, 2021, among numerous moves to compromise the American democracy, he asked Georgia's Republican secretary of state, Brad Raffensperger, to commit a criminal offense by "find[ing]" votes for him.<sup>40</sup> Dur-

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40 In February 2021, Georgia election officials opened an investigation into the call. Mark Niese, "Georgia Investigation Opened into Trump's Call to Overturn Election," *AJC Politics*, February 8, 2021, <https://www.ajc.com/politics/georgia-investigation-opened-into-trumps-call-to-overturn-election/GQ3WSOLP7VENRG4PVCCRAPMOBI>.

ing an hourlong recorded call, now coined the “Trump Tapes,”<sup>41</sup> he emphatically pressured Raffensperger, “to find 11,780 votes” to overturn his loss.<sup>42</sup> While Trump had won Georgia in 2016, this desperate attempt to coerce Raffensperger and threaten him with “a criminal offense” by using baseless claims that had circulated on the Internet was beneath the dignity of the Oval Office. Prior to the recorded call, Trump made eighteen previous attempts to call Raffensperger to insist that he recalculate the vote count.<sup>43</sup>

It is ironic how Trump attempted to find votes in the red state of Georgia, which has a big blue political dot hovering over Fulton County, ultimately deciding the vote in Biden’s favor. Black eligible voters in Atlanta, a Black Mecca of the US, voted for Biden mainly because of the support of Abrams (Democrat)<sup>44</sup> and Michael S. Render (Independent).<sup>45</sup> Abrams had registered over 800,000 new voters from the Black, Latinx, and Asian communities, ushering in a new coalition of Black voters in Georgia to fight on behalf of the Democratic Party. In the call to Raffensperger, Trump told him, “Stacey Abrams is laughing

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41 “Trump Urges Georgia Secretary of State to ‘Find’ Votes,” *The Washington Post*, January 3, 2021, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/video/politics/audio-trump-berates-georgia-secretary-of-state-urges-him-to-find-votes/2021/01/03/aba64f5f-8c3c-490f-af34-618ccea732d7\\_video.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/video/politics/audio-trump-berates-georgia-secretary-of-state-urges-him-to-find-votes/2021/01/03/aba64f5f-8c3c-490f-af34-618ccea732d7_video.html).

42 Linda Qiu, “Trump Repeats Debunked Election Claims in Call with Georgia Official,” *The New York Times*, January 3, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/03/us/politics/fact-checking-trump-georgia.html>.

43 Even in September 2021, more than ten months after the election, Trump again asked Raffensperger to decertify the election. This eventually led to charges by Fulton County.

44 Abrams was the target of voter suppression in the highly publicized 2018 Georgia gubernatorial election. Running to become the first Black and first woman governor of Georgia, Abrams lost to Brian Kemp by a 1.4% margin (about 55,000 votes). Kemp, who was the incumbent, simultaneously managed the election as the GA Secretary of State. He faced strong accusations of voter suppression and violating the Voting Rights Act.

45 Render played an integral role in mobilizing Black people in Atlanta. He, alongside Keisha Lance Bottoms, former mayor of Atlanta, and Clifford J. Harris Jr., rap icon and political activist, was instrumental in encouraging Black people in Atlanta to register and cast their vote.

about you. She's going around saying, 'These guys are dumber than a rock.'<sup>46</sup>

As the search for votes in states he lost continued, Trump's internal racial meter made him ask Georgia to find votes because he knew that racist officials were present in governmental positions. Raffensperger had participated in forms of voter disenfranchisement against Black and Brown people to keep the state of Georgia red. In an investigative film, he was "exposed for using vote suppression Jim Crow tactics—even misleading a federal court to keep 198,000 Georgians from voting in the [January 5, 2021] Senate run-off."<sup>47</sup> With national eyes on the presidential election, Raffensperger took a higher road to expose Trump and not fall liable to any of Trump's malevolent tactics.

With victories like the one in Georgia, progressives predicted that there should be no excuse for a unified Democratic government not to pass substantial legislation. The thought was that the new political climate in the US Congress would end Trump's and Mitch McConnell's legislative stranglehold on the congressional body. However, the filibuster would remain—which is a US Senate tradition, not a law—granted to the political party in the minority and that would force the number of votes needed to pass a bill in the chamber from fifty-one to sixty.

Warren argued, "The filibuster has deep roots in racism, and it should not be permitted to serve that function, or to create a veto for the minority. In a democracy, it's majority rules."<sup>48</sup> After being sworn into office, Democratic senator Rev. Raphael G. Warnock mirrored these sentiments:

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46 Qiu, "Trump Repeats Debunked Election Claims."

47 Greg Palast, "Stealing Georgia: Raffensperger is No Hero," *Greg Palast Investigative Journalism*, January 4, 2021, <https://www.gregpalast.com/stealing-georgia-raffensperger-is-no-hero>.

48 Mychael Schnell, "Elizabeth Warren: Filibuster 'Has Deep Roots in Racism,'" *The Hill*, March 18, 2021, <https://thehill.com/homenews/senate/543920-elizabeth-warren-filibuster-has-deep-roots-in-racism>.

Senator Strom Thurmond dedicated 24 consecutive hours to filibustering the 1957 Voting Rights Act so people who look like me couldn't vote.

To say the filibuster doesn't have a past rooted in racism is an appalling attempt to rewrite a very recent part of America's history.<sup>49</sup>

With the first day of the new us Congressional session forthcoming, progressive Democrats were excited for the moment to introduce and pass legislation they believed would significantly change the political consciousness of this country. Then came January 6, 2021, a day that will forever go down in infamy.

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49 @SenatorWarnock, *Twitter*, March 24, 2021, 4:34PM, <https://x.com/SenatorWarnock/status/1374837017733922823>.

## January 6, 2021: A Day of Racial Reckoning

The attempted coup by white Donald Trump supporters on January 6, 2021 was an assault on the Black effect on American democracy. The day will forever go down in infamy as it showed white America's democratic efforts to further maintain a rigid racial order. It was a day that should have affirmed to both Black Democrats and Black Republicans that the values of American democracy do not bind all citizens. There remains a division of white people in America who do not believe that "all women and men are created equal," nor that the tenet of fairness, which allows for a free and fair election, should be given to Black people in America. The day's actions prove that Black people must confront the white power structure in this country. One Black partisan group has attempted to do this with no racial reciprocity, and the other has participated in the practice of "trade-offs" to accomplish their individual goals in the United States.

The day will be forever stamped as a symbol of white supremacy. Trump supporters, of various far-right extremist groups, wanted to overturn the 2020 presidential election results to keep Trump in political power and maintain white racial order in this country. Taking Trump's lead, they worked in concert to storm the us Capitol Building with the intent to delay the certification

of the 2020 presidential election so that Republican-controlled legislatures could attempt to invalidate votes, which would have given Trump the Electoral College majority.

The events of the day showed that Trump and Republicans fell within the lines of condoning the US to be a domestic terrorist state that promotes political violence. This is a point that neither political party is willing to deny, and why both maintain that “unity” must be their bridge. Both fear that the coup attempt on the US Capitol Building was an exercise for what is forthcoming: a race war provoked by what President Joseph R. Biden called “a broad range of ideologically-motivated actors.”<sup>1</sup>

For Trump’s attempt to steal the election and be granted a second presidential term, the US Congress should have invoked the Fourteenth Amendment to ban Trump and his Republican co-conspirators from elected office. However, unwilling to admit the intent behind the day, Republicans defined the actions of Trump, his Republican co-conspirators, and supporters involved in the attempted coup as “legitimate political discourse.”<sup>2</sup> They desired for those viewing the insurrection in real time on their television screens to ignore the violence at the US Capitol Building and focus on the peaceful protestors who stood by and watched.

Republicans who supported this description of January 6, 2021, and refused to call it an act of political violence to overthrow the government, are participants in a racist revisionist history of a day that witnessed five dead, over 140 law enforcement officers injured, more than 700 Trump supporters charged with trespassing, threats to murder elected officials, and over

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- 1 President Biden asked the Department of Homeland Security to issue a national terrorism bulletin to address the potential for violence from “a broad range of ideologically-motivated actors.” Ben Fox and Eric Tucker, “US Terrorism Alert Warns of Politically Motivated Violence,” *AP News*, January 27, 2021, <https://apnews.com/article/us-terrorism-alert-75156eae27532bd9e5cbfe35e6485a3b>.
  - 2 Kyle Cheney, “What the GOP Meant When It Called Jan. 6 ‘Legitimate Political Discourse,’” *Politico*, February 15, 2022, <https://www.politico.com/news/2022/02/15/gop-meaning-jan-6-legitimate-political-discourse-00008777>.



\$30 million in damages, all actions that resulted in direct political opposition to the power of the Black vote. The January 6 US House Select Committee, a congressional bipartisan investigative group formed to investigate the day, concluded that Trump influenced the violent takeover of the US Capitol Building and engaged in a criminal conspiracy to remain in the presidential office.<sup>3</sup> During the House Select Committee's hearing in June 2022, former vice chair member Liz Cheney (R-WY) said, "President Trump summoned the mob, assembled the mob, and lit the flame of this attack."<sup>4</sup>

In the rest of this chapter, I describe how the events on January 6 and the subsequent response from the benefactors of whiteness encapsulate the held ideals that Black people's vote, our place in the US, our willingness to concede forgiveness, and our readiness to assimilate into white America do not matter. Days like January 6 are placed in plain view to impede our progress. They show that white America is afraid of our ability to impact the political landscape of the US. Their commitment to sustaining white racial order was on full display.

### Red Wednesday

On January 6, 2021, Trump summoned his supporters to Washington, DC. Before and during the "Save America" rally, he virtue signaled his supporters with electoral falsehoods. Trump's speech framed to the losing electorate the narrative that they were victims who had something stolen from them. In a Politico.com study, 79% of Trump voters believed the election was

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3 See *Eastman v. Thompson*, Case No. 8:22-cv-00099-DOC-DFM 2022, <https://www.cacd.uscourts.gov/sites/default/files/Dkt%20356%2C%20Order%20RE%20Privilege%20of%20599%20Documents.pdf>.

4 "Here's Every Word of the Second Jan. 6 Committee Hearing on Its Investigation," *NPR*, June 13, 2022, <https://www.npr.org/2022/06/13/1104690690/heres-every-word-of-the-second-jan-6-committee-hearing-on-its-investigation>.

stolen through illegal voting and fraud.<sup>5</sup> During the rally, Trump urged them to “fight,” “fight like hell,” and “take back our country” from the Democrats who had “stolen” the 2020 presidential election.<sup>6</sup> Such victimization rhetoric is used toward US citizens in the justification of war.<sup>7</sup>

He said to the crowd:

We will never give up. We will never concede. It will never happen. You don't concede when there's theft involved. Our country has had enough. We will not take it anymore. [...] You'll never take back our country with weakness. You have to show strength and you have to be strong.

We're going to walk down to the Capitol and we're going to cheer on our brave senators and Congressmen and women.<sup>8</sup>

Trump based his hellacious claim on a thirty-six-page report from White House trade advisor Peter Navarro, who insisted that Trump had won the presidency and was “legally elected.” Navarro called the report *The Immaculate Deception*.<sup>9</sup>

During the rally, Trump placed the deciding factor of certifying the Electoral College results for Biden on Vice President Mike Pence. He said to the crowd, “All Vice-President Pence has to do is send it back to the States to recertify, and we become

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5 “2020 Voter Priorities Survey,” *Seven Letter Insight*, November 2020, <https://www.politico.com/f/?id=00000175-f4af-d692-a975-fcff0b650000>.

6 “Fact-Checking Trump's Jan. 6 Speech to ‘Stop the Steal’ Protesters,” *The Washington Post*, January 6, 2021, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/video/politics/fact-checking-trumps-jan-6-speech-to-stop-the-steal-protesters/2021/01/06/7037b1ec-3a64-4f3a-83ee-d21764b3f4of\\_video.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/video/politics/fact-checking-trumps-jan-6-speech-to-stop-the-steal-protesters/2021/01/06/7037b1ec-3a64-4f3a-83ee-d21764b3f4of_video.html).

7 Robert L. Ivie, “Images of Savagery in American Justifications for War,” *Communication Monographs* 47, no. 4 (1980): 279–94.

8 “Donald Trump Speech ‘Save America’ Rally Transcript January 6,” *rev*, January 6, 2021, <https://www.rev.com/blog/transcripts/donald-trump-speech-save-america-rally-transcript-january-6>.

9 Peter Navarro, “The Immaculate Deception,” *Bannon's War Room*, <https://bannonswarroom.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/The-Immaculate-Deception-12.15.20-1.pdf>.

president, and you are the happiest people.”<sup>10</sup> This message to his supporters was not true. The day before, he tweeted a similar lie: “The Vice President has the power to reject fraudulently chosen electors.”<sup>11</sup>

Pence was not the decider. He was merely the presider to uphold the US Constitution. While he had been trying to intentionally separate himself from Trump to maintain his political future, Pence was no saint. He was equally complicit from the beginning of their presidential terms, if not more than Trump, for recentering whiteness in this country. Pence, along with Paul Manafort, former Attorney Generals Jeff Sessions and William Barr, the former White House chief strategist and white nationalist, Steve Bannon, former senior advisor Stephen Miller, and former Senate Majority Leader and political flip-flopper Mitch McConnell (R-KY) all willingly participated in further dividing our country. Bannon bragged on his *WarRoom* podcast on January 5, “All hell is going to break loose tomorrow.”<sup>12</sup> These politicians helped to further engineer a white supremacist base, which destroyed the historic fabric of the Republican Party. As head of the Coronavirus Task Force, Pence was complicit in systematically murdering over 400,000 Americans from March 2020 to January 2021 due to his allegiance to Trump’s governmental inactions.

During the “Save America” rally, Trump’s rhetoric further stoked a crowd that was engaging in a coordinated and planned nationwide effort to overtake the US Capitol Building and

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10 “Donald Trump Speech ‘Save America’ Rally.”

11 Jane C. Timm, “Fact Check: No, Pence Can’t Overturn the Election Results,” *NBC News*, January 5, 2021, <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/donald-trump/fact-check-no-pence-can-t-overturn-election-results-n1252869>. It was John Eastman, a conservative law professor, who promoted the theory that Pence had the power to alter the presidential outcome.

12 Steve Bannon, host, *WarRoom* podcast, episode 631, “EP 631- Pandemic: One day away (w/ Maggie VandenBerghe, Jack Posobiec, Sean Parnell and Richard Baris),” January 5, 2021, <https://warroom.org/2021/01/05/ep-630-pandemic-monday-special-w-maggie-vandenbergh-kylie-kremer-ben-bergquam-sean-parnell-and-boris-epshteyn-2>.

statehouses throughout the nation. Trump supporters, which included anti-government militias, conspiracy theorists, and far-right extremist groups, descended upon US Capitol grounds. During a *CBS 60 Minutes* feature, former acting US Attorney Michael Sherwin said about 10% of those who breached the US Capitol Building were from single or multiple militia groups that joined forces.<sup>13</sup> This included the Oath Keepers, the Proud Boys, Boogaloo Bois, the Three Percenters, and a host of others.<sup>14</sup> The January 6 Select Committee showed specifically how the Oath Keepers and the Proud Boys worked together to try and stop the transfer of presidential power.

Most Trump supporters in 2020 were older white males from rural areas. They stood in great numbers for Trump. Demographic research showed that “[m]ore than four-fifths of them are employed and come from various backgrounds, from business owners to white-collar professionals.”<sup>15</sup> Forming militia groups were active-duty military, and others were veterans. The remaining members were former law enforcement officers or had ties to law enforcement. According to a 2022 NORC University of Chicago report on security and threats, more supporters came from counties where Biden beat Trump by slim margins.<sup>16</sup>

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13 60 Minutes, “Detailing the Charges Facing the Capitol Rioters,” *You Tube*, March 21, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FoAqWnD7NTI>.

14 It is important to note that Enrique Tarrío, one of the leaders of the Proud Boys, was found to be an informant for federal and local law enforcement, according to transcripts from a 2014 federal court proceeding. Tarrío had been active in stirring racial hate in this country. Tarrío and four other members of the Proud Boys were charged with seditious conspiracy. For more information, see *USA v. Tarrío*, No. 22-mj-02369, <https://extremism.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs5746/files/Enrique%20Tarrío%20Government%20Detention%20Memorandum.pdf>.

15 Sam Cabral and Roderick Macleod, “Capitol Riots: Five Takeaways from the Arrests,” *BBC*, February 8, 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-55987603>.

16 More information on the 2022 *NORC University of Chicago* report can be found at “A Year Late, Who Is to Blame for the Attack on the Capitol?,” *NORC at the University of Chicago*, January 4, 2022, <https://apnorc.org/projects/a-year-later-who-is-to-blame-for-the-attack-on-the-capitol>.

Trump's supporters coordinated through social media platforms of the time such as Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook; however, much of the messaging took place on the conservative social media platforms of Gab and Parler. In addition, flyers and messaging services such as Telegram, were used and read, "Be there, will be wild."<sup>17</sup> Days before the attempted coup, more than 25 million users globally joined Telegram. This messaging app allows large, invitation-only, and encrypted messages. In sum, no traditional social media or messaging app had safeguards in place to address civic integrity.

Private and public elite donors funded the "Save America" rally. For example, Ginni Thomas, the wife of the only sitting Black us Supreme Court Justice at the time, Clarence Thomas, helped fund and endorse the protest demanding that the us Congress overturn the presidential election. Thomas, a white woman and staunch Trump supporter, led a group of conservatives who lobbied to remove officials from the Trump administration that they deemed disloyal to his political direction. In a now-deleted tweet, she wrote: "GOD BLESS EACH OF YOU STANDING UP OR PRAYING!" In a text message to former Trump White House chief of staff Mark Meadows, who worked behind the scenes to create baseless claims that the election was stolen, she wrote, "Help This Great President stand firm, Mark!!!"<sup>18</sup> us House Democrats called for Clarence Thomas, who once identified as a Black radical and supported the Black Panthers,<sup>19</sup> to

17 Michael Biesecker et al., "Records Show Fervent Trump Fans Fueled us Capitol Takeover," *AP News*, January 10, 2021, <https://apnews.com/article/us-capitol-trump-supporters-1806ea8dc15a2c04f2a68acd6b55cace>.

18 Ryan Nobles et al., "First on CNN: January 6 Committee Has Text Messages between Ginni Thomas and Mark Meadows," *CNN*, March 25, 2022, <https://www.cnn.com/2022/03/24/politics/ginni-thomas-mark-meadows-text-messages/index.html>.

19 Clarence Thomas was nominated to the us Supreme Court by George H.W. Bush, ex-us president and ex-Director of Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). His conversion from Black radical to conservative made many speculate that he was an informant. In 1980, Thomas told *The Washington Post*, "I marched. I protested. I asked the government to help black people. [...] I did all those things. But it hasn't worked." Corey Robin,

step down from his us Supreme Court seat due to his wife's participation in what became an insurrection.<sup>20</sup>

When the rally ended, Trump supporters descended upon the us Capitol Building, yelling loudly, "Patriots Go!, Patriots Go!, Patriots Go!" During a global pandemic, with the latest contagious coronavirus variant spreading, they hid under the guise of "patriotic protestors." They stormed the us Capitol Building in the name of Trump. These supporters set out to confront and attack Democrats and Republicans alike, who they believed betrayed the president. Speculation arose that the far-left anti-fascist group, Antifa, was disguised as Trump supporters and mixed with those at the rally. The FBI, however, confirmed that this claim was unfounded.<sup>21</sup> Instead, this was a diverse mob of Trump supporters filled with malevolent intent.

Most pushed their way beyond the barriers saying, "Trump sent us," and the us Capitol police let others through. There was no regard for the Blue Lives that these same supporters had defended during the summer 2020 Black Lives Matter protests. According to the us Department of Justice, approximately 140 police officers were assaulted that day.<sup>22</sup> One shocking video showed white people beating a white Capitol law enforcement officer on the Capitol steps with an American flag.<sup>23</sup> It was the same flag they worshipped while calling ex-NFL player Colin Kaepernick "un-American" and "unpatriotic" when kneeling

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"Clarence Thomas's Radical Vision of Race," *The New Yorker*, September 10, 2019, <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/essay/clarence-thomass-radical-vision-of-race>.

- 20 Justice Thomas was the only person on the us Supreme Court to oppose releasing documents related to January 6 to the Select Committee.
- 21 Tommy Beer, "FBI: No Evidence Antifa Involved in Capitol Chaos," *Forbes*, January 8, 2021, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/tommybeer/2021/01/08/fbi-no-evidence-antifa-involved-in-capitol-chaos>.
- 22 For more information, see "One Year Since the Jan. 6 Attack on the Capitol," *United States Attorney's Office, District of Columbia*, December 30, 2021, <https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/one-year-jan-6-attack-capitol>.
- 23 Situation Room, "Video Shows Rioters Beating Officer with American Flag," *CNN*, January 10, 2021, <https://www.cnn.com/videos/us/2021/01/10/capitol-riot-officer-beating-trump-go-home-message-sot-vpx.cnn>.

during “The Star-Spangled Banner” to protest the harm to Black and Brown bodies. The supporters’ heinous actions at the us Capitol Building forced a lockdown and led us congressional members to retreat to safe spaces.

The social construct of whiteness, which champions white supremacy and privilege, was fully displayed. White people at the us Capitol complex were fighting for their birthright in a changing nation — a nation that was foreign from the one they stole from Indigenous people and made enslaved Black people build. They entered the us Capitol complex with impunity, believing law enforcement would not punish them for their actions. Defending white America was their cause. These insurrectionists, some of whom did not even vote in the 2020 presidential election, were committed to protecting the sanctity of whiteness to restore white racial order. They believed this goal could not be accomplished without Trump in the White House.

Trump supporters broke out windows, climbed walls, lounged at the desks of us congressional members, stole items from congressional offices, and took selfies of themselves. Some took selfies with white us Capitol law enforcement officers. This diverse mob of Trump supporters rejected the legitimacy of any government, by any means necessary, in which they did not hold all the authoritative power.

In real-time, Black Republican Candace Owens tweeted:

My hope is that all violent agitators are arrested and their names are revealed publicly.

Call it a hunch, but my guess is there are still ANTIFA thugs in the mix.<sup>24</sup>

Shortly after, she posted several pictures of the 2020 Black Lives Matter summer protests, comparing them to the images that were happening on the television screen. The next day, after taking a short break from Twitter, she returned with:

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<sup>24</sup> @RealCandaceO, *Twitter*, January 6, 2021, 2:24PM, <https://twitter.com/RealCandaceO/status/1346915496051019776>.

Just a quick tweet to remind all of you leftists that I have zero shame about having supported [Trump's deleted Twitter account] for the last 4 years and I stand unapologetically with every patriot in this country.

Your smears have and will continue to inspire me.

I will never be silenced.<sup>25</sup>

After the "Save America" rally, Trump's behavior validated his approval of the actions of his supporters. He was the ringleader. He participated in the act of sedition, which is a crime under the US Penal code.<sup>26</sup> During the attempted coup, Trump misdialed Mike Lee (R-UT), who was in the US Senate chambers. Calling from the White House, he meant to dial newly elected Senate Republican, Tommy Tuberville (R-AL), to slow down the Electoral College vote certification. Lee passed the phone to Tuberville. He and Trump talked for nearly ten minutes before Lee asked for his phone back as senators were being evacuated.<sup>27</sup> An hour later, on an expletive-laced phone call with Kevin McCarthy (R-CA), he implored Trump to denounce those who breached the Capitol Building and bring in the National Guard.<sup>28</sup> During this moment, Trump refused to do so, siding with vigilantes. However, before the rally, the mayor of Washington, DC, Muriel Bowser, was willing to bring in the National Guard as long as they "protect[ed] the demonstrators that were executing their constitutionally protected rights."<sup>29</sup> During this

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25 @RealCandaceO, *Twitter*, January 7, 2021, 3:53PM, <https://twitter.com/RealCandaceO/status/1347300268585721857>.

26 See Seditious conspiracy, 18 U.S. Code § 2384, <https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/18/2384>.

27 Julie Gerstein, "In the Midst of the Capitol Siege, Trump Tried Calling Tommy Tuberville But Got the Wrong Senator," *Business Insider*, January 8, 2021, <https://www.businessinsider.com/tommy-tuberville-wrong-number-trump-2021-1>.

28 It was later confirmed that General Charles Flynn, the brother of Trump's former national security advisor Michael Flynn, was in the room for one of the calls to implore governmental officials to call in the National Guard.

29 Jenni Fink, "Trump Told Christopher Miller: Do 'Whatever Is Necessary' to Protect Demonstrators ahead of Capitol Riot," *Newsweek*, May 12, 2021,



time frame, Trump only talked to Tuberville and McCarthy, but not Pence.

Meanwhile, inside the Capitol Building, the Trump supporters were shown on video chanting “Hang Mike Pence, Hang Mike Pence,” as they ravaged through the building, and outside on the grounds stood a wooden scaffold with a rope noose.<sup>30</sup> Some supporters were within feet of Pence, who was hiding in an office near the Senate chamber. One of Trump’s supporters, Larry Brock, a retired us Air Force lieutenant colonel, carried zip-tie handcuffs to “take hostages.” Trump watched the chain of events unfold from the White House, calling Pence a “wimp” and saying, “Mike deserves it.”<sup>31</sup> Instead of being concerned for the vice president, speaker of the house, and senate president pro tempore during the nearly 187 minutes of the attempted coup, Trump was more concerned about facilitating a culture of violence to disrupt the American democratic process.

In a released video, Trump supporters were heard calling Former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) a “bitch,” a “traitor,” and a “C\*%t.” One person on the video is heard yelling, “Tell Pelosi we’re coming for that bitch. Tell f\*\*king Pelosi we’re coming for her.”<sup>32</sup> Additionally, James Clyburn (D-SC) said those who entered the building showed up at his “unmarked” office on the third floor while the congressional office that bears his name was not disturbed. During several interviews, he emphasized that a thorough investigation needed to be conducted to

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<https://www.newsweek.com/trump-told-christopher-miller-do-whatever-necessary-protect-demonstrators-ahead-capitol-riot-1590993>.

30 James Crowley, “Twitter Confirms It Halted ‘Hang Mike Pence’ as a Trending Topic,” *Newsweek*, January 9, 2021, <https://www.newsweek.com/twitter-stops-hang-mike-pence-trending-1560253>.

31 Martin Pengelly, “‘He Thinks Mike Deserves It’: Trump Said Rioters Were Right to Call for Vice-President’s Death,” *The Guardian*, June 28, 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/jun/28/trump-pence-deserved-it-hanged-capitol-attack>.

32 “Capitol Coup: Rioters Were Hunting for Pence, Pelosi ... Threats of Violence, Hanging,” *TMZ*, January 9, 2021, <https://www.tMZ.com/2021/01/09/rioters-wanted-hurt-nancy-pelosi-hang-mike-pence-capitol>.

determine how individuals knew where his “unmarked” office was located.<sup>33</sup>

Shelia Jackson Lee (D-TX), a member of the house of representatives, texted White House journalist, April D. Ryan, during the attack:

They [Trump supporters] are in the capital [sic] and they are attacking us. They have locked the doors. I am not fearful. I guess we are safe enough we are locked in.

Trump’s army still attacking.<sup>34</sup>

The congressional members who swore to “support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic,” never thought that on January 6, 2021, a greater prominence would be placed on the latter.

Reports showed that a total of five human beings died as a direct result of the attempted coup in the US Capitol Building. Four Trump supporters died that day.<sup>35</sup> The following day, Capitol law enforcement officer Brian D. Sicknick reportedly passed away due to injuries sustained while on-duty but it was later revealed that he died of a stroke.<sup>36</sup> Four other law enforcement officers died in the ensuing days and weeks. Two Capitol officers, Jeffrey Smith, a 12-year veteran, and Howard S. Liebengood, a 15-year veteran, died by suicide. In July 2021, two DC metro-

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33 For context, threats against members of the US Congress reached a record high of 9600 in 2021.

34 @AprilDRyan, *Twitter*, January 6, 2021, 1:38PM, <https://twitter.com/AprilDRyan/status/1346904008041103364>.

35 The four Trump supporters were Ashli Babbitt (35 years old; gunshot wound), Kevin Greeson (55 years old; heart attack from tasering himself to the testicles), Rosanne Boyland (34 years old; acute amphetamine intoxication), and Benjamin Philips (50 years old; heart attack).

36 According to court documents, Julian Elie Khater, 32, of Pennsylvania, and George Pierre Tanios, 39, of West Virginia, are responsible for the death of Sicknick. They sprayed him with a toxic chemical called “bear shit.” Court documents can be found at: [http://cdn.cnn.com/cnn/2021/images/03/15/tanios\\_khater\\_complaint.and.affadavit\\_redacted.pdf](http://cdn.cnn.com/cnn/2021/images/03/15/tanios_khater_complaint.and.affadavit_redacted.pdf).

politan law enforcement officers, Gunther Hashida and Kyle DeFreytag, also died by suicide.

One of the first Trump supporters who passed away was Ashli Babbitt of San Diego. She was an Air Force Veteran and QAnon propagandist, who was fatally shot in the chest. From the video footage we saw Lt. Michael Byrd, a Black Capitol law enforcement officer, shoot her with a single fatal shot as a “last resort” after she tried to breach a barricaded section of the Capitol Building hallway and climb through a broken door window frame. Most investigations upheld the decision by Lt. Byrd to shoot Babbitt. She died wearing a “Make America Great Again” flag wrapped around her neck.

In one of her Twitter posts, she wrote, “I will be in DC on the 6th! God bless America.”<sup>37</sup> The day before her death, Babbitt tweeted a cryptic message: “Nothing will stop us...they can try and try and try but the storm is here and it is descending upon DC in less than 24 hours...dark to light.”<sup>38</sup> She reiterated “The Storm” reference, suggesting Trump was working to dismantle an elite network of child abusers who manage world affairs.

QAnon members, who believed Trump was under attack by the deep state, appeared to be the most vocal on social media before January 6.<sup>39</sup> Jacob Anthony Chansley, known as “QAnon Shaman,” one of the other central figures leading supporters through the Capitol Building, was filmed after exiting saying, “We won the day!” In the video posted on Twitter, originally uploaded to Parler, he tells the camera when asked how he exited the Capitol Building, “the cops walked out with me” and again

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37 “Ashli Babbitt: The us Veteran Shot Dead Breaking into the Capitol,” *BBC*, January 8, 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-55581206>.

38 Ibid.

39 According to Trump supporters, the term “deep state” implies “a secretive illuminati of bureaucrats determined to sabotage the Trump agenda.” Charles S. Clark, “Deconstructing the Deep State,” *Government Executive*, <https://www.govexec.com/feature/gov-exec-deconstructing-deep-state>.

declared, “We won the day!”<sup>40</sup> Others shown on camera stated, “We’re storming the Capitol [Building]. It’s a revolution!”<sup>41</sup>

Many Trump supporters who entered the US Capitol Building stole items from congressional members. Items belonging to Nancy Pelosi were a central target. Adam Johnson of Florida, caught on camera stealing Pelosi’s lectern, posted it for sale on eBay. He was eventually arrested on multiple charges and released. He was later sentenced to a mere seventy-five days in jail.

The most noteworthy theft came from Riley June Williams, who stole Pelosi’s laptop and attempted to sell it to the Russians. A former romantic partner (Witness #1 in the affidavit) called and provided a tip to FBI officials. In the affidavit it read that she “intended to send the computer device to a friend in Russia, who then planned to sell the device to SVR, Russia’s foreign intelligence service.”<sup>42</sup> Despite the coordination and planning, the goal to overturn the 2020 presidential election proved unsuccessful; however, it further placed a “Black eye” on the US, making us look like imbeciles in front of the world.

While the insurrection continued, Trump recorded a video message calling for “peace.” His message to supporters was, “I know you’re in pain. [...] We love you, you’re special.”<sup>43</sup> This narcissistic message to his supporters on the Capitol complex grounds was more than he vocalized to the families who lost loved ones due to COVID-19. He doubled down hours later and wrote in a tweet:

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40 @MattBinder, *Twitter*, January 13, 2021, 4:11PM, <https://twitter.com/MattBinder/status/1349479308935442435>.

41 “Yahoo News Reporter Speaks to Woman Who Says She Stormed the Capitol Because ‘It’s a Revolution,’” *Yahoo! News*, January 7, 2021, <https://news.yahoo.com/yahoo-news-reporter-speaks-woman-162518552.html>.

42 More information on *United States v. Williams* can be found at: <https://www.courtlistener.com/docket/29115095/1/1/united-states-v-williams>.

43 Jason Easley, “Trump Shows Why He Must Be Removed in New Video Lying to Coup Mob about a Stolen Election,” *PoliticusUSA*, January 6, 2021, <https://www.politicususa.com/2021/01/06/trump-tells-coup-mob-go-home.html>.

These are the things and events that happen when a sacred landslide election victory is so unceremoniously & viciously stripped away from great patriots who have been badly & unfairly treated for so long. Go home with love & peace. Remember this day forever!<sup>44</sup>

Trump showed his supporters on that day the same love and support he did white nationalists after the 2017 “Unite the Right” rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, when he called them “very fine people.”<sup>45</sup> That rally left one white woman, 32-year-old Heather Heyer, a counter-protester, dead and dozens of others injured.<sup>46</sup>

Tim Scott (R-SC) condemned the Trump vigilantes on January 6 but did not offer any criticism toward Trump:

The violence occurring at the United States Capitol right now is simply unacceptable, and I fully condemn it.<sup>47</sup>

His comments fell on deaf ears and other Black congressional members, past and present, called for Trump to resign. Former Black Republican House member Will Hurd, who had previously condemned Trump’s racist comments, wrote on Twitter:

This isn’t a peaceful protest. This is an attack on our democracy and domestic terrorism to try to stop certifying elec-

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44 Rachel Lerman, “Trump Hadn’t Gone This Long Without Tweeting Since 2019,” *The Washington Post*, January 7, 2021, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2021/01/07/trump-twitter-silence>.

45 Jordyn Phelps, “Trump Defends 2017 ‘Very Fine People’ Comments, Calls Robert E. Lee ‘a Great General’” *ABC News*, April 26, 2019, <https://abc-news.go.com/Politics/trump-defends-2017-fine-people-comments-calls-robert/story?id=62653478>.

46 James Alex Fields, the man who drove his car into a crowd of counter-protesters, was sentenced to life in prison in June 2019.

47 @SenatorTimScott, *Twitter*, January 6, 2021, 2:28PM, <https://twitter.com/SenatorTimScott/status/134691660544415489>.

tions. This should be treated as a coup led by a president that will not be peacefully removed from power.<sup>48</sup>

Soon after, major social media outlets like Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook locked Trump's account, for the next 12 and 24 hours. Although he was temporarily blocked from using these accounts, a trend on Twitter indicated that US citizens were still concerned about his access to the nuclear codes. Former Twitter president Jack Dorsey and Facebook and Instagram owner Mark Zuckerberg later suspended Trump permanently. Twitter released a statement:

After [a] close review of recent Tweets from the @realDonaldTrump account and the context around them we have permanently suspended the account due to the risk of further incitement of violence.<sup>49</sup>

Dorsey took a stronger action to silence Trump's racial rhetoric than US congressional Republicans had during his four-year term. For years, even before his presidency, Trump had used Twitter as a tool to lie and cyberbully.<sup>50</sup> Dorsey and Twitter, too, played a significant role in the attempted coup. When a US congressional member later asked whether his social media platform bore some responsibility, he answered, "Yes."<sup>51</sup>

In October 2021, Facebook whistleblower Frances Haugen confirmed what we all knew, which was that the social media

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48 @WillHill, *Twitter*, January 6, 2021, 2:10PM, <https://twitter.com/HurdOnTheHill/status/1346912043031429122>.

49 Brian Fung, "Twitter Bans President Trump Permanently," *CNN*, January 9, 2021, <https://www.cnn.com/2021/01/08/tech/trump-twitter-ban/index.html>.

50 During the 2016 presidential campaign, America's First Lady in waiting, Melania Trump, pledged to address the vital issue of cyberbullying despite the irony related to her husband's tweets.

51 David McCabe and Cecilia Kang, "Lawmakers Grill Tech C.E.O.s on Capitol Riot, Getting Few Direct Answers," *The New York Times*, March 25, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/25/technology/facebook-twitter-google-capitol-riots-hearing.html>.

platform had refused for years to fix its algorithms to address the misinformation spewed. Haugen confirmed that Facebook also contributed to the January 6 attempted coup by not stopping the “Stop the Steal” movement spread on the platform by Trump supporters.<sup>52</sup>

On the night of January 6 and the following day, US congressional members reconvened to certify Biden’s Electoral College victory. At 3:40 a.m. on January 7, Pence finally announced that Biden had won the presidency.<sup>53</sup> During the same time, discussions had begun with members of Congress, including Republicans, to call for Pence to invoke the Twenty-Fifth Amendment and have Trump immediately removed from the Oval Office. Most Democrats called for impeachment. With only two weeks left in his presidential term, this spoke volumes about the carnage left on the trail of the Trump presidency.

In a scripted video on January 7, Trump condemned the attempted coup and told his supporters he would no longer be the president in thirteen days. He acknowledged, “A new administration will be inaugurated on January 20th [...]. This moment calls for healing and reconciliation.”<sup>54</sup> This pseudo-concession was a sad effort to salvage whatever was left of his presidency. Trump also indicated he would not attend the 2021 presidential inauguration, making him only the fourth outgoing president in history to not do so.

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52 On February 24, 2016, Trump and Roger Stone first created the “Stop the Steal” website and devised the movement as a safety net in the presidential primary phase of his campaign to challenge Ted Cruz for the Republican nomination.

53 Only six Republican senators objected. Led by Josh Hawley and Ted Cruz, they called for a congressional “electoral commission” to investigate the presidential vote in key states such as Arizona. Prior to the attempted coup, twelve senators vowed to object. There were 121 House Republicans who supported the objection to Arizona’s Electoral College results. House Republicans objected in other states, but no Senate Republicans objected in any other states. The same narrative of a rigged election was present in 2016, and no Republican objected then.

54 Melissa Quinn et al., “Trump Acknowledges Election Defeat in Video on Capitol Violence,” *CBS News*, January 8, 2021, <https://www.cbsnews.com/live-updates/trump-acknowledges-election-defeat-capitol-violence>.

On January 11, 2021, the us House of Representatives released its resolution to impeach Trump, charging him with “incitement of insurrection.”<sup>55</sup> While Democrats and Republicans were split over the course of action for the impeachment, the consensus between the two parties was that they did not want to allow Trump the opportunity to run again for presidential office in 2024.<sup>56</sup> McCarthy, also a friend of Biden, argued that a second impeachment would “divide our country more” and that we needed to be “united” to “deliver the peace, strength, and prosperity our country needs.”<sup>57</sup> He expressed fear for Democrats and Republicans who were on the brink of breaking ranks from the Republican Party.

Clyburn recommended waiting until 100 days after Biden took office for impeachment. In his opinion, this move would give the Biden administration time to enact substantive legislation before a time-consuming impeachment trial.<sup>58</sup> Moreover, the us had reached over 400,000 coronavirus deaths before the inauguration, and vaccine distribution ranked as the highest priority. He later abridged his timeline and made these remarks during the House impeachment session: “This threat [Trump] must be extinguished immediately. The president must be

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55 More information on the House of Representatives’ article of impeachment against Donald Trump can be found at “Read: The House of Representatives’ Article of Impeachment against Donald Trump,” CNN, January 12, 2021, <https://www.cnn.com/2021/01/11/politics/house-articles-of-impeachment/index.html>.

56 It is important to note that a vote on disqualification from the 2024 presidential election would only be held after two-thirds of senators vote to remove Trump. The conviction-and-removal vote that requires two-thirds of senators must occur first.

57 Ursula Perano, “McCarthy Says Second Trump Impeachment Would ‘Divide Our Country More,’” *Axios*, January 8, 2021, <https://www.axios.com/kevin-mccarthy-impeachment-trump-pelosi-house-6326c4cf-9bc9-4439-ad34-d1fo4c45331b.html>.

58 Devan Cole et al., “Democrats Promise Quick Move to Impeachment If 25th Amendment Push Fails,” CNN, January 11, 2021, <https://www.cnn.com/2021/01/10/politics/james-clyburn-impeachment-senate-trial-biden-cnntv/index.html>.



impeached and convicted, and he must be prevented from ever attempting to seize power again.”<sup>59</sup>

Once the House impeachment proceedings began, several Republicans verbally split from the party and indicated they would vote in favor of impeachment. McCarthy informed these Republicans to be wary because splitting from Trump could place their lives in danger. Members of the party and the Republican electorate base called for these House members to resign. Cheney, before being ousted from the Republican Party, told reporters:

I’m not going anywhere. [...] This is a vote of conscience. It’s one where there are different views in our conference. But our nation is facing an unprecedented, since the civil war, constitutional crisis.<sup>60</sup>

She declared her position due to Trump’s betrayal and failure to take responsibility for inciting the insurrection. Cheney’s comments after January 6, her decision to vote to impeach Trump, and participation on the House Select Committee led to her losing Wyoming’s lone seat in the US House ahead of the 2022 midterm elections. Across the partisan aisle, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY), pleaded for Republicans who continued to support Trump to “Resign. If your lust for power exceeds your dedication to democracy, there is simply no place for you in Congress.”<sup>61</sup>

While waiting for the US Senate to reconvene to start impeachment proceedings, new details surfaced about the

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59 Mark Moore, “Rep. Clyburn Says Trump Should Be Impeached, Never Hold Power Again,” *New York Post*, January 13, 2021, <https://nypost.com/2021/01/13/rep-jim-clyburn-says-donald-trump-should-be-impeached>.

60 Meg Wagner et al., “House Impeaches Trump for Role in Deadly Capitol Riot,” *CNN*, January 14, 2021, <https://www.cnn.com/politics/live-news/house-trump-impeachment-vote-01-13-21>.

61 @AOC, *Twitter*, January 12, 2021, 7:54PM, <https://twitter.com/AOC/status/1349172937920827394>.

January 6 attempted coup. Information emerged that seated members of the 117th Congress had aided Trump supporters. Mikie Sherrill (D-NJ) claimed that other House members had given reconnaissance tours of the US Capitol Building the day before the attempted coup. Early indications proved that House Reps. Paul Gosar (R-AZ), Andy Biggs (R-AZ), and Mo Brooks (R-AL) worked with Trump supporters. In a now-deleted video, a leader of the “Stop the Steal” movement, Ali Alexander, who is a right-wing activist and identifies as Black and Arab, said that certain US Congressional members were central to the mission and told him to apply “maximum pressure.”<sup>62</sup> Gosar, Biggs, and Brooks denied these claims, yet all three sought a pardon from Trump.<sup>63</sup> Brooks feared that so-called “Socialist Democrats” would wrongfully prosecute members of the Republican Party.<sup>64</sup>

Other US Congressional members strategic in assisting Trump supporters on January 6 were freshmen House members Lauren Boebert (R-CO) and Marjorie Taylor Greene (R-GA). Both Boebert and Greene are Trump loyalists and QAnon supporters. Each has far-right extremist views. Boebert took a law-and-order approach on the campaign trail despite being arrested four times from 2010 to 2017. A GED graduate before taking legislative office, she defeated a five-term Republican incumbent, Scott Tipton. Boebert gave a large group a tour of the Capitol before January 6. A photo later surfaced of her with

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62 Graig Graziosi, “Organiser of Capitol Riot Ali Alexander Claims He Had Help from Three Republican Congressmen,” *The Independent*, January 13, 2021, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/us-election-2020/ali-alexander-capitol-riot-republican-congressmen-b1786793.html>.

63 According to a complaint filed by Noelle Dunphy, a former aide to Trump’s former attorney Rudolph Giuliani, Trump and Giuliani were accused of selling pardons for \$2 million. Zoë Richards, “Giuliani Accused of Offering to Sell Trump Pardons For \$2 Million Each in New LawsUIT,” *NBC News*, May 15, 2023, <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/politics-news/giuliani-accused-offering-sell-trump-pardons-2-million-new-lawsuit-rcna84569>.

64 Brooks sought preemptive pardons for 147 members of Congress who voted against the certification of the Electoral College results in Arizona and Pennsylvania. Biden won both states.

three of the Capitol mobsters that dated back to December 2019. Boebert denied any participation in the attempted coup, yet prior to Trump supporters storming the Capitol Building, she tweeted, “Today is 1776,” which is a reference to the American Revolution,<sup>65</sup> and she shared Pelosi’s location in real-time.

In comparison, Greene was found to have posted her far-right extremist views about Democratic politicians on Facebook in 2018 and 2019.<sup>66</sup> In two explosive posts, she invoked Ku Klux Klan sentiments that “the stage is being set” to hang both Barack H. Obama and Hillary R. Clinton.<sup>67</sup> Greene also liked a post about assassinating Pelosi with a “bullet to the head.”<sup>68</sup> In one video released by *Mother Jones* on October 27, 2020, she is shown on camera with pro-gun activist, Chris Dorr, using violent rhetoric. She tells Dorr that defending freedom for Trump and this country could require “the price of blood.”<sup>69</sup> After this story surfaced, Democrats asked McCarthy to have her removed from congressional committees. When he refused, the US House passed a bill for her removal.

The new information about reconnaissance efforts infuriated the Black and Latinx congressional members who were put at risk during the attempted coup. Members of “The Squad” like Ayanna S. Pressley (D-MA), Jamaal Bowman (D-NY), and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY) confronted members whom they

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65 @laurenboebert, *Twitter*, January 6, 2021, 7:30AM, <https://twitter.com/laurenboebert/status/1346811381878845442>.

66 Em Steck and Andrew Kaczynski, “Marjorie Taylor Greene Indicated Support for Executing Prominent Democrats in 2018 and 2019 before Running for Congress,” *CNN*, January 26, 2021, <https://www.cnn.com/2021/01/26/politics/marjorie-taylor-greene-democrats-violence/index.html>.

67 In 1930, KKK members were an influential part of the US Congress. At least 75 members of Congress were a part of this US hate organization.

68 Sonam Sheth, “Georgia Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene Expressed Support on Social Media for Assassinating Top Democrats,” *Yahoo! News*, January 26, 2021, <https://news.yahoo.com/georgia-rep-marjorie-taylor-greene-214532989.html>.

69 Mark Follman, “In a Pre-Election Video, Marjorie Taylor Greene Endorsed Political Violence,” *Mother Jones*, January 29, 2021, <https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2021/01/marjorie-taylor-greene-endorsed-political-violence-video-guns-elections-congress>.

believed were key instigators. Each had their safety panic buttons torn out from their legislative quarters. In an hourlong live stream on Instagram, Ocasio-Cortez expressed:

There were QAnon and white supremacist sympathizers and, frankly, white supremacist members of Congress in that extraction point who I know, and who I had felt would disclose my location, who would create opportunities to allow me to be hurt, kidnapped, etc.<sup>70</sup>

She amplified this thought weeks later, saying to Ted Cruz (R-TX), a senator who also incited Trump supporters by challenging the election results, “you almost had me murdered 3 weeks ago.”<sup>71</sup>

The scope and mission of the political violence that Trump supporters were ready to deploy proved much broader than initially reported. They were set to target anyone in the US Congress whom Trump had declared a “traitor.” Cori Bush (D-MO), a member of the house of representatives, wrote on Twitter:

This has moved past the insurrection attempt. We’ve learned that GOP members gave tours to insurrectionists, coordinated with their leaders, and are trying to carry guns on the House floor.

They’re putting barriers around the Capitol, but the threat is on the inside right now.<sup>72</sup>

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70 Aishvarya Kavi, “Lawmakers Recount Feeling Unsafe Because of Colleagues’ Behavior during Capitol Siege,” *The New York Times*, January 13, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/13/us/lawmakers-capitol-aoc-boebert.html>.

71 @AOC, *Twitter*, January 28, 2021, 11:46AM, <https://twitter.com/AOC/status/1354848253729234944>.

72 @CoriBush, *Twitter*, January 13, 2021, 12:40PM, <https://twitter.com/Cori-Bush/status/1349425988933996547>.

Bush later expressed that the government should “[e]xpel the Republican members of Congress who incited the white supremacist attempted coup.”<sup>73</sup>

Former Acting US Attorney Michael Sherwin confirmed the totality of the day could have been worse if two major plots had been accomplished. First, Lonnie Leroy Coffman, 70 years of age from Falkville, Alabama, had in his truck weapons and eleven Molotov Cocktails with a “napalm effect” designed to act like “miniature hand grenades.”<sup>74</sup> Coffman, not a member of an extremist group, lived off the grid in Alabama. The FBI calls this type of white extremist their worst nightmare. The other was an unknown person responsible for placing two pipe bombs at the Democratic National Committee and the Republican National Committee headquarters the night before.

In the end, there was no resignation from Trump, no invoking of the Twenty-Fifth Amendment, and again, no impeachment conviction from the US Senate. For the second time during his first presidency, Trump was acquitted of impeachment charges despite his act of sedition to influence the attempted coup. Before he left the Oval Office in 2021, an *ABC News/Ipsos* poll showed that 56% of US citizens wanted Trump removed.<sup>75</sup>

Just weeks earlier, Trump had been recognized in a Gallup poll as the most admired man in America. He had overtaken the popularity crown from Obama.<sup>76</sup> Obama had held this crown

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73 @CoriBush, *Twitter*, January 8, 2021, 9:30AM, <https://twitter.com/Cori-Bush/status/1347566317168164865>.

74 For more information, see “Alabama Man Charged with Possession of Eleven Molotov Cocktails Found near Protest at U.S. Capitol,” *United States Attorney’s Office*, District of Columbia, January 8, 2021, <https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/pr/alabama-man-charged-possession-eleven-molotov-cocktails-found-near-protest-us-capitol>.

75 More information on the 2021 *ABC News/Ipsos* poll can be found at: [https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/ct/news/documents/2021-01/topline\\_abc\\_ipsos\\_poll\\_january\\_10\\_2021\\_final.pdf](https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/ct/news/documents/2021-01/topline_abc_ipsos_poll_january_10_2021_final.pdf).

76 Zack Budryk, “Trump Ends Obama’s 12-year Run as Most Admired Man: Gallup,” *The Hill*, December 29, 2020, <https://thehill.com/homenews/administration/531906-trump-ends-obamas-12-year-run-as-most-admired-man-gallup>.

for twelve years, which was an amazing feat considering that sitting presidents typically garner this label. Obama finished second and Biden third. The attempted coup changed the course of history and showed the difference between a man who had been elected to two presidential terms and the other who had been impeached twice. Trump ended his first presidency with an approval rating of 33%, which serves as the worst one-term rating in history.<sup>77</sup>

## Conclusion and Implications

The winter 2021 insurrection and the summer 2020 Black Lives Matter protests are inextricably connected. However, the entire scene on January 6 differed greatly from the summer protests after the death of George Floyd, when police lined the steps of the US Capitol Building ready to deploy force against Black bodies. What if Black people in America had done what these Trump supporters did? We witnessed verbal assaults toward Black protestors from white counter-protestors in the summer of 2020, followed by law enforcement officers deploying tear gas, arresting, and causing bodily harm to Black people. Conservative media outlets framed the protests to combat anti-Blackness and police brutality as “riots” and labeled the protestors as “thugs.” But, imagine the bloodshed that would have occurred if Black protestors breached the US Capitol Building, injured 140 law enforcement officers, and caused more than \$30 million in damages?

Thousands of people were arrested following the Black Lives Matter protests, but there were only thirteen initial arrests at the Capitol Building in 2021. More than fifty-two were arrested later that night, with forty-seven of those violating a 6 p.m. curfew set by Bowser. The public demonstration of arrests came days later from the FBI because many white US Capitol law enforcement

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77 Harry Enten, “Trump Finishes with Worst First Term Approval Rating Ever,” CNN, January 18, 2021, <https://www.cnn.com/2021/01/16/politics/trump-approval-analysis/index.html>.

officers failed to do their jobs. Some of them were shown on video capitulating to the needs and wants of the mob of Trump supporters. Six Capitol law enforcement officers were suspended, and 29 were placed under investigation following the events, for being complicit with white supremacy. Their behaviors and actions on January 6 gave more credence to the phrase “Defund the Police.” Luckily, the good law enforcement officers outweighed the bad, but the officers who wanted to “protect and serve” were outnumbered.

Black US Capitol law enforcement officers are on record alleging that the department’s upper management abandoned them and did not offer additional support, even after being signaled by the FBI ahead of the planned attack.<sup>78</sup> Superior officers rejected help from the FBI and US National Guard ahead of the “Save America” rally. The former Capitol Police Chief, Steven Sund, resigned due to scrutiny after Pelosi asked him to step down. In conflicting reports, Sund told reporters he asked for National Guard help six separate times but was denied.<sup>79</sup> After his resignation, officials assigned Acting Capitol Police Chief Yogananda Pittman to take his role.

Chief Pittman was the first woman and Black person to hold the position. In an interview, she told reporters that Capitol law enforcement officers were told of a “strong potential for violence” but failed to take preemptive action.<sup>80</sup> Sund, again later, presented a conflicting written testimony to US congressional members. While indicating that he had intelligence, Sund was

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78 Emmanuel Felton, “Black Police Officers Describe the Racist Attacks They Faced as They Protected the Capitol,” *BuzzFeedNews*, January 9, 2021, <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/emmanuelfelton/black-capitol-police-racism-mob>.

79 Jaelyn Diaz, “Ex-Capitol Police Chief Says Requests for National Guard Denied 6 Times in Riots,” *NPR*, January 11, 2021, <https://www.npr.org/2021/01/11/955548910/ex-capitol-police-chief-rebuffs-claims-national-guard-was-never-called-during-ri>.

80 Annie Grayer, “Democrats Stunned by Briefing on Capitol’s Security before Insurrection: ‘It Was Only by Pure Dumb Luck’ More Weren’t Killed,” *CNN*, January 26, 2021, <https://us.cnn.com/2021/01/26/politics/democrats-stunned-by-capitol-briefing-insurrection/index.html>.

allegedly not informed that it would be a violent, coordinated attack. He wrote in his testimony, “The breach of the United States Capitol was not the result of poor planning or failure to contain a demonstration gone wrong.”<sup>81</sup>

One of the few heroes from January 6 was Black Capitol law enforcement officer Eugene Goodman, who, when confronted by a group of Trump supporters by himself, lured them to follow him away from the Senate chamber. On video, Trump supporters were heard telling Goodman, “We’re gonna beat him up! We’re gonna beat him up!” He described the events in the Capitol Building as “something out of medieval times, where you see one big force fighting another force.”<sup>82</sup> One Trump supporter, Kevin Seefried of Delaware, attempted to wound Goodman with his Confederate flag. In the released video, Goodman is shown redirecting Mitt Romney (R-UT) to safety, one of the few Republican legislators who had sided with Democrats in condemning the presidency of Trump.

On Biden’s Inauguration Day, Goodman served as acting deputy senate sergeant-at-arms. He escorted Vice President Kamala Harris to the platform outside of the US Capitol complex. The US Congress introduced a bill to award Goodman and others with the Congressional Gold Medal. The first version of the bipartisan bill passed overwhelmingly; however, a dozen Republicans voted against this measure to honor the officers, further affirming that Blue Lives Matter only when defending *whiteness*. Greene and her colleagues opposed the bill due to its language of calling January 6 an “insurrection.” The revised bill had twenty-one House Republicans (406-21) who did not support it, but it was ultimately passed in the US Congress and signed by Biden. From his presidential Twitter account, Biden wrote:

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81 Zachary Cohen, Whitney Wild, and Marshall Cohen, “Capitol Security Officials Point Fingers over Disastrous January 6 Riot Response,” *CNN*, February 23, 2021, <https://www.cnn.com/2021/02/23/politics/us-capitol-attack-senate-hearing/index.html>.

82 Stephanie Lai, “Officer Eugene Goodman Recounts How He Held Off Mob on Jan. 6,” *The New York Times*, June 13, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/13/us/eugene-goodman-capitol-riot.html>.



Today, I signed a bill to award the Congressional Gold Medal to law enforcement officials who defended our democracy on January 6th. To all of them: Thank you for protecting the Capitol, our Constitution, and for saving the lives of public servants.<sup>83</sup>

Out of the darkness, the attempted coup did shine a bright light on the growing body of current and former white enforcement officers who have openly avowed their commitment to far-right extremist groups. The FBI had warned previously that white extremist groups have “active links” to law enforcement officials.<sup>84</sup> Take, for example, in the summer of 2020, an Orange County deputy in California who was spotted wearing a “Three Percenters” patch while policing a Black Lives Matter protest after the death of George Floyd. The Three Percenters are a far-right paramilitary group founded in 2008 on the brink of the Obama presidency. Some of its members carry a mock credit card that bears on the front, “WHITE PRIVILEGE CARD: TRUMPS EVERYTHING,” which authorizes membership at “BIRTH” and is good through “DEATH.” The cardholder’s name is “SCOTT FREE.”<sup>85</sup>

The Orange County sheriff, Don Barnes, denounced his deputy’s actions. He stated:

This deputy’s decision to wear these patches, and the implication of his association with an extremist group, is unacceptable and deeply concerning to me.<sup>86</sup>

83 @POTUS, *Twitter*, August 5, 2021, 6:27PM, <https://twitter.com/potus/status/1423425502241509384>.

84 Federal Bureau of Investigation, *Counterterrorism Policy Directive and Policy Guide*, April 1, 2015, <https://assets.documentcloud.org/documents/3423189/CT-Excerpt.pdf>.

85 “‘White Privilege Card’ Found in Raid of Men Charged with Plot to Bomb Democrats,” *MSNBC*, July 16, 2021, <https://www.msnbc.com/the-last-word/watch/-white-privilege-card-found-in-raid-of-men-charged-with-plot-to-bomb-democrats-116920389908>.

86 Richard Winton, “O.C. Deputy under Investigation after Wearing Extremist Paramilitary Patch at George Floyd Protest,” *Los Angeles Times*, June

After an internal investigation, the deputy was fired, but there was no uniform federal investigation by the FBI and subsequent actions to terminate all law enforcement officers with anti-government and far-right extremist ties. Identifying “active links” is not enough. The irony is that 2600 miles across the country from Orange County, Trump supporters wearing the same patch were seen in the US Capitol Building on January 6. We must assume that white men and white women with such ties are applying for law enforcement jobs in the US each and every day.

In its totality, the collective rally cry after January 6 is hard to decipher when comparing the events of the summer 2020 Black Lives Matter protests to the winter 2021 insurrection. It was delusional to see members of the US Congress act surprised at the moment. They were alerted that this could potentially happen. Therefore, Democrats, who have used January 6 to their political advantage, are not absolved. How could Democrats have left the US Capitol Building undefended? Pelosi, who delegated to the sergeants-at-arms and Capitol law enforcement, was partly at fault, and Lindsey Graham (R-SC), one of Trump’s allies in the US Senate, later called her on it.<sup>87</sup> To compare, during the summer 2020 Black Lives Matter protests at the US Capitol complex, Pelosi and McConnell, who was Senate Majority Leader at the time, warned both the sergeants-at-arms and US Capitol law enforcement to be on alert, and both forces lined the steps of the building. It was well-defended.

Democratic congressional members wanted to show the American public how motivated Trump supporters would be to defend him. They were privy to the flyers that read, “Be there, will be wild.”<sup>88</sup> Moreover, Democrats encouraged resistance and riots during the summer 2020 Black Lives Matter protests.

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3, 2020, <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-06-03/orange-county-deputy-three-percenters-patch-george-floyd-protest>.

87 Christina Zhao, “Pathetic’: Pelosi Aide Slams Graham for Blaming Speaker for Capitol Security Lapse,” *Newsweek*, January 17, 2021, <https://www.newsweek.com/pathetic-pelosi-aide-slams-graham-blaming-speaker-capitol-security-lapse-1562261>.

88 Biesecker et al., “Records Show Fervent Trump Fans.”

They were equally complicit in the narratives surrounding the protests. Conversely, on January 6, Democrats used a mob that they knew was coming to sell the narratives of “What if Black people had done...” and “Look at the lengths Trump supporters will go...” to enthrall their Black electoral base. And it worked. All the blame cannot be placed on the alleged warnings to us Capitol law enforcement superiors. Democratic congressional members must share the blame. The problem is, they had no idea that Trump supporters would breach the us Capitol Building, it would turn into an attempted coup, and their lives would be in danger. They allowed the Manchurian Candidate, who was Trump, to cajole and activate his supporters at the us Capitol complex but did not believe those supporters would attempt to purge the congressional members inside.

It was disappointing to see Black and white Republicans afterward flock to social media to argue that not everyone who entered the us Capitol Building was a white supremacist with bad intentions. Most of them were. Black Capitol law enforcement officer, Harry Dunn, who encountered Trump supporters that day, said on ABC’s *Soul of a Nation*, that after they learned he voted for Biden through verbal exchanges on the Capitol grounds, they called him a “Nigger.” According to Dunn, “Everybody wants to say that it was about politics and everything. But it was a large number of people in that crowd that were racist.”<sup>89</sup> Even if everyone who entered the us Capitol Building was not a white supremacist, they heard the calls to “find” and “hang” and remained inside instead of exiting immediately. All of the Trump supporters present that day may not have been active Klan members with white hoods on, but their assemblage resembled an American white supremacist hate group.

The racial hypocrisy in the handling of the two events showed that any progress made toward addressing systemic discrimination and racism in the summer of 2020 could not move forward

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<sup>89</sup> Luke Broadwater, “Battling the Mob, a Black Officer Came Face to Face with Racism,” *The New York Times*, February 25, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/25/us/politics/capitol-riot-harry-dunn.html>.

due to the long-standing permanence of white supremacy. We know that white supremacy is built on the foundation of hypocrisy. We were again left to compare white rage to the quest for Black liberation.

Joy Reid, on her show, *TheReidOut*, delivered a powerful message that night:

White Americans aren't afraid of the cops. White Americans are never afraid of the cops, even when they're committing an insurrection. Even when they're engaged in attempting to occupy our Capitol to steal the votes of people who look like me, because, in their minds, they own this country. They own that Capitol. They own the cops. The cops work for them, and people like me have no damn right to try to elect a president. Because we don't get to pick the president, they get to pick the president.

They own the president. They own the White House. They own this country. And so when you think you own it, you own the place, you ain't afraid of the police. The police are you, and the police reflect back to that. "We're with you. You're good. We're not gonna hurt you, because you're not them."<sup>90</sup>

Former First Lady Michelle Obama, who once said, "When they go low, we go high" while defending Hillary R. Clinton at the 2016 Democratic National Convention,<sup>91</sup> took to Twitter to also identify the glaring difference in how Capitol law enforcement officers handled Black lives in 2020 versus white lives in 2021. In a statement on Twitter, she pointed out that "once authori-

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90 Emma Nolan, "Joy Reid Says BLM Protesters Would Be 'Shackled, Arrested or Dead' in Viral Speech on Race," *Newsweek*, January 7, 2021, <https://www.newsweek.com/joy-reid-blm-protesters-shackled-arrested-dead-viral-speech-race-1559759>.

91 Jade Scipioni, "Michelle Obama: Why Going 'High' When Faced with a Challenge Is So Important to Her," *CNBC*, February 12, 2020, <https://www.cnbc.com/2020/02/12/michelle-obama-on-famous-catchphrase-when-they-go-low-we-go-high.html>.

ties finally gained control of the situation, these rioters and gang members were led out of the building not in handcuffs, but free to carry on with their days.”<sup>92</sup> Obama blamed Trump and the media by writing:

The day was a fulfillment of the wishes of an infantile and unpatriotic president who can't handle the truth of his own failures. And the wreckage lays at the feet of a party and media apparatus that gleefully cheered him on, knowing full well the possibility of consequences like these.

Black academics and commentators had been predicting for years that this day would come. In 2019, Black political commentator Keith Boykin was ridiculed on *CNN News* by conservative hosts S.E. Cupp and Rich Lowry when he argued that Trump “encourages civil war.” One of the hosts, Lowry, said that Trump only had a habit of deploying bad tweets and retweets; however, Boykin pushed back and said we “have to stop holding [Trump] to a lower standard.”<sup>93</sup> Both commentators laughed and dismissed Boykin’s claim under the gaze of ignorant white privilege.

In my book, *Power to the People: The Time is Now*, which preceded the attempted coup, I asked the question: “If Trump, their adopted leader, is not re-elected in 2020, will he then signal for white nationalists to start a race war in the USA on his behalf, which would potentially harm the human survival and well-being of all racial and ethnic minorities?” To end the passage, I wrote, “To be continued....”<sup>94</sup> The ending to the first act of Trump’s mission to start a civil war took place on January 6, 2021, when he summoned his supporters to spark political violence and attempt to “take back America” from the people who

92 @MichelleObama, *Twitter*, January 7, 2021, 2:49PM, <https://twitter.com/MichelleObama/status/1347284244763127810/photo/1>.

93 @keithboykin, *Twitter*, January 6, 2021, 2:05PM, <https://twitter.com/keith-boykin/status/1346910688971689986>.

94 William T. Hoston, *Power to the People: The Time Is Now, Vol. III* (Atlanta: ZL Publishing House, 2020), 43–44.

worked hardest to elect Biden to presidential office: *Black people in America*.

On January 6, the global world saw Trump for what he was—an ungovernable monster in the Oval Office. He never wanted to be the president of the United States. Trump merely wanted to win the popularity contest between his old friends Hillary R. Clinton, and her husband William J. Clinton, a former president. Trump himself infamously admitted that being the us president “is more work than my previous life. I thought it would be easier.”<sup>95</sup> Gaining the presidency was a narcissistic way for him to become more famous and revitalize his brand, and he did it at the expense of us citizens. Trump never governed. He simply loved the popularity and attention that came with the presidential position. He was a conservative media darling who helped them “sell [their] papers and [their] books and [their] tv.”<sup>96</sup> Rallies were held immediately after his 2016 presidential victory to continue to boost his ego. While holding these events, he spewed lies to his white electoral base and paid minority actors, who were Black, Latinx, and Asian, to attend.<sup>97</sup>

After losing the 2020 election to Biden, Trump knew that no business venture or television show would fill his narcissistic disposition after vacating the White House. He used the Oval Office as a bully pulpit. We ensure that future generations know that Trump only loved that the job provided fame, white supremacist insulation, and authoritative powers.

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95 Cristiano Lima, “Trump: I Thought Presidency Would Be ‘Easier’ Than ‘Previous Life,’” *Politico*, April 28, 2017, <http://www.politico.com/story/2017/04/28/trump-presidency-easier-previous-life-237728>.

96 NBC News, “Michelle Wolf’s White House Correspondents’ Dinner Speech (Full) | NBC News,” *YouTube*, April 30, 2018, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CeEiq\\_C6j3c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CeEiq_C6j3c).

97 Before Trump’s first scheduled 2020 presidential campaign rally on June 20, 2020, after the pandemic had begun, an ad ran on the Tulsa Craigslist website looking for “minority” actors to pretend to be Trump supporters. Initially planned for Juneteenth (June 19), the rally was rescheduled due to the outcry of the Black community. An archival copy of the ad can be found at <https://web.archive.org/web/20200615013704/https://tulsa.craigslist.org/tlg/d/tulsa-actors-needed-june-20/7141828474.html>.

Trump once reposted on social media an edited image of his likeness on Mount Rushmore next to the faces of Presidents George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Theodore Roosevelt, and Abraham Lincoln.<sup>98</sup> Such a modification to add a fifth image should only be made for the first Black president. Trump wanted to be a God to his white electoral base. No example serves better than in 2019. While in Alabama visiting tornado survivors, he signed Bibles with his own signature to “raise [the] spirits” of his supporters.<sup>99</sup>

For him, winning at all costs was the end game, and he paid no attention to the adverse effects of the process or whose life he destroyed. From the Russian interference to win the 2016 presidential election, to asking Georgia’s Republican secretary of state Brad Raffensperger to “find” votes, he never stopped cheating to win.

In February 2014, he told *Fox and Friends* that “total hell” would make America “great” again. Trump, who was on the network bashing Obama and positioning himself for a presidential run, also said that the solution to America’s problem was chaos and civil unrest. He stated in the interview:

You know what solves it? When the economy crashes, when the economy goes to total hell and everything is a disaster.

Then you’ll have, you know, you’ll have riots to go back to where we used to be when we were great.<sup>100</sup>

January 6, 2021 was planned — to cause chaos and civil unrest amongst us citizens — and fulfilled a prophecy for Trump and

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98 The image was originally posted by a follower named “Patriotic American Alpha Sauce.”

99 Steve Warren, “Was It Wrong for Trump to Sign Bibles? Here’s What He Once Told CBN News About the Bible,” *Christian Broadcasting Network*, March 11, 2019, <https://www1.cbn.com/cbnnews/us/2019/march/was-it-wrong-for-trump-to-sign-bibles-heres-what-he-once-told-news-about-the-bible>.

100 “Donald Trump’s 2014 Political Predictions,” *Fox News*, February 3, 2017, <https://video.foxnews.com/v/3179604851001#sp=show-clips>.

his Republican allies. Black people should have expected white Republicans to remain loyal to whiteness, their political party, and their electoral base. White Republican politicians like Ron Johnson (R-WI) said he “never really felt threatened” and “wasn’t concerned” during the attempted coup, but if “those were tens of thousands of Black Lives Matter and Antifa protesters, [he] might have been a little concerned.”<sup>101</sup> A 2021 *Reuters/Ipsos* poll found that half of Republicans believed the attempted coup was “largely a non-violent protest” infiltrated by “left-wing activists [...] trying to make Trump look bad.”<sup>102</sup> That could not be further from the truth, but the sentiment of it was a strategy used by Trump’s senior advisor, Jason Miller, who encouraged the administration to suggest two theories to the public. One was that “Bad apples, likely ANTIFA or other crazed leftists, infiltrated today’s peaceful protest over the fraudulent vote count.” The other was, “The fake news media who encouraged this summer’s violent and radical riots are now trying to blame peaceful and innocent MAGA supporters for violent actions. This isn’t who we are!”<sup>103</sup>

On the contrary, this is precisely who Trump supporters are. The series of events undertaken on January 6 was to maintain the strength and collective power of *whiteness*. Despite continuing to be the majority of the US population, white people have succumbed to the belief of the “white replacement theory,” which first began circulating the Emancipation Proclamation, and continued to desegregation, and then to Black people hav-

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101 Ben Leonard, “Ron Johnson Says He Didn’t Feel Threatened Jan. 6. If BLM or Antifa Stormed Capitol, He ‘Might Have,’” *Politico*, March 13, 2021, <https://www.politico.com/news/2021/03/13/ron-johnson-black-lives-matter-antifa-capitol-riot-475727>.

102 More information on the 2021 *Reuters/Ipsos: Trump’s Coattails* poll can be found at: <https://fingfx.thomsonreuters.com/gfx/mkt/oakvelbwlp/Topline%20Reuters%20Ipsos%20Trump%20Coattails%20Poll%20-%20April%2005%202021.pdf>.

103 “Read: Text Messages Sean Hannity, Marjorie Taylor Greene, Ivanka Trump and Others Sent to Mark Meadows,” *CNN*, April 25, 2022, <https://www.cnn.com/2022/04/25/politics/read-mark-meadows-texts-sean-hannity-ivanka-trump-marjorie-taylor-greene/index.html>.



ing the right to vote.<sup>104</sup> It now includes the growing number of immigrants, Latinx eligible voters, and the fact that the US will become “minority white” by 2043. Former *Fox News* conservative talk show host, Tucker Carlson, suggested:

[T]he Democratic Party is trying to replace the current electorate, the voters now casting ballots, with new people, more obedient voters from the Third World. [...] If you change the population, you dilute the political power of the people who live there. So every time they import a new voter, I become disenfranchised as a current voter.<sup>105</sup>

On the other hand, Black Republicans should be appalled by January 6. However, their non-commitment to Black consciousness and solidarity, and total commitment to believing systemic discrimination and racism is a myth led this group to believe that they could Blexit from the structural and institutional problems faced by the Black community and culture. They believed Trump was the second coming of President Abraham Lincoln. Little did they understand that while Lincoln was praised for freeing enslaved people, he intended to maintain racial and societal order, and free Black people still faced forms of structural and cultural control.

In closing, it took a white man to foster a societal climate that would televise a (white extremist) revolution, in order to show the “White Lives Matter More” crowd, and too show Black people who ventured to the darkest side of humanity, that he would stop at nothing to exercise his authoritative power to destroy America. Toward the end of his first presidency, Trump increased his racial rhetoric and defied truth. His employing of

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<sup>104</sup> The white replacement theory suggests that nonwhite people and immigrants will overtake the United States via immigration, reproduction, and the seizure of political power.

<sup>105</sup> Ari Berman, “Tucker Carlson Defends the Racist ‘White Replacement Theory,’” *Mother Jones*, April 10, 2021, <https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2021/04/tucker-carlsons-racist-ideology-inspired-white-supremacist-killers>.

authoritarian tactics to delegitimize the Democratic Party compromised the political fabric of the Republican Party. Like the “Southern Strategy” of President Richard Nixon, he provoked white racial resentment among his white electoral base. For Black people, Trump’s first presidency did have utility. While ultimately, this strategy did not lead to an electoral victory, it successfully revealed a significant gap in the progress of racial relations after Obama.

On January 6, 2021, the actions of Trump and his MAGA supporters were not solely a repudiation of American democracy and the political process but a repudiation of the millions of Black Democrats who organized and exercised their right to vote to remove him from office. Trump supporters pledged their support for fascism on that day.

## Strategies toward Liberation for Black People in America

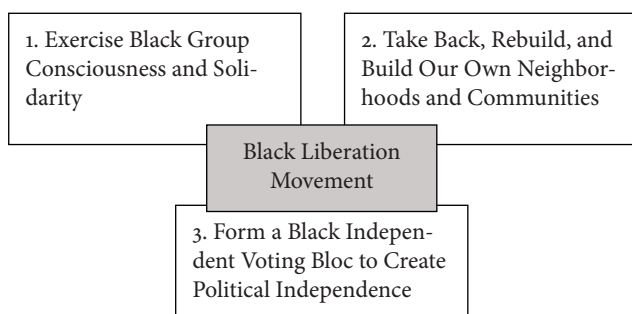
What will it take to create a “United” States of America conducive to the human survival and well-being of Black people? Even if exploratory and hypothetical in approach, such a question can get to the core of building a society and culture where both partisanship and ideology bonded by the social construction of race find common ground for a Black Liberation movement.

Black people in America must outline strategies that serve as quality-of-life solutions to create an economic, social, cultural, and political foundation in relation to a Black political agenda, as discussed in Chapter 3. In this chapter, I outline three large-scale strategies, which are: (1) Exercise black group consciousness and solidarity; (2) Rebuild and build our own neighborhoods and communities; and (3) Form a Black independent voting bloc to create political independence. These strategies are presented to help create a Black community and culture where we exercise conscious collective action yet remain self-autonomous as non-monolithic Black people. Such strategies operate from the premise that the group, as a whole, is willing to concede that the group’s identification with one another depends on the generative power of Black group consciousness and solidar-

ity and that the group is ready and willing to do what is in the best interest of the larger Black community.

During a pivotal time in history, where the power of whiteness continues to facilitate negative structural and cultural factors, an “ask” of solidarity from Black people in America should honor our ancestors who were once considered three-fifths of a human being. In this chapter I argue, among other things, how critical it is to establish a common bond for the betterment of the entire group, a bond which is free of intra-racial and intra-gender conflict that impedes progress and leads to continuous Black self-destruction.

These strategies are not exhaustive, but in my opinion they are the foremost substantive approaches needed in the pursuit of a Black Liberation movement in the twenty-first century. The idea of “liberation” has been sold to Black people three times in the annals of us history — once after the Emancipation Proclamation, again after the American Civil Rights movement, and before the presidency of Barack H. Obama. We must use these strategies to finally get to the “Promised Land,” the place the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. envisioned before his death. These strategies are a starting point to move us forward and ultimately foster a societal climate where Black people are autonomously empowered to enhance our lives in meaningful ways.



*Fig. 1.* Strategies for a Black Liberation Movement.

## Exercise Black Group Consciousness and Solidarity

There can be no design of a Black political agenda without first having a greater commitment to Black consciousness and solidarity in the larger Black community. Black psychologist Amos N. Wilson is noted for stating:

The love we have for each other is the greatest threat to those who rule over us. If those who rule over us want to stay in power, then they must destroy our ability to love each other in a healthy sort of way.<sup>1</sup>

For centuries, we have observed white people divide and conquer the Black community and culture in America and abroad. White oligarchs broke the will of Black people through calculated methods and divided us along race, class, partisan, and ideological lines. Structures, institutions, and policies aided mobility for a faction of Black people, yet the majority were held back by these pervasive forces. According to El-Hajj Malik el-Shabazz, such forces made us believe we had “different objectives, different goals,” but our collective goal has always been to establish a broad sense of community to gain Black empowerment.<sup>2</sup> As a community, the intervals of Black conscious periods in history have kept us viable. Can we imagine a continual period of Black consciousness and solidarity? Black people would be unstoppable.

The foundational scholars of group consciousness have long studied its importance among racial and ethnic minority groups.<sup>3</sup> Their expansion of this concept found a conscious fate

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- 1 Black Power Media, “Dr. Amos Wilson Black Love Black Male and Black Female Relationships,” *YouTube*, December 25, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FHtQFhz5yTo>.
  - 2 El-Hajj Malik el-Shabazz, excerpt from his speech, “The Black Revolution (April 8, 1964),” *ICIT Digital Library*, <https://www.icit-digital.org/articles/malcolm-x-on-the-black-revolution-april-8-1964>.
  - 3 Sidney Verba and Norman H. Nie, *Participation in America: Political Democracy and Social Equality* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972); Richard

that linked members of a racial group together due to past historical circumstances. According to Michael C. Dawson, in his definition of “linked fate,” it is the degree to which an individual believes that their own self-interests are linked to the interests of the race.<sup>4</sup> He indicates that this concept “explicitly links perception of self-interest to the perception of the racial group interest.” Therefore, group interests can become “a useful proxy for self-interests,” necessary for identity, solidarity, and mobilization.<sup>5</sup> Dawson argues that we must believe that what generally happens to Black people in America will have something to do with what happens in our own individual lives.

Generally speaking, racial consciousness, racial solidarity, and forms of conscious fate, all surrogates of one another, are forged in the belief that Black people are a group of individuals whose interests are explicitly aligned with the group as a whole.<sup>6</sup> Any factions of the social group that go against the Black community and culture’s deep-seated solidarity are seen as traitors and appear complicit in the vilification of the unwritten rules governing Black life. However, as Black people, we know this not to be true. The unwritten rules of the ancestors do not bond with this current generation.

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D. Shingles, “Black Consciousness and Political Participation: The Missing Link,” *American Political Science Review* 75, no. 1 (1981): 76–91; Katherine Tate, “Black Political Participation in the 1984 and 1988 Presidential Elections,” *American Political Science Review* 85, no. 4 (1991): 1159–76; Katherine Tate, *From Protest to Politics: The New Black Voters in American Elections* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993); and Katherine Tate, *Black Faces in the Mirror: African Americans and Their Representatives in the U.S. Congress* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

4 Michael C. Dawson, *Behind the Mule: Race and Class in African-American Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 77.

5 Dawson, *Behind the Mule*, 77.

6 McClain et al. conducted a study to differentiate linked fate and group consciousness. They argue that scholars have used linked fate as “a sophisticated and parsimonious alternative” to explore racial group consciousness. Paula D. McClain et al., “Group Membership, Group Identity, and Group Consciousness: Measures of Racial Identity in American Politics?” *Annual Review of Political Science* 12 (2009): 477.

We have witnessed Black people who “made it” into the nightmare of the American Dream, where they are defined solely by material gain, societal status, and white associations, but still have to succumb to daily forms of discrimination and racism. For every Black person who has succeeded educationally, economically, and spiritually, hundreds of thousands are left behind. It is then imperative for those who succeed at the highest levels to consciously pull others up to stop white America from using the strings of our bootstraps to hang us mentally. Under white America’s structural rules, gaining forms of individual success deters some Black people from extending a “Black branch.” For no one criticizes Black people more than Black people.

Like many Black scholars before, I propose that we must be at the defining moment and collectively come together to exhaust the utility of our consciousness. Four elements negatively affect the sustainability of a conscious fate. First, as written by DuBois, is “double consciousness,” which leads to a “warring soul.” It is the warring idea of having to subsist between white America and Black America in one dark body attempting for one to preserve both their national and cultural identity.<sup>7</sup> We must choose our Black soul — that consciously binds Black people together.

The second element is our class status is relative to racial capitalism, as discussed in Chapter 3. We must work to close the racial wealth gap for the Black masses and not allow white America to weaponize the existence of successful Black people against other Black people. Structural racism as a byproduct of capitalism does impact overall economic opportunities and outcomes.

Third is the presence of Black people who have achieved and who are now crowned by white America as gatekeepers within a societal structure that oppresses across the diaspora of Blackness. Black gatekeepers and progress blockers exist. In many respects, these Black people either work for the white owners

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7 W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: A.C. McClurg & Co., 1903), 8.

of the symbolic gate, believe that other Black people should work twice as hard to gain entrance into a mythical world of Black unilateral power, or have mastered the luxury component of tokenism. These gatekeepers, at times, see Black suffering as oppositional to the life they have created for themselves or was granted to them via “white acceptance” or “Black sponsorship.” Either way, their behaviors and actions halt Black progress and uphold an oppressive white tradition. The internal Judas inside of them must die. The potential of thirty pieces of silver is not enough to impede the individual and collective progress of Black people.

Lastly, too many divisions stand in the way of collective progress. For example, we have Black in-group fighting between groups like the African Descendants of Slavery led by Yvette Carnell and Antonio Moore, the Foundational African People led by Boyce Watkins, and the Foundational Black Americans led by Tariq Nasheed. Each group has philosophical differences in defining who are Black descendants of enslaved people and who should receive reparations if the government would allot funds. Regardless of these philosophical differences, everyone on the continuum of Blackness should receive reparations if granted. Such in-group fighting shows how Black people must be free of domains of thought that keep us mentally enslaved and limit our ability to progress. We must be willing to reprogram our minds, bodies, and souls, which is a necessary precondition to face the political process head-on.

All things considered, Black people who prosper should be applauded for working to achieve a set goal that enhances our human survival and well-being. However, when we rise, white America hopes that our individual successes will *neutralize* us and diminish our desire to help other Black people. They, too, know that the ultimate achievement of Black liberation comes from the merging of our conscious fate. Individualism, for Black people, is a fictional term when it comes to our societal and cultural status — one which cannot be true for human beings con-



ceived, birthed, and raised from the womb of Blackness in white America.<sup>8</sup>

Black educator Barbara A. Sizemore argued that what has gotten in the way of Black people achieving group success is “the lack of a unity among us to persist and stand like the tree by the water.” She called this “a degeneration of our spirit” and said, “we must get it back.”<sup>9</sup> Group success, grounded in a mission to achieve a Black Liberation movement, must come from a combination of Black consciousness and collective action. Black consciousness and its link to collective action must be the foundation for any legitimate political power that would benefit the group.

### Rebuild and Build Our Own Neighborhoods and Communities

Black people in America must rebuild and build our own physical communities. Many structural, institutional, and systemic problems have contributed to the deterioration of Black neighborhoods and communal spaces. According to Alan Mallach, in his study of 300 neighborhoods in six large cities — Baltimore, Chicago, Detroit, Milwaukee, Philadelphia, and Cleveland — a significantly higher number of Black neighborhoods than white neighborhoods had succumbed to high levels of poverty from 2000 to 2018. Homeownership was down in nearly all the neighborhoods due to Black people being primary targets for predatory lending, while vacancy and poverty rates were up.<sup>10</sup>

8 My Name Is My Name, “Dr. Amos Wilson Culture & Problem Solving,” *YouTube*, February 13, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WMb4zEaouHI>.

9 Victor of rws, “Barbara Sizemore - Powerful Presentation on White Supremacy,” *YouTube*, January 12, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iqEzKeH-tHE>.

10 Alan Mallach, “Making the Comeback: Reversing the Downward Trajectory of African American Middle Neighborhoods in Legacy Cities,” *Lincoln Institute of Land Policy*, February 2021, <https://www.lincolninstitute.edu/publications/working-papers/making-comeback>.

The nearly 1000 avenues, boulevards, drives, and streets in the US named after the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. lie in public spaces where Black people experience poverty, lack of available jobs, a dearth of health care facilities, public and dilapidated housing, and a lack of community-based services. Because some Black communal spaces are disadvantaged in these areas, it is vital to rebuild and build physical communities with a deep historical and cultural significance, embodying the legacy of Black heritage and identity. Revitalizing Black communities and neighborhoods is not just a necessity, it is a beacon of hope for our economic vitality, which supports empowerment and self-sufficiency. Moreover, it creates a supportive environment where Black people and our families can thrive, building a strong and racially conscious foundation for future generations.

In order to rebuild existing neighborhoods and communities, Black people with the financial means need to first dedicate themselves to buying real estate in these dilapidated spaces. Take for example, the majority Black city of Baltimore, Maryland that contains an abundance of abandoned housing that contributes to neighborhood and community decline. In 2023, nearly 15,000 vacant houses and 20,000 vacant lots were listed, the majority of which were in predominantly Black, low-income neighborhoods.<sup>11</sup> Baltimore's neighborhood changes are characterized by poverty, decreasing housing values, and the deterioration of neighborhood services due to the withdrawal of public and private investment capital.

These properties need to be bought and rebuilt to create a communal environment for Black people. Our goal should be to "Buy Back the Neighborhood," a plan that encourages Black people with the financial means to invest in local real estate, businesses, and community initiatives. This ownership would also counteract the effects of gentrification, which often displaces long-time Black residents. By reclaiming property and

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11 "Whole Blocks, Whole City: Reclaiming Vacant Property throughout Baltimore," *Abell Foundation*, February 2023, <https://abell.org/publication/reclaiming-vacant-property/>.

establishing Black-owned businesses, the community can create employment opportunities, support local entrepreneurs, and ensure cultural preservation.

Furthermore, assistance is needed from state and local politicians to address this issue. In October 2024, Democrat Wes Moore, the only sitting Black governor in the US, signed an executive order titled *Reinvest Baltimore* to show that the gubernatorial office is “committed to maximizing the economic potential and quality of life for all residents of Baltimore City.”<sup>12</sup> Housing and Community Development secretary Jake Day said that the vacant housing in Baltimore is a result of the “strangulation of life in our cities through racist housing policies like redlining [...] across the city, people deserve to live in safe, healthy neighborhoods—lovable, thriving places.”<sup>13</sup> At the local level, Democratic mayor Brandon M. Scott pledged a multi-billion dollar investment to address the city’s vacant housing crisis. His plan called for strategic public investment to redevelop at least 37,500 properties, with a blueprint to address as many as 45,000 properties.<sup>14</sup>

What is happening in Baltimore should serve as a model to combat a growing problem in the Black community. In other majority-Black cities, Black multi-generational households are also being displaced by modern-day redlining, gentrification amid soaring property values, and community disinvestment. Solutions are needed for long-time residents to remain in their communities and have community control of development

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12 “Executive Order: Reinvest Baltimore,” *The State of Maryland*, January 1, 2024, [https://governor.maryland.gov/Lists/ExecutiveOrders/Attachments/70/EO%2001.01.2024.34%20Reinvest%20Baltimore\\_Accessible.pdf](https://governor.maryland.gov/Lists/ExecutiveOrders/Attachments/70/EO%2001.01.2024.34%20Reinvest%20Baltimore_Accessible.pdf).

13 Danielle J. Brown, “Moore Signs Order to Revamp Program Aimed at Baltimore Vacant Housing,” *Maryland Matters*, October 1, 2024, <https://marylandmatters.org/2024/10/01/moore-signs-order-to-revamp-program-aimed-at-baltimore-vacant-housing/>.

14 Adam Thompson, Cristina Mendez, and Paul Gessler, “Multi-Billion Dollar Plan to Solve Baltimore’s Vacant Homes Crisis Disclosed,” *CBS News*, December 11, 2023, <https://www.cbsnews.com/baltimore/news/baltimore-mayor-to-announcement-partnership-to-combat-vacant-homes-crisis/>.

within their neighborhoods. The first step is to reinvest in the community.

Second, Black people must incorporate our own cities in the legacy of history, land, and culture. It is not far-fetched for Black people in the twenty-first century to incorporate our own cities where we have the infrastructural essentials of banks, schools, churches, hospitals, and grocery stores. In the city of Atlanta, Georgia, approximately nineteen Black families pooled their funds together to buy ninety-seven acres of land to build their own community. The land known as “Freedom, Georgia,” is a refuge for Black people seeking to escape the daily forms of racism and discrimination. This initiative was conceived after the summer 2020 Black Lives Matter protests by Renee Walters and Ashley Scott. Walters indicated, “Watching our Black men being murdered on national television in front of everybody, it kind of just all shook us by storm. [...] It’s now time for us to get our friends and families together and build for ourselves. That’s the only way we will be safe. That’s the only way this will work.”<sup>15</sup> Composed of professionals ranging from doctors to real estate agents, the people are building an infrastructure for Black survival. According to resident Marissa Brown, one of the residents, “There are so many communities that have their own space, and it’s not that we’re anti-anything. [...] We have to be pro-black love, and black love matters. Black community matters. Black power matters.”<sup>16</sup>

White Americans have employed the model of “Freedom, Georgia” for centuries. They incorporate small cities away from majority-minority contexts to create what they believe will be a better quality of life. Consider the case of the proposed city of St. George in the state of Louisiana, which the Louisiana Supreme

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15 Roz Edward, “Freedom, GA is Black Wall Street of the New South,” *Atlanta Tribune*, May 6, 2024, <https://atlantatribune.com/2024/05/06/freedom-ga-is-black-wall-street-of-the-new-south/>.

16 Ashley Schwartz-Lavares and Steve Osunsami, “Black Americans Are Leaving Their Homes to Start Their Own All-Black Communities,” *ABC News*, September 30, 2020, <https://abcnews.go.com/US/black-americans-leaving-homes-start-black-communities/story?id=73344171>.

Court favorably ruled on in mid-2024. Despite earlier setbacks, the high court recognized the validity of the majority-white city, affirming that it would provide its residents with proper public services.

The St. George movement began in 2010. White residents wanted to create a separate school district for the southeast corner of East Baton Rouge Parish. In June 2015, organizers held a petition drive to get the question of creating a new city on the election ballot. They fell short by 71 signatures. Then, in 2019, supporters of this initiative tried a second time to incorporate a new city with the help of redrawn city boundaries from the 2018 election cycle. During this time, St. George was voter-approved by 54% of the residents who lived within the proposed city's limits. However, Democratic mayor Sharon Weston Broome and then-city councilman Lamont Cole sued organizers. The city was later rejected in mid-2022 by retired 22nd Judicial District Judge Martin Coady. The judge denied the claim that the proposed city was drawn to discriminate against Black people because the organizers provided a racially neutral reason. He did, however, state in his ruling that the decision was based solely on the inability of St. George to operate with a balanced budget, and approval would cost taxpayers \$48.3 million.<sup>17</sup>

In 2023, the Louisiana First Circuit Court of Appeal ruled that incorporation of the city lacked a sufficient plan. They cited the proposed city's budget as inaccurate and said the city would be operating at a loss. Nonetheless, the St. George Transition team remained steadfast and held meetings to fortify a plan. The mid-2024 ruling by the Louisiana Supreme Court was granted after the court acknowledged organizers followed the proper process for incorporation.<sup>18</sup>

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17 Broome and Cole v. Rials and Browning, Louisiana First Circuit Court of Appeal, 19th Judicial Court, May 31, 2022, [https://dcer237tfeol.cloudfront.net/img/wbrz/files/st\\_george\\_decision\\_may\\_2022.pdf](https://dcer237tfeol.cloudfront.net/img/wbrz/files/st_george_decision_may_2022.pdf).

18 Lara Nicholson, "Louisiana Supreme Court Rules in Favor of New City of St. George, Reversing Lower Courts," *The Advocate*, April 26, 2024, [https://www.theadvocate.com/baton\\_rouge/news/courts/louisiana-supreme-](https://www.theadvocate.com/baton_rouge/news/courts/louisiana-supreme-)

The genesis of St. George arose from affluent white residents of an unincorporated area southeast of East Baton Rouge Parish who wanted to establish a new municipality segregating themselves from Democrat-run Baton Rouge, its high population of Black residents (47.2%), and other growing minority communities.<sup>19</sup> Calling the initiative to separate themselves “Independence Day,” a reference to a time when many Black people were still enslaved, the proposals from organizers led with the throughline that incorporating their own city would allow the capacity to create a new school district formed of predominantly white schools. The Parish school system is currently 90% non-white. The initiative reinforces the fact that we are nearly seventy years removed from *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954), yet white people still do not want to attend schools with Black people.

Beyond the educational angle, in their opinion, the formation of St. George would benefit white residents in multiple ways. First, it would allow tax dollars and public services to be concentrated on residents of St. George within a 60 square-mile radius and not that of the entire 470 square-mile East Baton Rouge Parish. Second, it would make way for white flight as a reaction to the Democrat-run city of Baton Rouge. Supporters of the new city argued in proposals that local government was poorly operated. Third, the expected 86,000 residents in the new city would be able to elect their own mayor and city council members. Last, living in the new city would provide refuge from the high crime rate in Baton Rouge. In 2022, the crime rate in Baton Rouge was 2.5 times greater than the US average. It was higher than in 98.3% of US cities.<sup>20</sup>

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court-rules-in-favor-of-st-george/article\_cb4315ba-e7da-11ee-a2c1-2714177560c2.html.

- 19 At the time of this writing, Baton Rouge is only on its second Black mayor in its 200-year history. Those are Melvin Lee “Kip” Holden (2004–2016) and Sharon Weston Broome (2016–present).
- 20 Katie Krueger, “Is Baton Rouge Safe?” *Deep Sentinel*, January 20, 2023, <https://www.deepsentinel.com/blogs/home-security/is-baton-rouge-safe>.

Like others before it, the St. George model, despite its racial intent, would be a progressive approach if Black people adopted a similar model to achieve a Black Liberation movement. As affluent white residents secede from Black people to create their own cities, communities, and neighborhoods, we can do the same by exercising our constitutional rights. Not with a racial intent of bigotry, but in addition to the proposed quality-of-life markers in Chapter 3, such cities are needed to restore our mental and physical health — which has suffered as a natural reaction to white racism. Black people can incorporate, then elect a progressive Black mayor and all-Black city council, form an all-Black law enforcement unit, appoint an Afrocentric school superintendent, create Black homeownership in various communities, and have the infrastructural essentials of banks, schools, churches, hospitals, and grocery stores.<sup>21</sup> These cities would not only provide us with a safe and inclusive environment but also serve as a beacon of hope and progress for future generations.

Equally potent to our quality of life, we would instill a code of conduct in these cities where we, as Black people, can be free to consciously love and respect each other without fear. Communal love would be our center. Families would work together and take care of one another. The St. George group's political spokesman, Lionel Rainey III, a white Republican who denied the plan of a racial divide when discussing the incorporation of the city, said, "This is about creating a better life for your family."<sup>22</sup> What I propose for Black people would be, too. It would be a testament to our resilience and determination as Black people that we are now considering the incorporation of our own cities, reclaiming our history, land, and culture.

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21 An important genesis of our human survival and well-being would be the ability to fish, hunt, farm, and build structures to further extract ourselves from oppressive systems.

22 Rick Rojas, "Voters Near Baton Rouge Want Better Schools. First, They Need a New City," *The New York Times*, October 10, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/10/us/baton-rouge-st-george.html>.

The remaining Black residents of Baton Rouge could turn the tide and revolutionize this opportunity. From the incubation of the idea to secede to the present, part of Black tax dollars has gone to initiatives that allowed the city of St. George not to start from scratch. Local officials must figure out how the parish's budget will shift. Nevertheless, this created the perfect opportunity for the Black residents of Baton Rouge to pool their resources and stand as a united front, vehemently opposing white supremacy and showing that it will not leave the city in ruins.

The goal is for our incorporated cities not to have these structural and cultural problems. This would be the beginning of a Black business district controlled, operated, and labored in by Black people. These newly incorporated cities that house Black communities and neighborhoods would work to foster economically self-sufficient people where Black ownership and job opportunities would be plentiful. There would be no significant economic divide among Black people, and if forecasted, universal basic income programs would be in place. Hopefully, this would help subdue the desire to have a "Black bourgeoisie" and the "crab mentality" mindset and uphold conscious economic standards for the betterment of the cities and the people in them.

Structural problems such as the displacement of Black households through modern-day redlining and gentrification would not exist. Residents could benefit from Black-led mortgage bank firms, like LEGACY Home Loans, who are willing to help Black people become homeowners and close the 30% homeownership gap.<sup>23</sup> In addition, affordable housing in the form of micro-homes and access to housing vouchers would be available to all.

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23 LEGACY Home Loans created a "Special Purpose Credit Program" (SPCP) titled "CLOSING the GAP" for Black people who wanted to become homeowners. This would be piloted in six US cities, Atlanta, Baltimore, Chicago, Detroit, Memphis, and Philadelphia. The borrowers needed to reside in a census tract of the six cities with a 51% or more Black population. See LEGACY Home Loans, "A Mortgage Loan just for BLACK Borrowers! Offered by the Nation's Largest Black Led Mortgage Company," *PR Newswire*, September 8, 2022, <https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/a->



The “Haves” would be all Black people — not a form of utopian socialism — but the second coming of Oklahoma’s Greenwood District, also known as Black Wall Street, where Black people were economically independent and flourishing before whites perceived us as a threat to the white-dominant American capitalist structure. Under the auspices of a false allegation of a Black man raping a white woman, a white mob destroyed the town and all it stood for.

When we have created thriving Black communities throughout history, the white political establishment has destroyed them to maintain white racial order. Racial cleansing stories like those about the Wilmington insurrection of 1898, Forsyth County Georgia in 1912, Black Wall Street in 1921, and the Rosewood massacre of 1923 show Black people what we can do when we consciously bond together and create our own social and cultural environments.

### **Form a Black Independent Voting Bloc to Create Political Independence**

The political dimension of the above strategies is for Black eligible voters to form a Black independent voting bloc — not as a monolithic or homogenized group tied to one political party, but one seeking liberation. We must leave the partisan and ideological imprisonment of the two-party system and become an independent voting bloc that embraces a progressive ideological epicenter. Our second president of the United States, John Adams, who was said to have never owned any enslaved Black people, predicted that “a division of the republic into two great parties [...] is to be dreaded as the great political evil.”<sup>24</sup> This course of action would be paramount to our political growth to free us of the evil of the two-party system.

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mortgage-loan-just-for-black-borrowers-offered-by-the-nations-largest-black-led-mortgage-company-301620685.html.

24 “From John Adams to Jonathan Jackson, 2 October 1780,” *National Archives*, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/06-10-02-0113>.

Instead of Black eligible voters working to turn Red states into Blue states, threatening to sit out of some elections, or calling for a “blank-out campaign” where we cast votes for local races but refuse to cast a vote for president,<sup>25</sup> we need to work to turn one of the major political parties to Black. While the Democratic Party is already considered the captor of the Black vote, it is only Black-leaning because most Black eligible voters believe that the party gives us the best option for Black hope.

The more than 30 million Black eligible voters in the US must act as a bloc and give our vote to the party that best serves our interests. It could be the Democratic Party or the Republican Party. Under this strategy, Black eligible voters cannot be averse to rejoining or lending our vote to the Republican Party. We have been both Republicans and Democrats in the lineage of this country. Since the realignment of the 1930s, to the 1960s, to the present day, we have had to deal with the functional racism of white supremacy in the Republican Party and a combination of white and liberal racism in the Democratic Party.

Opponents of this strategy may argue that one is more favorable than the other due to the overtly white supremacist base of the Republican party; however, both parties are rooted in white supremacy. One would be the devil we know, and the other would be the devil we claim not to know. In life, we have, according to former Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, “no permanent friends or enemies, only interests.”<sup>26</sup> It was former President Franklin D. Roosevelt, a champion of progressive legislation, who believed Black eligible voters should be “flexible enough to swing between the two parties according to the

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25 Eddie Glaude Jr. in *Democracy in Black* calls for a “blank-out campaign,” which I argue is not a progressive strategy for Black liberation. Eddie S. Glaude Jr., *Democracy in Black: How Race Still Enslaves the American Soul* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2017).

26 “71. Address by Secretary of State Kissinger,” *United States of America Department of State Office of the Historian*, March 11, 1976, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v38p1/d71>.

momentary interests of Blacks.”<sup>27</sup> With the political infighting in the Democratic Party and the extremist base in the Republican Party, we can leverage our political power while both are rebranding.

This political thought was a part of O’Shea Jackson, Jim Brown, Steve Harvey, and Kanye West’s reasoning for meeting with Trump prior to the 2020 presidential election. Jackson reached out to both political parties about his own political agenda, *A Contract with Black America*, (CWBA).<sup>28</sup> The CWBA urged Democrats and Republicans to be progressive and address racial inequalities within the areas of economic development and the criminal justice system. He also sought to devise a comprehensive plan for Black reparations. Democrats told Jackson they would consult with him only if Biden won the presidential election. However, the Trump Administration agreed to meet and listen to his political “asks” and “demands.”

Although Trump was not sincere in his olive branch to Black celebrities and used them as a photo-ops, meetings with Black congressional members across the political aisle, activists, and organizers are needed to find common ground. Black psychologist Umar Johnson shared a similar thought in an interview on the Cannon’s Class podcast, when he said:

You don’t exclude the Republican because he’s a Republican, and you don’t automatically endorse the Democrat because he’s a Democrat. You listen to them both, and you choose the one who has an agenda that is closely aligned to the one you’re trying to push.

I don’t need to like you to do business with you. If I got to strike a deal with Donald Trump for Black empowerment, I’ll strike a deal with Donald Trump. Because what I am not

27 Ronald W. Walters, *Black Presidential Politics in America: A Strategic Approach* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988), 47–48.

28 “A Contract with Black America: Addressing Racial Inequality,” *Yumpu*, January 7, 2020, <https://www.yumpu.com/en/document/read/63585404/cwba>.

looking for is a Black president, or a Black governor or a Black mayor. I'm looking for Black power.<sup>29</sup>

The Republican Party should welcome our temporary membership to rebrand the party. Since 1972, Republican candidates have won only about 10% of the Black vote on average; the Democrats have averaged 87%. The party has lost seven of the eight past popular votes in presidential elections (e.g., only George W. Bush in 2004 won the popular vote versus John Kerry), and only won by the undemocratic power of the Electoral College in 2000 (George W. Bush) and 2016 (Donald J. Trump). Nevertheless, with little racial and ethnic minority support, they have fared well in maintaining political influence, mainly due to the non-progressive actions of Democrats.

The party we lend our vote support to would need more than 75 million votes to have a legitimate chance to win. As a result, we would need a multi-cultural effort from other racial and ethnic minorities. There are 32 million Latinx people eligible to vote (13.3%), 30 million Black people eligible to vote (12.5%), 11 million Asian-American people eligible to vote (4.7%), and 160 million non-Hispanic white eligible voters (66.7%). There is a premium on winning the vote support of poor and working-class Latinx and Asian voters who were Democratic-leaning in 2020. Hypothetically, whichever party we endorse would need 95% or more of the Black vote, two-thirds of the Latinx vote, and the remaining more than 23 million votes would have to come from Asian-Americans, the "others" population, and white eligible voters who understand the importance of such a movement.

We must deal with the fact that Latinx voters are not monolithic, and each faction of the group weighs its relationship to power differently, primarily based on class and gender. Because many Cuban eligible voters identify as or lean toward the Republican Party, the Black voting bloc would be counting on the progressive Latinx faction, which some still harbor ill feelings

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29 Nick Cannon, "[Full Episode] Dr. Umar Johnson on Cannon's Class," *YouTube*, October 6, 2020, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aG1NV-\\_z1k](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aG1NV-_z1k).

toward those who allowed Trump to build his 2016 presidential campaign on the agenda of building a wall to stop undocumented immigrants from entering the United States.<sup>30</sup> Despite Trump's rhetoric, he succeeded in gaining one-third of Latinx support.<sup>31</sup> We observed an estimated total of 16.6 million Latinx voters cast a ballot in the 2020 presidential election.<sup>32</sup> While a faction of Latinx voters, mainly Latinx men, have moved to the right since the Obama presidency, a significant amount remain Democratic-leaning. This group would be essential in reaching our primary goal to influence the political agenda of a political party.

From the Asian-American community, we would be counting on their vote. Historically, Asian-Americans have had the lowest voter turnout of all the major racial groups, but with population growth they are on pace to constitute almost 10% of eligible voters by 2036. They are becoming an influential voting group. In the 2020 presidential election, first-time Asian-American voters in crucial battleground states contributed to Biden's victory. Moreover, we would be counting on Asian-American voters who have moved into the lowest socioeconomic Black neighborhoods to build businesses after being redlined from most white communities to cast a favorable vote. Their vote support would provide an electoral advantage.

Black eligible voters would offer our vote to any political party that has: (1) Adamantly voiced our concerns and issues in a meaningful way; (2) Outlined a Black political agenda with

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30 Jens Manuel Krogstad, "Most Cuban American Voters Identify as Republican in 2020," *Pew Research Center*, October 2, 2020, <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2020/10/02/most-cuban-american-voters-identify-as-republican-in-2020/>.

31 Michael Herndon et al., "The Power of the New Majority: A 10 State Analysis of Voters of Color in the 2020 Election," *UCLA Latino Policy & Politics Initiative*, February 27, 2020, <https://latino.ucla.edu/research/the-power-of-the-new-majority-a-10-state-analysis-of-voters-of-color-in-the-2020-election/>.

32 Rodrigo Domínguez-Villegas et al., "Vote Choice of Latino Voters in the 2020 Presidential Election," *UCLA Latino Policy & Politics Initiative*, January 18, 2021, <https://latino.ucla.edu/research/latino-voters-in-2020-election>.

proper consultation from politicians, activists, and organizers; (3) Pre-crafted race-specific pieces of legislation; and (4) Shown us prior to election day Executive Orders they would sign on behalf of Black people in America that address our most pressing needs. Executive Orders are to be signed on Inauguration Day, and legislation is expected to be introduced in the first thirty days.<sup>33</sup> These actions would establish a political bond between Black voters and said party. Leveraging our Black independent voting bloc would also ensure that we have an advantageous and like-minded us Congressional body to move this substantive legislation through the political process. A like-minded us Congressional body would facilitate a unified government, eliminate legislative gridlock, and limit Congress as a stronghold of conservatives and moderates.

To bring this to fruition, we would have to be politically active all year round, especially during the midterm and presidential years. This strategy forces party competition and makes potential presidential candidates and political parties cater to our concerns and not those of mainly conservative and moderate white voters, who are often the target population for many candidates. We must be just as vigilant at the local and state levels. Because the us has frequent elections, Black people must be committed to fighting against the white political establishment to prevent them from disadvantaging our human survival and well-being.

Black people would create political action committees to run and support our own candidates to influence the presidential primaries, political conventions, and then the general election.<sup>34</sup> We must embrace and support a progressive leader who

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33 Trump signed 220 Executive Orders from 2017–2021, and Obama signed 276 Executive Orders from 2009–2017. After a partisan shift in 2010, Obama signed 36, another 34 in 2011, and 39 more in 2012. More information can be found at “Executive Orders,” *Federal Register National Archives*, <https://www.federalregister.gov/presidential-documents/executive-orders>.

34 Prior to the election of Barack Obama, political scholar Ronald Walters offered a strategy for Black voters to influence presidential elections. Walters, *Black Presidential Politics in America*, 133.

not only understands the vital nature of political bargaining and trade-offs but can also demonstrate to the white political establishment the importance of adhering to our political “asks” and “demands.” Even more imperative for the consciousness of Black America, our proposed candidates must be humanitarians who are connected to the people. You have to love Black people to serve Black people.

To clarify the aforementioned point, the call is not for Black eligible voters to identify as Independents willing to give our vote to an Independent Party nor to create a Third-Party movement.<sup>35</sup> While Independents are political free agents, the majority stand as a diverse partisan electorate who are often less engaged during midterm election cycles and “lean” toward one of the two major political parties during election season. Most of all, the American electoral system supports the two-party model. Black people in America do not have the sheer numbers to carry an Independent Party in a “winner take all” system. Ross Perot, who ran as a third-party candidate in 1992, was the last Independent to disrupt the two-party machine. As a result of not being able to reach a voting threshold to win a national election, it would be difficult for us to start our own separate political party made up of the majority of Black eligible voters and other voters only familiar with two-party branding. Thus, forming a Black independent voting bloc is the key to a Black Liberation movement.

## Conclusion and Implications

Without conceding to the “asks” and “demands” of Black eligible voters, there is no place for Black people in either political party. Until Black Democrats and Black Republicans break free, or truly Blexit, to higher economic, social, cultural, and political ground, they must regroup and decide their collective futures

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35 Omar H. Ali, *In the Balance of Power: Independent Black Politics and Third-Party Movements in the United States* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2008).

as Black people in America. Black people in general cannot trust a political party that does not advocate for a Black political agenda.

The decades of white Democrats pandering to the Black community and culture with their intentional or unintentional participation in “competence downshifting” has led to them practicing white liberal racism. As stated, many of them use explicit racial appeals to pander to Black eligible voters. As Black journalist Torraine Walker wrote on Twitter before the 2020 presidential election, they cannot mobilize our vote with “fist bumps and outdated hip-hop slang.”<sup>36</sup> Black hip-hop and R&B couples like Beyonce and Jay-Z, Cardi B and Offset, or Megan Thee Stallion, should not have been front and center during the Obama, Joseph R. Biden, and Kamala Harris presidential campaigns. In 2020, Cardi B interviewing Biden when he was the presumptive Democratic presidential candidate should not have been a Black mobilization strategy when there were many qualified Black journalists to perform such a job.

The Democratic Party cannot mobilize us with twerk videos either, like those posted on the Black Lives Matter Global Network Foundation’s (BLMGNF) website and social media sites. Since its inception, the BLMGNF — not the Black Lives Matter movement — has worked in concert with the Democratic Party to pander to our concerns and funnel money back into their pockets. We were warned of this by Black Lives activists such as the late Darren Seals, whom the FBI surveilled for his criticism of Black Lives Matter organizers. Among numerous allegations, BLMGNF reportedly obtained \$90 million in donations after the death of George Floyd but could not account for more than \$60 million two years after.<sup>37</sup>

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36 @TorraineWalker, *Twitter*, January 8, 2021, 9:44AM, <https://x.com/TorraineWalker/status/1347569941462052864?s=20>.

37 See Sean Campbell’s (2022) expose showing the misappropriation of funds from the BLMGNF. Sean Campbell, “Black Lives Matter Secretly Bought a \$6 Million House: Allies and Critics Alike Have Questioned Where the Organization’s Money Has Gone,” *New York*, April 4, 2020, <https://nymag.com/intelligencer/2022/04/black-lives-matter-6-million-dollar-house.html>.



Patrisse Cullors, one of the co-founders of the Black Lives Matter movement and ex-Director of BLMGNF, said the network was a “power building body,” and said such entertainment videos showing women twerking for civil rights were a part of a series aimed to “collectively remember Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King not just as an iconic Civil Rights leader, but as a human being full of love, joy, play, and healing.”<sup>38</sup> In a yearly video pandering to Black people, which Cullors lamented as “F\*ck White Supremacy, Let’s Get Free,” she encouraged every person impacted by white supremacy to do the Black line dance, the Electric Slide. Such actions only hurt the Black community by taking the focus off real concerns and issues.<sup>39</sup>

Black people must be politically sophisticated enough to judge the authentic nature of the campaign strategies and images deployed by white Democrats. I’m in agreement with Eddie S. Glaude Jr., who emphatically stated when discussing Black demands on MSNBC’s *All In* with Chris Hayes, “I don’t want empathy. I don’t want folk huggin’ on me. I want policy, policy, policy!”<sup>40</sup> We cannot be loyalists to empty empathy from white leaders or Black leaders who put their arms around us while simultaneously cultivating relationships with neoliberals for personal gain.

In our fight for racial equality, many well-meaning white Democrats and white establishment supporters have been the

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38 Makeda Easter, “Twerk Video Celebrating MLK Faces a Backlash. But Are Critics Missing the Point?,” *Yahoo! News*, January 27, 2021, <https://www.yahoo.com/now/twerk-video-celebrating-mlk-faces-171213528.html>.

39 BLK Dating App, “BLK presents ‘No Voting No Vucking’ - ft. Saucy Santana and Trina,” *YouTube*, October 4, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1KtAkBcd2PQ>. This and a “Get Your Booty to the Poll” video (at the URL, now expired: <https://www.getyourbootytothepoll.com>) made the rounds before the 2022 midterm elections. “No Voting No Vucking” featured rappers Trina and Saucy Santana explaining the importance of voting in the midterm elections. One line of the song reads, “Wanna hit this booty? Gotta do your civic duty.” Again, this perpetuated a historical racist trope that sexualizes Black men.

40 @guang\_lie, *Twitter*, March 7, 2020, 8:24PM, [https://twitter.com/guang\\_lie/status/1236477978000920576](https://twitter.com/guang_lie/status/1236477978000920576).

greatest opponents of a Black Liberation movement in the United States — some more than Republicans and conservatives — and those maintaining a fundamental racist worldview. There is a spectrum within the ideological machine that exists in the Democratic Party, mainly composed of white conservatives and moderates that only want “people of color,” especially Black people who have now been included under this term of erasure, to be seen and not heard. White Democrats preach from the pulpit of Black thought on the campaign trail and retroactively charge Black people to tithe to their supposed white saviorism.

In comparison, even more so than any other Republican president, Trump’s first presidency displayed how there is no place for Black Republicans — old or young — in the Republican Party, who consciously or unconsciously exhibit an anti-Black worldview. Such proof was the racial reckoning on January 6, 2021, in which Black Republicans deflected from the seriousness of the day by participating in the act of memory-holing alongside the vast number of white Republicans. When the older regime of Black conservatives like the late Colin Powell and others defected after the attempted coup and its backlash, it should have officially ended the Black grifter section of the party.

In recent years Mia Love, the only Black Republican woman in the US House in 2018, and Will Hurd, a rising Black Republican, pivoted from the party under the Trump regime. These politicians and other traditional conservatives departed because they finally realized that the Republican Party had become flooded with white supremacists who had used them merely as pawns. This is a fact that many Black Republicans knew, but they were hypnotized by the more than 26,000 lies Trump told while in the Oval Office in his first term.

The post-2020 Republican Party’s tactic to remain in political power is to suppress the voting influence of racial and ethnic minorities, especially Black eligible voters. Unfortunately, Black Republicans reinforce such suppression of the Black vote, like Candace Owens and others who parrot white Republicans’ claim that there was voter fraud in 2020 and that our political

climate is now less racist than ever in this country.<sup>41</sup> For now, these newfound Black Republicans, led by Owens, will continue to project their anti-Black messaging in the Party of Lincoln. It is a party at war with ideas, actions, progressivism, and their overall political message but insulated by the bond of white supremacy and Black delusion.

The above strategies do not operate in a vacuum. Black people in America know that white allies are necessary as we propose these methods as our passageway to “plot, plan, strategize, organize, and mobilize” to move the Black race further towards liberation. We need devoted white allies in the us Congress, state legislatures, and local governments. Additionally, on the ground, we need a significant number of white people who traditionally vote Democrat but lean conservative and moderate to see the world through our lens. We would hope, after seeing their stance on the summer 2020 Black Lives Matter protests and the winter 2021 insurrection, that at least two-thirds of these white voters will continue to be committed to economic, social, cultural, and political equality for Black people. The political word of the year for 2021 was “allyship.”

Black people must identify, thoroughly vet, and mobilize educated white eligible voters who will not co-opt our movements, capturing as a result the recent pattern of white educated voters that followed the Democratic Party in 2020. Moreover, we need those who proactively work for the inclusion and belonging of Black people. We cannot chance them eventually conspiring against us. Also important, we must teach this group that diversity and nice racism alone does not lead to justice or create change agents. However, teaching them should not be our responsibility. As author Ijeoma Oluo says:

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41 Zell and Lesick found that white Republicans had less knowledge of historical racism and perceived less individual and systemic racism than white Democrats. Ethan Zell and Tara L. Lesick, “Ignorance of History and Political Differences in Perception of Racism in the United States,” *Social Psychological and Personality Science* 13, no. 6 (2022): 1022–31.

Just once I want to speak to a room of white people who know they are there because they are the problem. Who know they are there to begin the work of seeing where they have been complicit and harmful so that they can start doing better.<sup>42</sup>

Black people should have never been put in a position to do this work, nor should we have to continue to do so. We cannot be racial inoculators or facilitators. Most poignantly, the late Neely Fuller Jr., who was a champion for racial equality, tells us that we must be intentional and not an audience for performative allyship by stating, “As long as racism exists, anything said or done by people that is not intended to help eliminate racism and to help produce justice, is a waste of time and energy.”<sup>43</sup>

Black eligible voters need the love that white politicians and political parties have for the Black vote to transform into promises that lead to tangible resources, outcomes, and forms of justice for all Black people. US House member Ayanna Pressley (D-MA) has repeatedly said that policy must be the love language given to us. That has not happened, on either side of the political aisle. Neither the Democratic Party nor the Republican Party has shown their worthiness of the Black vote. Historically, garnering our vote has always been either political or profitable but never reciprocal. Sick and tired should be the Black people of all partisanship and ideologies that argue over which master to serve every four years. Historian John Henrik Clarke tells us, “We must be masters of ideas that influence [our] destiny” and not enslaved to negative structures, institutions, and policies.<sup>44</sup>

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42 Ijeoma Oluo, “Confronting Racism Is Not About the Needs and Feelings of White People,” *The Guardian*, March 28, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/comments/free/2019/mar/28/confronting-racism-is-not-about-the-needs-and-feelings-of-white-people>.

43 Neely Fuller, “About,” *Produce Justice: The Counter Racist Code*, <https://producejustice.com/about-2>.

44 For the comprehensive life of Dr. John Henrik Clarke, see Kwaku Person-Lynn, “On My Journey Now: The Narrative and Works of Dr. John Henrik Clarke, the Knowledge Revolutionary,” *Africology: The Journal of Pan African Studies* 6, no. 7 (2014): 89.

Black people can no longer be political puppets for either the Democratic or the Republican Party. Power will not concede to a divided racial group, especially a divide manufactured by the false constructs of partisanship and ideology. We are not each other's enemies. Thus, our partisan and ideological differences and intra-racial conflict and grievances are counterproductive to improving the conditions of Black people in America.

On the one hand, Black Democrats should have demanded more of Obama and Biden before they were elected to the presidential office, but they did not. On the other hand, Black Republicans should have drawn a "red line" and shed their partisan affiliation with Trump before, during, and after his first presidency as he showed his true racial biases, but they did not. As a result, the byproduct of this is a president currently in the Oval Office who will propose legislative ideas, budget recommendations, and agenda items but will never provide to Black people "an America as good as its promise."<sup>45</sup>

This broken promise further validates the position of economic strategist Claude Anderson, who has argued for decades about how Black people "have been socially engineered into the lowest level of a real-life Monopoly game."<sup>46</sup> Based on the game, we are the products of the structural failures in the real world; individuals unable to gain solidarity and accumulate group wealth, which divides us and lands us in the most disadvantageous spaces in life. This favors the white political establishment, which wants and needs other ethnic and social groups to succeed economically at a greater rate than Black people. It confirms to the white imagination the stereotypes of "inferiority" and "laziness," which by and large would make us forever

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45 Full quote, "What the people want is very simple. They want an America as good as its promise." — Barbara Jordan, political icon." PJ Pierce and Liz Carpenter, *Let Me Tell You What I've Learned*: *Texas Wisewomen Speak* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002), 16.

46 WHUT TV, "The Rock Newman Show ft. Claud Anderson | Episode 310," *YouTube*, February 17, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zioWXUPerj8>.

dependent on them to ameliorate our economic, social, and cultural conditions.

To once and for all avert this, Black people in America must push away and lean toward a new partisan and ideological truth — *in a Darwinian sense of urgency*— for the next generation of Black people to break the generational stronghold of the white authoritative powers that preserve the two-party system and frames the us as a healthy, representative democracy.

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