



Blacks Rethink Democratic Party

By: Barbara Howard

For over a decade now, many minds — both great and small — have pondered over what would make a reasonable black person join the Republican Party.

Especially since it is the Democratic Party that has spawned almost 9,600 black elected officials since 1970, according to a study published by David A. Bositis of the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies.

The Democratic Party has revised history to show that Democrats, and not Republicans, have been in the forefront of civil rights for blacks over the years.

So who in their right mind would want to join a party with the reputation of being racist?

For years now, the racist label has been attached to white Republicans without any supporting evidence. Yet the charge has gone mostly unanswered. Few have publicly addressed the unearned condemnation, so generations of black folk live and die without ever knowing the truth.

There is an African proverb that says, “Until the lions have their historians, tales of the hunt will always glorify the hunter”.

I remember wondering why those brave men and women who were in the middle of the struggle with Dr. King, failed to disclose that it was the very party they now pay homage to that promoted slavery, lynching and killing hundreds of thousands of slaves.

It is the same party that created the segregationist Jim Crow Laws, beating and killing numerous civil rights workers who fought against those laws and for their dignity and freedom in a nonviolent revolution.

Why are they silent today when even the most astute black person thinks it was the FBI under a Republican administration instead of Democrat J. Edgar Hoover under Democratic Attorney General Robert Kennedy during the Democratic administration of John F. Kennedy that tapped Dr. King’s phones and had him (and them) under constant surveillance, defining them as communists?

A black minister once said to me that he hated the Republican Party because it had never done anything for black folk during his lifetime of over 50 years. Why would he think that?

Because the Democratic PR machine tells him so and because those civil rights heroes remain mute when blacks attribute such initiatives as affirmative action to Democrats instead of to Republicans.

They are not told that black Republican pioneer Dr. Arthur Fletcher is known as the father of affirmative action, serving as secretary of labor under President Richard Nixon and heading the U.S. Civil Rights Commission under President George H.W. Bush.

While 95 percent of blacks will vote for any Democratic candidate for president (or for any other office for that matter), they have no problem hurling demeaning insults at blacks who vote for Republicans, even when the Republican is black.

For over four decades, blacks have flocked to the Democratic Party while the Republican Party has seemingly been missing in action. So how does the party regain its rightful place as the champion of blacks' civil rights, particularly when civil rights leaders have failed to set the record straight?

Contrary to popular belief, the majority of black voters are primarily Christian and conservative, even though they vote for liberal candidates. Seventy percent of them voted against gay marriage in California during the 2008 presidential campaign.

Once they get past their emotional attachment to the Democratic Party, they usually admit that they are conservative in their views. Sometimes they even express feelings of betrayal when they discover the truth about which political party was really in the forefront of civil rights as opposed to the one which only claims to have been.

Even in the face of daily attacks on the Republican Party by Democrats, particularly during the Bush presidency, some blacks have quietly become Republicans in spite of an obvious lack of recruitment strategy by the Republican National Committee.

There are some of us who vote our conscience and values regardless of pressure from family and friends to vote on their emotions.

Being black and Republican can be a lonely road to travel. Hateful insults come from associates and friends alike — even from family. One stands to lose friends and sometimes prestige, reputation, and even economic opportunities.

The Republican Party should not only recruit more blacks to the party, it should protect those who find themselves on the front lines every day. The recruitment strategy must differ, however, from what has been used to date.

I've been a political consultant for over 20 years, half as a Democratic strategist, where I learned that "by any means necessary" sometimes meant just that.

The Republican Party must recognize black voters as the assets they are and invest party resources into retaining the loyalty of those of us who are still here, while employing those techniques that will prove to be as successful in increasing our numbers as when George Bush ran his second term.

But there are changes that have to be made to the play book.

Being black and Republican is no more an oxymoron than being black and a patriot. As we commemorate Memorial Day 2009, we know this to be true. We are proud to call America our home.

Our fathers and forefathers and mothers gave their lives for this country, not to mention our sons and daughters who are still protecting our flag.

We also know that as long as 95 percent of us are romantically involved with the same party responsible for the tragic deaths of thousands of men, women, and children and the emotional enslavement of their future generations, particularly in the age of our first black president, the village will continue to raise their progeny in poverty, ignorance, and crime.

We don't have the luxury of allowing black Republicans to be a dying breed. The future of our community and our country depend on it.

The Ashanti believe that "one falsehood spoils a thousand truths." We have lived the lie way too long. We must now have the courage to speak truth to power. Or the Democrats will be in control of our community for another 40 years.

Well, that is unless somebody is finally tired of the ghettos.

Barbara Howard is trade and travel goodwill ambassador to Kenya and president of Barbara Howard & Associates, Inc.