

The History and Politics of Voting in America

**A Sabbatical Leave Activities Report
and Value Statement 2008 - 2009**

by

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On July 14, 2009 I received a copy of a letter from the Salary and Leaves Committee reminding me of the requirements for officially ending my Sabbatical Leave for the year 2008-2009. It was clear indication that the leave was now ended, but what really attracted my attention in the letter was the statement, which said "We take the sabbatical leave very seriously and hope that you will too." It was an innocent statement that caused me to smile. I thought, let me see, I have taught Political Science at Mt. San Antonio College for almost 20 years. I have been the only African American female professor in the Department of History, Art History, Geography and Political Science for all of my years here. I have taught not only the introductory course, Political Science 1 and California State and Local Government, but I was the original advocate for the inclusion of a course entitled African American Politics, which I taught for many years. I have spent the greater portion of my professional career researching and writing about the history and politics of the African American experience in America. In fact during my last sabbatical leave my subject dealt with the study of "Teaching the History and Politics of African American Civil Rights in the New Millennium". I was also awarded a National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship in 1994 and spent the summer with other scholars from throughout the country at UCLA, to examine the history of Civil Rights as portrayed in literature. So did I take this sabbatical leave seriously in looking at the "History and Politics of Voting in America" at a time when America was about to vote in an historical election by electing the first African American to the Presidency. Well as my friends, family and colleagues can attest, this was an exciting time for Dr. Mackey to be on sabbatical leave. In fact they wondered if my timing of the leave was planned in advance. Of course I had to reply "no". At the time that I

submitted my proposal to the committee I had no idea that this was going to be such an historical year politically. I felt so fortunate to have the opportunity to read and write about a topic for which I have always had a passion. What a marvelous stroke of good luck to be able to do this project with the backdrop of history unfolding as I carried out the objectives of my proposal.

What made this opportunity so exciting was that in addition to my project work information about voting and elections was being discussed everywhere. There was excitement that could not be matched. The political discourse all focused on the 2008 Presidential Election. It was all that was being talked about between friends, family, colleagues and professional analysts. The media coverage of the election dominated the airwaves and the internet became the center of up-to-the minute updates on the campaigns. Information was everywhere you turned--you could not escape it. When friends and colleagues learned of my selected sabbatical topic they would continuously forward all sorts of references relevant to my sabbatical project. It was all very exciting. I felt like a participant observer to this historical election.

From the very beginning of my project as outlined in my proposal, I began to check out books from the Honnold Library of the Claremont Colleges. As I read my assigned books I discovered so many other sources that I also included in my project reading. It was difficult to avoid adding additional resources to the list that included both periodicals and journals. While reading my assigned books I also could not avoid the numerous interviews being conducted on television news segments that would have interviews with the presidential

candidates and their campaign staffs. In fact when my project started, August, 2008 the Democratic Convention in Denver, Colorado was taking place. So the backdrop for my reading and writing on the first part of my project (Democracy) was a political convention that had to vote and decide whether to support the candidacy of Hillary Clinton or Barack Obama as the parties official nominee. It was the democratic process being played out right at the start of my sabbatical year. So in addition to my reading and referencing sources in my paper. I decided that it would be beneficial to record the convention highlights for future use in my classroom and make them available to my colleagues at Mt. Sac. I also began to collect books and articles that I believed would also be useful in teaching the topic of presidential election politics. In addition to taping the political conventions, I also decided to record the presidential debates between the Democratic nominee Barack Obama and the Republican nominee John McCain. I plan to use these tapes in class in our discussion of campaigns and elections and presidential politics. I will also make these tapes available to my colleagues. In total I have recorded over 66 hours of Presidential Election 2008 items that would promote classroom discussion and feedback. I have also collected numerous newspaper articles, periodicals and books that may also be used by my colleagues. I have also referenced some of the collected books and articles in my project report.

In September, as I continued to read and write my report, I decided to reinforce my reading by actually visiting the Democratic and Republican headquarters in the City of Claremont and Pomona. I wanted to talk with the staff at the headquarters about their experience with the campaign. During my visit I was

able to observe the staff at both headquarters enthusiastically registering students in order for them to be eligible to vote in the election. It was a first hand encounter with the practice of democracy. The staff was able to assist the students with completing the official county of Los Angeles County Registrar of Voter Application. It was important for me to observe this process in action because it helped explain the tremendous turnout in this election in November, especially from the various ethnic communities and notably the youth vote. I discuss in my project paper the successful recruiting of young people as volunteers in this campaign and the use of the new technologies to support the turnout of youth on election day November 4, 2008. It was a key factor in this election. During my visit to the campaign headquarters I was also able to collect campaign literature that may also be used in facilitating discussion in class about the election and its outcome. It was also beneficial to interview the campaign staffers about this election and give them an opportunity to convey their thoughts and ideas about the election and the process of voting. It was useful information that I was able to incorporate into my project paper hopefully capturing the flavor and excitement the election.

As I continued my reading of books and material into October, the campaign took on another dramatic turn as the American economy took a turn for the worst. Both the Democratic nominee, Barack Obama and Republican nominee John McCain would not be able to ignore the unfolding events and all eyes were focused on the presidential debate between the two candidates. How would they handle the tough questions about the economy and how would it impact their campaign for the presidency. Again, unfolding political events were reinforcing

my project writing efforts. I thought, could this get any more exciting for a political science professor. It was a political enthusiast's dream election. Never a dull moment. Now the economy took center stage causing both campaigns to respond to this urgency. It made for great discussion in my project paper. And it also lead to heated debate between the two candidates. (I recorded this debate for future use as well). I discovered by this point in my project that my biggest challenge would not be the lack of information to collect and write about, but just the opposite, that information was everywhere and my biggest challenge would be to decide which additional information to include in my final written report. It was information overload.

In addition to recording and analyzing the second debate between Barack Obama and John McCain, I decided to record and analyze the October 7, 2006 debate between the Vice Presidential candidates, Joseph Bidden (Democrat) and Sarah Palin (Republican) and collect newspaper articles and periodicals about their impact on the presidential election as well. In comparison, I also recorded the third presidential debate on October 15, 2008 between Barack Obama and John McCain. By then the campaign had really turned 'up the heat' and the sprint to the November 4, 2008 election day was clearly apparent but again made an excellent backdrop for my project study topic. The polling organizations were starting to make projections about the elections outcomes and the news media coverage intensified as news organizations conducted on air interviews not only of the presidential candidates, but of the top aides to the campaigns. I was able to reference many of these interviews in my project report. It seems ironic now but just as the campaign was entering the last week of frantic campaigning, I was

completing Part 1 of my project and beginning to read in preparation for Part 2 and Part 3. My outline timing was ideal but certainly unexpected.

By the time election night arrived on November 4, 2008, I needed to not answer my phone or accept any additional information. I just wanted to analyze the election results and write about its outcome. At least that is what I had thought originally, but this was not to be the case for me. Little did I know that a major historical event was about to take place and that information overload was about to increase even more. I again turned on my recording device to capture not only the election returns, but the acceptance speech of the president-elect, Barack Obama, who would be the first African American elected to the Presidency. It was to say the least exciting for me to live to see such an historical moment. Me, an African American professor on sabbatical leave reading and writing about the history of voting in America at a time when Americans would be casting a majority vote for a new president named Barack Obama. I could not have foreseen this moment when I submitted my initial proposal to the Salary and Leave committee in late 2007. My continued reading and research at the Claremont Honnold Library would take on a new meaning as I continued to work on my project as the momentous 2008 Presidential year came to a close.

As the new year 2009 rolled in, I was now into the last stages of my project which focused on the history of African Americans gaining the right to vote in a nation that once condoned slavery. Again, it was perfect timing as all talk turned to the Inauguration of Barack Obama as the 44th President of the United States. As friends made plans to go to Washington, D.C. to be apart of the historical

ceremony, I continued to collect newspaper articles and periodical journals that were now assessing the election in retrospect. The political analysts were now speculating on the future of the new Presidential Administration. Who would President Obama select as his Chief of Staff and who would be his top aides? Who would be selected to serve in the Presidential Cabinet? Who would he appoint to the Supreme Court if a vacancy became available? What would be some of the policies of the new administration. As I continued the project reading and writing, I quickly discovered that information about the election would not decrease but continue in a different venue and the change in presidential administrations. I would use this to my advantage by trying to incorporate this into my writing about the contemporary aspect of voting in America. Again, there was no shortage of information. Just the struggle to decide what to include as a reference in my report and in my expanding collection of videos, periodicals, newspaper articles and books on the subject.

On January 20, 2009, as an overflow of people converged on the Capitol Mall in Washington D.C., the nation and the world community watched television monitors and the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, John Roberts gave the oath of office to President-elect Barack Obama, the 44th President of the United States. It was history in the making and yes, without a doubt, I took this sabbatical leave very seriously. Thank you, the Salary and Leaves Committee for the opportunity.

Benefit and Value to the College

- It is my sincere hope that the information presented in the report will be beneficial to the college community in understanding the history of voting rights in America.
- That insight will be gained into the understanding of the sacrifices made to in maximizing participation of all of the American citizenry.
- That there will be an appreciation of the of how far America has come in the long journey toward democratizing voting participation.
- That the report will convey the contemporary aspects of voting while exploring the inside perspectives on the 2008 Presidential Election Campaign.
- That the resources collected during my sabbatical leave will be used by faculty and staff to facilitate seminar or classroom discussions about the election process and the significance of the 2008 Presidential Election.
- That the 66 hours of video tapes recorded during the election campaign be used in the classrooms for discussion purposes.
- That the PowerPoint slides be used to make classroom presentations on the topic or serve as a template for expanding the discussion on voting and elections.

Personal Value and Benefit of the Sabbatical Leave

- It was by far the best time for a political science professor to take a leave to study the history of voting in America.
- I gained such a tremendous insight into the history and politics of voting in America and have substantially increased my knowledge of the topic in my chosen field of expertise--political science.
- I am recharged professionally and excited about sharing all that I have learned during my one year leave.
- I am proud of my expanded resource collection about the 2008 Presidential Election and look forward to sharing these resources with the Mt. Sac faculty and staff.
- I have a new perspective and understanding of democracy and the electoral process as practiced in America.

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Part 1 - The Foundations of American Democracy

Introduction

The 2008 Presidential Election opened a title wave of political discourse on the topic and meaning of democracy in a post-911 world. The America we all once knew seemed to be reforming itself at record speeds as we moved through a campaign season unlike any other in American history. The traditional ideologies and ideological struggles played itself out in the media with conflicting definitions about where America stands on the practice of democratic principles that have been built into and implied in our United States Constitution. A Constitution of course written as a grand experiment that would later prove to be more difficult and complex to implement than the Founding Fathers could have predicted.

During that warm Philadelphia summer back in 1787, they certainly would not have envisioned the massive and inclusive turnout of voters to elect the first African American President, Barack Obama in 2008. For the Constitution that they created had many restrictions that would in fact prevent many Americans from practicing and participating in this most precious right of citizenship -- voting. Along those same lines, no one could have predicted the turn out and outcome as the Presidential Administration of George W. Bush also ground to a staggering end, with the national economy in shambles signaling the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression and resulting in the opinion

ratings of the president dropping to an all time low for a sitting president of the United States. If future historians are not kind to President Bush, they may well position him below that of Warren G. Harding, the nation's twenty-ninth president, who has held the dubious distinction of having the lowest of presidential public opinion ratings. (With the exception of President William Henry Harrison who died the first month of his presidency).

The legacy of George W. Bush will long be remembered for its post 911 decision to take the country into an Iraq War at the same time that our troops were already fighting a war in Afghanistan. He will also be remembered for the failure of the federal government to respond in kind to the people devastated by Hurricane Katrina in the South Gulf coast. Particularly the people of the city of New Orleans. Those images of Americans standing on roof tops crying out for rescue and relief may very well stay a part of our American consciousness and not fade in the near future. The media coverage of the very poor with many of their loved ones lost in the unforgiving flood waters of the overflowing levies that failed to protect them and their neighbors may be forever recorded as a sad failure of the government. For those who lived through it-- what would now be their definition of democracy? How would the anger manifest itself in the upcoming elections as the 'lame duck' George W. Bush prepared to leave the White House to his predecessor Barack Obama. One thing that was clearly verbalized by the American people is that their anger was not just reserved for the American President but also for that of the U.S. Congress who they also accused of a disconnect from the needs of the American people.

How did that anger play out in the campaign and election? The outcry was consistent and unmistakable. The people wanted change! Overwhelmingly the opinion polls showed that a large majority of the voting public thought the Nation was heading in the wrong direction. That cry for change resulted in a determined electorate showing up at the polls in large numbers on November 4, 2008. It was clearly an expression of their disappointment with its elected officials and the government's failed policies. So determined was the voting electorate that long lines formed at Registrar of Voters headquarters weeks before election day. In Los Angeles County, it was an awesome sight to see the determination of voters who stood for hours in the rain in front of the County Registrar of Voters Building to make sure that voting registration papers were filed correctly and in order. Clearly this election was important and it crossed all economic, racial and ethnic lines. Nothing would stand in the way of the voter being able to cast his or her vote in this defining, historically important election.

What seems most significant about the 2008 elections is that it called into question the meaning of democracy and the significance of the vote. What did the election and its result teach us about the practice of democracy in America? What does it say about our history and the evolution of voting rights in America and the significance of the voice of the people. There seems no better time to address the question of the origins and foundations of American Democracy. To examine its foundations, the historical redefining of democracy, its politics and the struggle of many to force the process (voting) to be made accessible to all Americans who on November 4, 2008, wanted to exercise the most basic of rights of American citizenship, not only to elect a new American President, but to also

elect representatives to serve as decision makers in National, State and local legislative bodies. Clearly this election was a "defining moment" and an opportunity to explore some of these critical questions.

A. What is Democracy?

There is both myth and conjecture about the word democracy. In this past election we observed citizen participation with many lining up to vote for a promise of change in American policy. It was certainly a turnout of voters, especially the young, who have been historically noted as being turned off by the American electoral process. While this may have been true in the past, the turnout in the 2008 Election by the young was impressive and notable and certainly demonstrates that the term democracy and its practice still survives in the modern age.

Many authors on the subject of democracy explain it in many differing ways. The most common conception of the definition is based on the idea that of political power resting with the people in deciding elections and policy direction for the nation. For example, the Athenian philosopher Aristotle, as published in his recorded works called *The Politics* written between 335 and 323 BC., proclaimed that at the heart of democracy is the principle of liberty.¹ We would call it today, life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. But this definition comes

¹ Aristotle, *The Politics* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981), 362-4.

with a less widely accepted view on the part of the early political philosophers. As the Greek philosophers talked about the foundational meaning of democracy it should be noted that they did not conceive of the evolution of democracy in the manner in which it is now understood in western democratic theory. To understand the earlier views of democracy we must be reminded of the fact that Aristotle, for instance, was too much of an aristocrat to envision the evolution of democracy as characterized in the discourse and mass political interest and involvement of the electorate in the 2008 presidential election. In fact, it can be argued that Aristotle had little faith in the wisdom of the lower classes and projected that there would be total disregard for rights with their involvement in political decisions regarding the polity,² if the mass were given full participation in the decision-making process with the community or the 'polity'. At the same time though, Aristotle also feared the use of unlimited political power in the hands of "one man". He feared the resulting tyranny and selfishness of such rule and condemned this form of government as the worst for its potential of destroying individual initiative and thus the overall productivity of the society. So in the final analysis we can say that Aristotle understood the inherent weaknesses of a democratic government but certainly he understood also that democracy was by far the most satisfying choice in achieving a community organization for meeting the needs of society.³

² Walter R. Agard, *What Democracy Meant to the Greeks* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1942), 225.

³ *Ibid.*, 222-23.

Without question the understanding of democracy in western civilization has developed into both " a form of government and a political value." ⁴ The central motivation of ideals behind the concept of democracy and democratic thought can be traced back to the ideas presented by the Athenian philosophers who stayed with political constructs we no longer think as foreign to the modern American view of democracy, like equality, liberty, respect for the law and justice. It is when we start the discussion of 'individuals and their rights' that we find this hard to trace back to the thinkers of Athens.

What we can trace back to Athenian democracy is its exclusivity "marked by unity, solidarity, participation and a highly restricted citizenship. We also find that the "state reached deeply into the lives of its citizens, but embraced only a small proportion of the population." ⁵ It was only after 1789 did we start to hear the emergence of a new ideal for democracy-- a form of democratization of societies-- a movement toward a more individualistic perspective on human rights. It should also be noted that this emergence of democratic thought is often attributed to the French Revolution which inspired a movement toward the existing concept we now associate with modern democracies.⁶ The consensus is that democracy should not be assigned the ominous task of solving all of our problems and modern day challenges but it is reasonable to embrace Held's definition of what democracy should do and accomplish. He says that;

⁴ John Dunn, *Democracy: A History* (New York, New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2005), 17.

⁵ David Held, *Models of Democracy*, 2nd Edition (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1996), 23.

⁶ Dunn, 17.

"...Democracy can be seen to lay down a programme of change in and through which pressing, substantive issues will receive a better opportunity for deliberation, debate and resolution than they would under alternative regimes."⁷

In his writing, Held encourages us to see "both the remarkable achievements and strict limits of Athenian democracy."⁸ By understanding the limited but eventual emergence of expansive democracy we come to appreciate its journey and impact on our lives over time and through struggle.

B. The Origin of Democratic Theory

In the legacy of democracy, it is also noted that many of the Greek philosophers, namely that of Plato (c.427-347 BC), Thucydides (c.460-399 BC) and of course Aristotle (384 -322 BC) continued to be quite critical of the concept of democracy.

⁹ But with the emergence of the concept of modern democracy many authors on the subject now take a broader and more expansive view of democracy. It is as if the intervening years of experiments with the practice taught us lessons about the true nature and practice of democracy, both its successes and its failures. But most important, comparing its weaknesses with other forms of government that may have resulted in more failings than that of basic democratic practices.

⁷ Held, 298.

⁸ Ibid., 24.

⁹ Held, 16.

The major lesson great political thinkers seemed to have learned in time is that democratic theory is far from perfect. In his book *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* published in 1943, writer Joseph Schumpeter asserted boldly that, "classical democratic theory was in need of a great revision" and with this assertion he set out to do just that. His first major precept was that democratic theory not be viewed as a 'means to an end'. In its place he offers this idea instead. He said that; "Democracy is a political method, that is to say, a certain type of institutional arrangement for arriving at political- legislative and administrative-decisions."¹⁰ It was his view that democracy should be defined by the process by which the competition for the peoples' vote is central to the meaning of democracy. It is within this very process of competition between competitors for power over decision-making in government and the act of gaining that decision making authority (voting), that we find the central core meaning of democracy.¹¹

In the classic political work, *Democracy in America*, French philosopher Alexis de Tocqueville, presented this view of his observations of the American practice of democracy. He said:

"Democracy does not give the people the most skillful government, but it produces what the ablest governments are frequently unable to create; namely, an all-pervading and restless activity, a

¹⁰ Joseph A. Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* (New York : Harper, 1942). 242.

¹¹ *Ibid*, 269.

superabundant force, and an energy which is inseparable from it and which may, however unfavorable circumstances may be, produce wonders. These are the true advantages of democracy."¹²

The long standing idea behind democracy which has been sustained from the roots of Athenian political thinking is that democracy, when it stays within the view of people being concerned about the common good for the community, democracy is at its very pinnacle of functionality and core purpose. When its form and practice favors the many and not just the few-- only then is the true practice of democracy taking place. It is only when the community of citizens are educated and aware of the needs of the community and aspire to put self aside and dig deeply into what is in the best interest of the larger community -- then, and only then, can the claim on democracy be realized.¹³

Acclaimed writer and author Robert A. Dahl, offers this assessment of the practice of democracy at its best. He said that, "only in associations with others can we hope to become fully human or, certainly, to realize our qualities of excellence as human beings."¹⁴ With this claim comes the understanding that in order for citizens to associate and take action on behalf of the community, education is critical to their participation. In fact, democratic participation does not take place without democratic education. It is a central component in the

¹² Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1945), 252.

¹³ William E. Hudson, *American Democracy in Peril: Eight Challenges to America's Future*, Fifth Edition (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press, 2006), 146.

¹⁴ Robert A. Dahl, *Democracy and Its Critics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 14.

involvement of adults in a society striving for civil and political freedoms and the practice of democracy. Without education, participation is compromised.¹⁵

What democracy does offer us is an opportunity for citizens to participate within a system that is not perfect but a system that is optimistic about our ability to become involved in the work of problem solving for the greater development of the community.¹⁶

C. The Practice of Democracy in the Modern Era

It is clear that, "democracy places a high premium on citizens being both knowledgeable and articulate."¹⁷ But the most identified method for that articulation in democratic elections is the vote.

Elections have become central in the practice of modern democracies. Elections are also central to the democratic method because they provide the mechanism through which the control of leaders by non-leaders can take place.¹⁸

Central to the process of voting is the structure of the ballot that allows citizens to express their will. The ballot basically structures the voters choices and ask them to select among competing contestants who are vying for positions of

¹⁵ Amy Gutmann, *Democratic Education* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1987), 28.

¹⁶ Agard, 6.

¹⁷ Gutmann, 285.

¹⁸ Robert A. Dahl, *Preface to Democratic Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956), 3.

leadership and authority.¹⁹ Even so, the job of a voting citizenry does not end when the ballot is cast. In fact the role of the citizen never ends (at least it should not end) even between elections because the focus now must shift to the engagement of "activities and involvements designed to garner the attentions of elected officials and keep them focused on the needs of the citizenry."²⁰ There is no denying that elections are important in a democracy but if citizens do not participate in large numbers it may also signal that they may either feel a sense of hopelessness in the process or that on the contrary, they may in fact be satisfied with the decisions of the elected government leaders.²¹

On the other side of the argument of participation and involvement, 'protective/pluralists' have been known to fear massive citizen involvement. The concerns of the American Founding Fathers were prevalent during the debates in the chambers of Constitution Hall back in 1787. What was their concern? It was the fear of too much widespread democratic involvement by the citizenry. Author William E. Hudson articulates it in this way; "...too much democracy creates more conflict than representatives can easily resolve, and it brings into democratic politics authoritarian elements of the population who are intolerant of democratic compromises."²² But the response of the American Founding Fathers was to design a nation and craft a United States Constitution to do just that would--hold the common people in check by establishing a

¹⁹ Douglas W. Rae, *The Political Consequences of Electoral Laws* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), 16.

²⁰ Hudson, 144-145.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 146.

²² *Ibid.*, 146-147.

government of laws 'above that of men'.²³ From a contemporary perspective "George Washington himself would have been horrified by the notion of a president being elected directly by universal suffrage organized on [political] party lines."²⁴ But it was Thomas Jefferson who continued to argue for the rights of the common man, (though his private views often conflicted with his public ones), he clung to the idea that, "the care of human life and happiness is the first and only legitimate object of good government."²⁵ But writer Douglas Rae is also quick to remind us that the ultimate "objective of all electoral systems is the formulae of victory."²⁶

One often overlooked perspective on the link between the democratic objective and the electoral voting process is the immediate expectation that nation building is easily precipitated as a result of the vote. Nothing could be further from the truth. Democracy does not take place over night nor on a direct unchallenged path. As history reflects in the forming of new or reemerging democratic systems of government, there is always a price to pay on the journey to achieve the anticipated freedoms that often accompany democracy. Writer and Journalist Fareed Zakaria has written extensively on the subject of the struggles of nations painstakingly convulsing toward at least the semblance of a democracy. But he is also quick to point out that this comes with a price. In one article printed in Newsweek Magazine on September 29, 2009, as the war in Iraq

²³ Agard, 224.

²⁴ Paul Johnson, "The Organic and Moral Elements in the American Constitution," *World and I* (New World Communication, Inc.) 18, no. 2 (February 2003), 11.

²⁵ Agard, 13.

²⁶ Rae, 39.

raged on, Zakaria presented the following warning about 'too simple to be true democracy'

One simple path to democracy is to hold elections. This has an obvious appeal. It legitimizes the political system, broadens participation and provides a simple answer to the question 'Who should rule?' Holding elections is a defining feature of any liberal democracy. But it should not be the first step in building a democracy. Western societies went through centuries of modernization before they held elections. The Magna Carta, which first established limits on governmental power, preceded universal adult suffrage in Britain by about 800 years. It takes time to develop institutions of law and a civil society.²⁷

So we are left with the question of how then do we recognize a reasonably, successful democracy? (See Table 1). Walter R. Agard seems to offer the simplest answer to this perplexing question. He says that we can recognize a successful democracy, "when the members of a community possess this spirit of freely participating in a common cause, the fruits of which they will share, there true democracy functions."²⁸

²⁷ Fareed Zakaria, "Democracy: If You Want to Free Your Country, First Liberate Its Land," *Newsweek*, September 28, 2008: 46.

²⁸ Agard, 14.

Table 1**Elements in the Practice of Democracy**

1. Each individual has essential importance and worth
2. People can be trusted to work out useful solutions when they have sufficient education and responsibility
3. Judgement of all the people in the long run, is both sounder and safer than any one person or group
4. Collective interests must be protected against any individual or group which jeopardizes them
5. Democracy recognizes no validity in the prejudices of class, race, or religion
6. A community is most productive when all its abilities are utilized

(Data Source: *What Democracy Meant to the Greeks*, Walter R. Agard, The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1942, 3-16)

Held is no doubt correct in his assessment, but which factor can be identified as a primary vehicle in fostering democracy and how do we recognize the circumstances that lead to or promote the participation element in a democracy. One idea is that democratic values and practices thrive when people have land that they can claim as their own. It is through personal ownership, as opposed to living under a form of feudalism, that democratic participation is nourished. It is this fact historically that prevails even today and continues to promote the idea that the citizen has an investment in the well-being of the community. It is through ownership of property that citizens also own a part of the democratic investment.

Early liberal land policy is often attributed to the growth of American democracy. The agrarian concept that so typifies the early American experience cannot be underestimated in both the growth of American democracy and the economic growth of the nation. It is typically identified as a factor in the promotion of democracy among common man and can be credited with his achievement and understanding of the importance of participatory involvement in the social and political spectrum of American democracy. Buried in the core of this concept is the idea that along with ownership are the seeds of the rights of liberty, equality and a sense of individualism that is so engrained in the American political and cultural belief system.²⁹ On this issue of the power of ownership, Fareed Zakaria also writes that, "If there is a dominant obstacle to building democracy, one that seems to recur in country after country, it is

²⁹Ewing, Cortez A. M. *Presidential Elections: From Lincoln to Franklin D. Roosevelt* (Norman, Oklahoma: The University of Oklahoma Press, 1940), 2.

feudalism. In most developing countries, land is the most important asset, and is the key to economic and political power.³⁰

³⁰ Zakaria, 46.

Part 2 - The History of Voting in America

"Every time you vote you make your kids a promise. its a promise that you will look past cheap slogans and lazy alliances to try to find a way to make America worthy of a new generation."³¹

Anna Quindlen

Introduction

With the excitement of the most recent Presidential Election on November 4, 2008, it seems unfathomable that the history of voting in America did not provide open access to all who wanted to participate in the democratic process of electing our representative who would be given authority to set the direction and focus of the American nation.

An examination of America's voting rights encompasses a long history of organized struggle and sacrifice to gain the sought after precious right of citizenship. By today's standards of open access to the vote, it is sometimes difficult to understand the origins of an America whose very Founding Fathers consciously drafted a restrictive and none inclusive U.S. Constitution as they gathered in Philadelphia to first restructure and ultimately design a new government. These were the champions of the Revolutionary War with England and the new society of peoples transported from Europe, but always hungry for

³¹ Anna Quindlen, "This is Important," *Newsweek*, September 29, 2008: 70.

the likes of freedom. With the cry for freedom pouring from their lips and the sweet smell of liberty fragrantly permeating in the colonial air, how could it be that these very same sojourners miss the opportunity to design a new nation that would equally provide access to the voting process. And, why did it take so long for the nation to correct the misfortunate decisions of the Founding Fathers and finally put the country on track to realizing the full democratization of the voting process? Who initially was included, and who was left out of the voting process and why? What strategies did disenfranchised groups incorporate into their struggle to gain the right to vote? What does this struggle teach us about the modern day concept and viability of democracy? These are all important questions that shaped the political discourse during the 2008 Presidential Election along with the louder outcry for change.

A. Voting Rights and Restrictions in Early America

We often ask the question, what were the Founders thinking? Historians and political scientists continue to debate about the true motives of the 55 men who gathered in Philadelphia back in 1787 with the monumental task of redesigning and then ultimately creating a new national design of government. We may never truly know the answer to this question but we can examine the facts and resulting consequence of the Founders decisions. For example, we know from

examining the records of the debate (*The Federalist Papers*)³² that there was no talk at the convention about such lofty ideas such as universal suffrage, the rights of labor, the equality of women, free public education and certainly no discussion of complete emancipation of the slave populations. All of these ideas were in fact alien to the delegates participating in the convention.³³ We also know that the 55 men who gathered in Philadelphia were the elite of colonial society. They were the wealthy, the influential, and some of the most educated men of the country all sharing what Woodrow Wilson would call, a "conscious of solidarity of interests".³⁴ Yet what was most foreign and alien to them at the convention was the idea that all men were created equal [or] treated equally before the law and should have access to all opportunities of life. Of course nothing closely resembling these ideals were clearly stated in the original Constitution.³⁵

What was not foreign to their thinking, was the need to reinvent a government that had fallen into economic and political rebellion under the *Articles of Confederation*, the loosely designed government structure drafted by the Continental Congress and ratified in 1781 with the purpose of protecting the independence of the colonial states. It was a founding document whose fear of central tyranny and more freedom to localities, was the overriding objective.

³² A series of eighty-five essays written by Alexander Hamilton, James Madison and John Jay to respond to critics of the Constitution as drafted in 1787. The essays were published in newspapers throughout the colonial states with the major focus on winning the support of the state of New York.

³³ Richard Kluger, *Simple Justice: The History of Brown v. Board of Education and Black America's Struggle for Equality* (New York, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004), 29.

³⁴ *Ibid*, 30.

³⁵ *Ibid*, 29-30.

But under its administration, the young nation of America became engulfed in economic and political strife that could not be ignored by the prominent business and political leaders. The reluctance to consider that the original design of government was faltering, was a reflection of the fears of returning to a form of British rule where a central monarchy exercised extensive governing authority. In fighting the Revolutionary War, the colonies had long ago decided that they had had enough of such rule. But in designing a decentralized government to prevent such governing little did they realize that they were also planting the seeds of rebellion and discord in colonial life by giving too much power and autonomy to the localities.

The crisis of not having strong national leadership in the design of government could no longer be ignored. So as the Founding Fathers gathered to address the apparent weaknesses of the Articles , within five days these same delegates came to the realization that they would be called upon for a larger task that could not have been imagined when the first call went out to gather in Philadelphia in 1786. They would in fact need to invent a new nation. But there were some looming questions and challenges that almost seemed insurmountable.

These 55 men of property and wealth had achieved prominence in their home states and they brought to the convention their individual fears and trepidations. Whatever their fears, the American nation needed a cataclysmic redesign with a redistribution of governing power and authority. As they began their deliberations, the challenges they faced became painfully apparent. First, the

allocation of power between the localities and the overwhelming fear of creating a centralized power that would compromise individual liberties would have to be addressed. They also recognized that without a central government, chaos and a lack of unified national interest and purpose would be compromised without it. So the center of debate focused the challenge of, who should have the largest or 'lion share' of governing power in the American nation?-- How do we govern the nation centrally to unify the purposes of the national interest but at the same time not ignore the unique governing needs of the localities?

With the ending of the American Revolutionary War and the end of a period (1760s - 1780s) the colonists began to move away from the traditional practice of humanism and colonial voting patterns to embrace a revised view and practice of politics and voting.³⁶ From their viewpoint, office holding was a right that belonged to the elite and were considered a civic duty. But it also came with the responsibility to serve the interests of the commonwealth. Also, they believed that the elite were best able and better prepared to decide what is in the best interest of the community. Fortunately by the end of the Constitutional Convention, the delegates had moved away from the conception of government based on the mixed government of monarchy, aristocracy and the people as a form of government and had forged a document that embraced the ideal of republicanism--a system that would give people the power of consent.³⁷

³⁶ Donald W. Rogers, "Introduction: The Right to Vote in American History," in *Voting and the Spirit of American Democracy: Essays on the History of Voting and Voting Rights in America*, ed. Donald W. Rogers and Christine Scriabine (Chicago, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 9.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 8-9.

With this new design arose a new question of participation-- namely, who should be allowed to participate? The Constitutional debate over the question presented such obstacles to the thinking of the delegates that a title wave of compromises were put forth to resolve the issues to be addressed. It was over the question of inclusion versus exclusion that the Founding Fathers began to falter in the inventing of the new nation.

While their decision-making on the question of the compromise over government structure and balance between a central v. local power distribution conveyed great foresight, it was over the question of citizenship rights, and participation in the voting (electoral process) that sent America down a dark road that would scar the nation for generations and render the Constitution contradictory to the values espoused during the American Revolution. There was no questioning of the fact that the Founders feared the 'rule of the majority' for in their minds, the majority (the people with the power of consent), would be 'unruly, fickle, and imprudent' in their decision-making-- causing instability in a nation that so needed a stable foundation in its infancy.³⁸

When taken in a historical perspective, one can understand the concerns of the Founders of the American nation over the question of the need for stability. But it was in the all consuming need to compromise these overwhelming fears that we find deep failures buried in the original Constitution. It is in the dramatic

³⁸ Kluger, 30.

pendulum swing for the sake of compromise that the Founders set us on the path of correction and revision at great cost. Did they realize back then that it would take years to sort out the injustices of their decisions to those whose rights were denied. It may have pragmatically been the only route for them to take to save the young nation, but at what price?

B. African American Exclusion from the Vote

The history of African American suffrage in American can be traced back to the very beginning of one of the most detrimental decisions that the Founding Fathers made at the Philadelphia Convention. It was the decision on the question of allowing the African slave trade to continue.³⁹ The minimal debate at the Convention itself demonstrated that the Founders either lacked the will to abolish the slave trade outright or pragmatically assumed that the Southern region, which condoned and economically depended on slave labor, would never ratify the revised government structure they had created. Was it ingenious to make such a decision at the time or just a poor compromise. Whatever the reason, by the end of the deliberations at the Convention, the delegates there had "created a framework of government that tacitly recognized slavery, offered

³⁹ Note: The delegates approved of a provision to the Constitution that would prohibit congressional interference with the slave trade for twenty years. (Article 1, Sections 9)

protection to it, and, most important, strengthened the hand of its advocates in the national government."⁴⁰

Without question, "since the seventeenth century, race has been a dominant and dynamic force in virtually all aspects of American life."⁴¹ As the delegates at the Convention worked at pragmatic solutions to save the young American nation experiencing growing pains, the debate over the question of the existence of slavery, that 'peculiar institution' that had become so entrenched into the fabric of the nation, was not clearly a question that 'figured prominently' at the Convention. Although, that same question would continue to shape and define the nation and the evolution of the Constitution for some six decades.⁴²

After decades of struggle, slavery officially ended on December 6, 1865 but African Americans were still denied the right to full citizenship and the right to participate in the vote. Former slaves were not the only group without the power to exercise the vote, but so were "indentured servants, and women and the mass of men who did not own enough property to qualify as voters under state regulations."⁴³

In the quest for African American suffrage rights, the U.S. Congress failed to address this injustice by not passing legislation that would have put into place

⁴⁰ Donald G. Nieman, *Promises to Keep: African-Americans and the Constitutional Order, 1776 to the Present* (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 12.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, vii.

⁴² *Ibid.*, vii.

⁴³ Kluger, 29.

strict limitations on the ability of many southern states from preventing African Americans from voting. It would take seventy-four years for African Americans to finally gain their full voting rights after Congress finally passed the Voting Rights Act of 1965.⁴⁴

In the decades that preceded the passage of the Voting Rights Act there were continued efforts to fight for the equal protection freedoms and franchise rights of African Americans. Most notable but undeniably, the Civil War forced the nation to redefine itself as a nation under a Constitution that promised high ideals but only for a very limited number of people. Historian James M. McPherson was best able to capture the impact of the Civil War by highlighting President Abraham Lincoln's second Annual Message to Congress (today we would call it the State of the Union Address) delivered on December 1, 1862. In his assessment, McPherson conveys what the Civil War meant to President Abraham Lincoln and to an America in need of healing its wounds. McPherson presents it as follows;

The state of the Union at the end of 1862 was perilous- the Confederate State of America stood proud and defiant as an independent nation whose existence flouted the pretense of Union. Northern armies were experiencing frustration and defeat on all fronts. Political opposition in Washington menaced the Lincoln Administration's ability to carry on the war to restore the Union.

⁴⁴ DeWayne Wickham, "Congress Needs to Make Full Confession on Slavery," *USA Today*, June 23, 2009: 11A.

That opposition focused particularly on the Emancipation Proclamation, announced the previous September and scheduled to go into effect on January 1, 1863. Lincoln had embraced emancipation both as a way to weaken the Confederate war effort by depriving it of slave labor and as a sweeping expansion of Union war aims. No longer would the North fight merely for restoration of the old Union-- a Union with slavery to mock American ideals of liberty. Now it would fight to give that Union "a new birth of freedom," as Lincoln put it almost a year later at Gettysburg.⁴⁵

What we can say conclusively about the Civil War is that it redefined the principles of the American Constitution. Finally, there would be new meaning given to the definition of what is the true meaning of 'national citizenship' and what it means to provide 'equal protection before the law'.⁴⁶ The Civil War marked a turning point that would put America on track to realizing true freedom rights for all of its citizens--but such rights would not come without great sacrifice from those denied their basic freedom rights of participation.

The Civil War also ushered in a new period known as the Reconstruction Era. It was a time in America when the radical Republican lead Congress passed several

⁴⁵ James M. McPherson, "Forward," in *The Last Best Hope of Earth: Abraham Lincoln and the Promise of America (Catalogue of an Exhibition at the Huntington Library)*. (San Marino, California: Huntington Library, 1993).

⁴⁶ Rogers, 10.

pieces of legislation to address the rebellious Southern regions need to reform itself after nearly destroying the Union through its act of succession. It was during this period that the "Civil War" Amendments to the U.S. Constitution would be passed. Those amendments included the Thirteenth Amendment that would forbid slavery. The Fourteenth Amendment that would forbid states from denying citizens certain basic rights. (This amendment is known as the 'equal protection clause' of the Fourteenth Amendment). And the Fifteenth Amendment specifically aimed at providing voting rights to emancipated African American males. This amendment is now interpreted to include all minorities groups who were denied the right to vote because of their, 'race, color, or prior condition of servitude'.⁴⁷

An era which started with the vestige of hope and change actually became short lived when that same Congress began to abandon its prior commitment to correcting America's disappointing history in providing equal rights and protection of its people.⁴⁸ The National government's repeal and failure at continued enforcement of Reconstruction policy, particularly in the South, put a nail into the coffin of equal protection and voting rights that would not again take center stage until the advent of the modern day Civil Rights Movement. There would be a long, painful waiting period before African Americans would be able to exercise their voting rights. They could fight in American wars,

⁴⁷ Note source: U.S. Constitution, Amendments, 13, 14, & 15.

⁴⁸ Note: By the 1800's, northern whites began to focus on industrial development in their region and lost interest in continued enforcement of the south by the federal military. When the troops were finally withdrawn, southern democrats began to take actions that would undermine black voting rights in the region. (See Rogers, page 13, for a detailed explanation).

sacrificing their lives for their country, but in many regions, notably that of the South, they were still not able to register to vote and fully express their rights as a citizen of the nation that still promised equality in its Constitution. It became clear that America lacked the will to permanently and succinctly alleviate these injustices. The result would be that millions of Americans were disenfranchised and would remain so until the actions of groups united under a modern day Civil Rights Movement began to force the hand of the national government, moving it toward full alignment with its founding constitutional principles.

What is most unfortunate about this American legacy of freedom rights (voting rights) is that ..."although American government was founded on the practice of frequent elections, enormous amounts of political energy throughout American history have been expended on deciding which Americans can vote on behalf of 'the People' ..."49

C. African Americans at the 'Center of the Storm' for Voting Rights

In the struggle for voting rights in the South, one thing was now certain, "there were [now] few Constitutional limitations on the manner in which states might treat persons residing within their borders and even fewer if they were black".50 This fact of course did not mean that the southern state governments would

⁴⁹ Rogers, 5.

⁵⁰ Donald G. Nieman, *Promises to Keep: African-Americans and the Constitutional Order, 1776 to the Present* (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 24

exercise their power to impose restrictions on the rights of blacks to vote. From the 1860s and on to the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the southern region systematically and unceremoniously developed creative methods of denying the right to vote for millions of African Americans much of which came about through state and local legislation.⁵¹ So creative were the devices used to disenfranchise African Americans, that such methods were smooth enough to argue that the Fifteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution had not been violated. The same states rights arguments that supported a Southern departure from the Union during the Civil War era was now being used to prevent African Americans from voting. (See Table 2).

Table 2 - Methods of Restricting Voter Participation

1. The Poll Tax
2. The All - White Primary
3. Literacy Tests
4. Intimidation
5. Discriminatory Registration Practices
6. Elections Law Changes⁵²

⁵¹ See a copy of the *Louisiana Literacy Test* in the Appendices.

⁵² Source of Data: Richard Scher and James Button, "Voting Rights Act: Implementation and Impact," in *Implementaton of Civil Rights Policy*, ed. Charles Bullock III and Charles Lamb (Monterey, California: Brooks/Cole, 1984), 20-25.

So hostile was the southern resistance to African American voters even in the face of national legislation and Supreme Court decisions, the South continued its defiance of federal mandates. One notable example of this defiance occurred when in 1944, "the Supreme Court declared white primaries unconstitutional, many southern officials, anticipating a concerted push for black suffrage, once again took steps to prevent it."⁵³

Physical intimidation of African Americans who dared attempt to register and vote in the south became a painful, degrading reality of life. When the physical intimidation was not sufficient to instill fear, there was always the economic and psychological intimidation that always seemed to be present in everyday life. Such intimidation would include being "fired from jobs, denied credit in stores, or evicted from the land they [African Americans] worked as tenant farmers."⁵⁴ It was not unusual for African Americans to be tortured or murdered when seeking to register to vote or if caught advocating and encouraging other African Americans to do the same.⁵⁵ As reprehensible as these actions may have been, it must be acknowledged that the South was aided by the Northern indifference of its politicians and the inaction of the federal judiciary.

Given these intersecting winds against change, one does not need to wonder why the civil rights of African Americans were essentially 'gutted' and the intent

⁵³ Chandler Davidson and Bernard Groffman, *Quiet Revolution in the South: The Impact of the Voting Rights Act, 1965-1990* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994),

⁵⁴ Scher and Button, 22.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 22.

of the Civil War amendments nullified.⁵⁶ The long and painful history of denying African Americans the right to vote places this group of citizens at the heart of the central question of equality and equal protection under the law. It is the African American struggle for voting rights that transformed the Constitution from a "document primarily concerned with property rights and federal relations into a charter of equality."⁵⁷ This is not to say that the struggle of other groups were less important but that the question of African American voting rights was at the heart of American ideals from its founding era. By "appealing to the principles embodied in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, black Americans and their white allies forged an equalitarian constitutionalism and skillfully used it to reshape the Constitution itself and American society."⁵⁸

Why then is the right to vote so fundamentally important in America? It is because "elections actively demonstrate that American government is--at least, theoretically-- an extension of the people's will."⁵⁹ From the very beginning of the African American Civil Rights Movement (most fervently after World War II) leaders of the Civil Rights Movement recognized that they would need white cooperation and support in the struggle to gain voting rights since there was great reluctance on the part of the Congress and the Judiciary to push for full compliance of Federal law.⁶⁰ It would take convincing the entire nation that the time had arrived where the country needed to finally make the commitment to

⁵⁶ Davidson and Grofman, 379.

⁵⁷ Nieman, ix.

⁵⁸ Ibid, viii.

⁵⁹ Rogers, 5.

⁶⁰ Scher and Button, 23-24.

change and redirect the country to the original ideals of democracy, freedom and equality long denied. Sadly, even with the passage of the Civil Rights Acts of 1957, 1960 and 1964-- there was still no guarantee that voting rights would be given to large numbers of African Americans living in the deep South. Civil rights leaders, the Congress and then President Lyndon B. Johnson also began to recognize "that only extraordinary measures would guarantee black southerners the rights they had long been denied.....voting rights was a case in point..."⁶¹

In a speech delivered in June of 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson said the following about the long quest for equality for African Americans. He said back then that; "We seek not just freedom but opportunity--not just legal equity but human ability--not just equality as a right and a theory but as a fact and as a result."⁶²

This call to arms by the President did not come easily or quickly. President Johnson was known for his political skill and acumen. He found himself as President with few options when it came to the state of unrest that had engulfed the country over the issue of civil rights. African American leaders had long seized the moment and could wait no longer for a reticent immobilized government to lead the way to civil rights changes. This was a nation divided and scarred by its involvement in the Vietnam War. A war that had come to engulf the American President to the point of shear frustration, distracting him

⁶¹ Davidson and Grofman, 379.

⁶² Quoted from a speech given by President Lyndon B. Johnson entitled: "To Fulfill These Rights" at Howard University in Washington, D.C., for the Commencement Address (June, 1965).

from his passion to focus the energies of his Administration on the domestic needs of the nation.

The vigilance of the anti-war activists and of the civil rights leaders were persistent and focused. The American public now made aware of the atrocity of southern blacks in their quest for basic rights so long denied them. The media cameras were now bearing witness to the violent attacks on innocent non-violent black protesters. The violent television scenes of attacks on protesters awakened a sleeping nation about its lack of freedoms at home. What did the U.S. Constitution mean at home and to the world when so many of its citizens were being denied their basic rights. To his credit, it was Martin Luther King, Jr. who recognized the power of the written word and the attention generating power of media camera on the actions of the civil rights protests. He understood that the success of the movement depended upon getting the public opinion pressure intensely focused on the policy makers. He clearly intended to tap into America's moral conscious on the question of justice and equality.⁶³

The leaders of the nation may have had the will to move the country toward change but it took the pressure of activist groups willing to place their lives on the line for this great American cause of freedom and to show them the urgent need for action now.⁶⁴ It was only after organized pressure, that President

⁶³ Larry Schweikart and Michael Allen, *A Patriot's History of the United States: From Columbus's Great Discovery to the War on Terror* (New York, New York: Sentinel/Penguin Group, 2004).

⁶⁴ Note: The sit-ins and boycott protests were against Jim Crow segregation in the South. Organized groups included the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee

Johnson began to utilize the full force of his political acumen to heavily lobby the Congress to pass the 1965 Voting Rights Act even in the face of strong opposition from the South. In his book, *Simple Justice*, Richard Kluger offers his description of President Lyndon B. Johnson's push for Civil Rights legislation.

A consummate practitioner of legislative deal-making, whose glad-handing could turn bone-crushing if need be. His expansive rhetoric and carrot-and-stick enticements drew together liberal and moderate lawmakers of both parties and fashioned a program that advanced the rights of African Americans far beyond what Kennedy, for all his good intentions, could probably ever have accomplished.⁶⁵

The Civil Rights Act of 1964, which was passed by Congress on July 3, 1964 prohibited any institution in America from denying African Americans public access. But the continued white resistance to the provisions of the Act, especially the provision that would allow African Americans the right to register and vote in large numbers in the South, convinced civil rights leaders, Congress and President Johnson that more would have to be done.⁶⁶ The March from Selma, Alabama across the Edmund Pettis Bridge to Montgomery led by Martin Luther King, Jr. on Sunday, March 7, 1965 to demand voter registration rights for

(SNCC), The Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and many others leaders and community organizations.

⁶⁵ Kluger, 758.

⁶⁶ Davidson and Grofman, 379.

African American in the South, again attracted the glare of the cameras as protesters were battered and bloodied by Alabama State Troopers.⁶⁷ Within that same year, Congress was compelled to pass the Voting Rights Act of 1965. By the end of the following year 1966, large numbers of African Americans were registered relatively quickly leading observers to conclude that the 1965 Voting Rights Act was the "most effective piece of civil rights legislation ever passed in America."⁶⁸ This was an easy observation to make since it is estimated that the increase in African American voters in the South climbed to 28 percent during the year following the passage of the Act.⁶⁹ Also, with the increase in African American voting many southern districts with majority black populations were able to elect African American representative to the U.S. Congress for the first time.⁷⁰

Why was the Voting Rights Act more successful than others at giving voting rights to African Americans very quickly. First of all, unlike the previous acts, the provisions of the bill finally focused on specifically designated areas where discrimination against African American were overtly apparent.⁷¹ Secondly, the inclusion of a provision that if identified literacy tests were still be used, the U.S. government (through the Executive Branch) would now have the power and authority to send federal examiners to the southern regions in order to make sure

⁶⁷ Note: This protest march is also known as "Bloody Sunday". So named because of the level of violence experienced by the non-violent black protesters.

⁶⁸ David J. Garrow, *Protest at Selma* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1978), xi.

⁶⁹ See a copy of the *Voter Education Project, Inc. Newsletter*, Volume 5, April-June, 1971 in the Appendices.

⁷⁰ Schweikart and Allen, 686.

⁷¹ Scher and Button, 25.

that African Americans were finally able to exercise their right to register and vote without the restrictive creative barriers that had been imposed on them as a result of the long standing system of Jim Crow segregation in the South.

As for the legacy of President Johnson, one might assume that after using his political skills to push through the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and risking the alienation of the South and after giving perhaps his most compelling address to the U.S. Congress on March 15, 1965 strongly advocated its passage that he would be remembered for his contributions in changing the American landscape on the issue of rights so long denied to its citizens. But what history reflects instead is that Lyndon Johnson continues to be remembered more for escalating the War in Vietnam. The nation was painfully divided over American involvement in the War in Vietnam, so on March 31, 1968, a shocked and surprised nation would hear a weary and beleaguered President Johnson announce that he would not seek a second term as president, saying under the bright lights and glaring television cameras, "I will not seek nor will I accept the [Democratic] nomination of my party". It was clear that he'd had enough of the strain and pressures of the presidency and of a divided nation over the issue of the War in Vietnam. He would now retire as a southern son viewed as betrayer to his southern roots.⁷² So he left the office of the presidency, "wreathed in rancor

⁷² Note: The Republican party capitalized off the disenchantment in the south with the advances but forth through civil rights legislation. The Democratic Party lost its strong base in the south and the southern region realigned itself under the Republican Party label and ideology.

and hooted at by a long-haired generation that despised much of what its parents believed in."⁷³

But the fact remains that as president, Lyndon B. Johnson was able to accomplish more legislatively on the issue of civil rights for African Americans than President John F. Kennedy could with his aura of charm in the age of 'Camelot'. Perhaps President Kennedy, if not being fell by an assassin's bullet in 1963 during his first term as president, had been able to serve a second term in the presidency, he would have been able to get civil rights legislation through the U.S. Congress. But this is the stuff of historic speculation. It is historians who are left to ponder this possibility. What history does show, is that this monumental, legislative turning point took place at the hands of President Johnson and at a time when the American people had grown tired of the hypocrisy and myths of freedom so promised in the Constitution. It would also take place during a time when the leaders and members of the African American community were willing to push for needed change, regardless of the cost, on that long road to the most precious right of citizenship, -- voting.

D. Women Gaining the Right to Vote

In the African American struggle to gain their suffrage rights, it clearly came about as a result of a national response to the need for change as the U.S.

⁷³ Kluger, 761.

Congress finally took serious legislative steps to insure those rights through passage of the Civil Right Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. But for the women of America still disenfranchised until 1920 when the Constitution was finally amended to include the Nineteenth Amendment giving voting rights to women, the federal mandate for change was not so apparent and very slow in its evolution.⁷⁴ Again change would not take place without an organized lobby to put pressure on the government decision makers. But this time the struggle for the right to vote would not deal with racial prejudice but of gender discrimination and long standing cultural beliefs about women and their place in society.

Though the struggle for woman's rights did not focus on race as a central concern, the issue of race did surround and influence the early advocacy of the movement. It could not be avoided. Quite typical of that time period there was a regional split in the thinking of women's rights advocates over slavery and abolitionist thinking that divided the movement during the period of African American enslavement, the Civil War and the Reconstruction Era.

The history of the Woman's Movement reflects that it was primarily a movement "from beginning to end a struggle of white, native born, middle-class women for the right to participate more fully in the public affairs of a society, the basic

⁷⁴ Sara Hunter Graham, *Woman Suffrage and the New Democracy* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1996), 154.

structure of which they accepted."⁷⁵ Where was the major opposition to women gaining the right to vote? Well, the answer to this question depended upon the region in which you lived at the time. For the South, it was the issue of African American freedom and the fear of what would happen if the African American gained significant voting rights. If you lived in the Middle-West or East there was concern over the issue and impact over industrial and business sources and how they would be impacted if women had the right to vote.⁷⁶

"The origin of the woman's rights movement is commonly dated from 1848 when Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucretia Mott, and a few others met in Seneca Falls, New York, and drew up the first public protest in America against women's political and social inferiority."⁷⁷ But the struggle for voting rights would not come easily nor quickly. After the Civil War, Stanton would lead the way in starting an organization to fight for woman's rights along with Susan B. Anthony. It was called the National Women's Suffrage Association (NWSA) whose primary objective was to support a Constitutional amendment that would give women the right to vote. But as the Association pressed for this right which finally came after passage by Congress on June 4, 1919 and ratified by the necessary states on August 26, 1920, the organization had expanded their advocacy to include additional rights that had been denied to women, such as birth control and modification of divorce law. These expanded advocacy issues

⁷⁵ Aileen S. Krador, *The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement 1890-1920* (New York, New York: Columbia University Press, 1965).

⁷⁶ Eleanor Flexnor, *Century of Struggle: The Woman's Rights Movement in the United States* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press, 1975), 305.

⁷⁷ Krador, 1.

caused the organization to fracture into a separate organization called the American Women's Suffrage Association (AWSA) led by Lucy Stone, who wanted to focus on the central goal of voting rights for women. After a long bitter break, the two groups eventually merged into one organization in 1890 and called itself the National American Women's Suffrage Association. (NAWSA)⁷⁸

The original founders of the Woman's Rights movement were abolitionists but that did not mean that they all believed in equal rights for all women.⁷⁹ While many women by the nineteenth century may have been ready to advocate for vocational training for women, many were reticent about strong advocacy for voting rights. Advocacy for abolition and temperance was the primary agenda of the movement and the advocacy of these issues opened the means for women to seriously enter politics.⁸⁰ What worked against the woman's movement prior to the passage of the Nineteenth amendment was the fact that women had very little experience in mainstream party politics and most often were discouraged or barred from participation in the political system. Even after ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment, the new voters were only 'briefly courted by nervous politicians' and not encouraged to be actively involved in party politics nor actively seek elected office.⁸¹ To the credit of the National American Woman Suffrage Association, prior to the ratification of the nineteenth amendment, the organization was noted for its experiment with pressure politics and as such,

⁷⁸ Schweikart and Allen, 530.

⁷⁹ Kraditor, 1-2.

⁸⁰ Paul Johnson, *A History of the American People* (New York, New York: HarperCollins Books, 1997), 657.

⁸¹ Graham, 154-155.

initiated a very effective lobbying campaign for women's rights.⁸² Other smaller women's groups would also follow this same model in advocating for suffrage rights for women.⁸³

In the early years of the Woman Suffrage Movement, states were being pressured by these groups to pass numerous voting rights measures for women. In their approach to advocacy, the women incorporated a determination that was extremely impressive given their lack of political system involvement in the past. Such tactics used by the women were classic lobbying strategies that often required them to travel across vast distances in substandard transportation for the purpose of getting petitions signed, promoting letter writing campaigns and speaking to voters and state legislatures on behalf of women gaining the right to vote.⁸⁴ What differed in the advocacy approach of the Woman's Rights Movement from the approach taken by advocates for African American civil rights was the degree of intensity in its pressure approach. The African American civil rights advocates level of frustration grew so intense that they were willing to take on the tactics of non-violent disobedience (sit-ins, marches, freedom rides) many resulting in physical injury and even death at the hands of government authority. But the Woman's movement adopted and relied on a 'goodwill and gentlemanly' approach to politicians and government officials in authority. They were relying on 'indirect influence' rather than the raw exercise

⁸² Ibid, xi.

⁸³ Kraditor, xi.

⁸⁴ Ibid, 5.

of political power to gain their voting rights.⁸⁵ It took fifty-three years from the first state suffrage referendum held in Kansas back in 1867 to the final ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution in 1920. The last ten year push by the Woman's Movement was aided by the rapid changes taking place in America and the melting away of restrictions and old fashioned taboos about women.⁸⁶

After years of struggle for both African Americans and Women in the cause of gaining their long denied voting rights, in the end, the unifying purpose of both of these groups was that they now share in winning their voting rights under a Constitution that needed to be transformed into the realization of the democratic ideal--freedom and equality for all of its citizens.

⁸⁵ Graham, xiv.

⁸⁶ Flexner, 304.

Part 3 - Contemporary Voting and Politics

Introduction

To state that a political tsunami hit the shores of the American nation in the year of the 2008 presidential election is an understatement. The campaign and election of Barack Obama, the first African American to serve as president of the United States shattered the old line thinking about what was possible in American politics given the history of voting rights in America.

It was not merely the fact that America was electing its first African American president but that the political campaign itself was a case study in new strategies for getting elected. The Obama campaign organization reflected a brilliant use of staff (free from internal conflict), money, volunteers and technology during the twenty-two month long campaign for the presidency. It was both a combination of old line politics with that of new approaches to the election methodology leading to its historical election outcome.

The 2008 election sent professional analysts scrambling for answers and resulted in many of them revising some of their long standing assertions and assumptions about how to successfully manage a campaign and motivate voters to turn out at the polls for their candidates. A classic example of one of these strategies took place when the Obama campaign announced early in the primary that it would not accept public finance monies, a move that socked many political proponents.

The first reaction to this announcement bordered on bewilderment and somewhat of a betrayal of the electoral process utilized by prior candidates in the past. But it turned out to be yet another brilliant move by the Obama team who demonstrated the prowess of their candidate and his ability to raise large amounts of money without the public finance median. The campaign managed to raise a staggering \$600 million dollars largely through use of the internet. It would be the beginning of a series of astute campaign moves by the Obama campaign leading to the well deserved recognition of having a top rated campaign organization that both stayed on message and understood the strengths of their candidate nicknamed, 'No Drama Obama'. The Obama team also focused on the apparent weaknesses of the opposition campaign of John McCain, who according to an article written by Time Magazine Journalist, Joe Klein, near the end of the long campaign, that Republican candidate John McCain could not "win honorably on the issues, so it [the campaign] resorted to transparent and phony diversions."⁸⁷

What also aided the Obama campaign is their ability to stay tuned into the pulse of the American voter as did former President Bill Clinton during the 1992 campaign. The Obama campaign seemed to understand the high levels of frustration of the average American voter and candidate Obama seemed always focused on that discontent. Not even the painful resurrection by the media of controversial sermons given by Obama's former Minister, Jeremiah Wright (also an African American) could derail the campaign during the political party

⁸⁷ Joe Klein, "The Lying Game," *Time Magazine*, September 29, 2008, 31.

primary election face off with former First Lady and U. S. Senator Hillary Clinton. The Obama candidacy never really strayed from its central purpose and that was getting Barack Obama elected to the presidency on the promise of 'change'. Even when racial controversy resurfaced near the end of the general election, John McCain's campaign refueled the issue of race and uncertainty into the campaign by again bringing up the issue of Obama's former minister and friend. Fortunate for Obama that this was viewed as a desperate last attempt to stir up fear among the voters. Ultimately it seemed that the American voter was more terrorized by the weakening economy and their sinking retirement accounts than of an aging minister so near retirement. In the end, it was the concerns about the troubling American economy that sent voters to the polls in large number to vote for a change in the political landscape. Not only was change mandated in the Presidency, but in the U.S. Congress as well. It was clearly a voting mandate against the George W. Bush Presidential Administration and the policies of the Republican party. In 2008, Americans were ready to vote for a candidate they believed expressed the concerns of the people and Barack Obama was selected as the candidate that best reflected that hope and need.

What was also so notable about the campaign organization of the Obama campaign was their savvy use of technology during the campaign which successfully tapped into the communication style of today's youth. It is safe to say that the Obama campaign has changed the landscape of American politics by showing us how a campaign organization can fully incorporate technology openly and directly to personally involve the potential voter. Inviting supporters

to leave their cell phone/text message addresses so that the campaign could give them updates borders on tactical genius. This method not only made supporters feel directly linked to the campaign but it also allowed the Obama campaign to develop a powerful network via cell phone contact. You can be assured that future candidates for office will no longer ignore nor take for granted the powerful uses of the cell phone in any future campaign. The Obama campaign taught us that cell phones are a direct way to communicate with the youth vote. The Obama campaign benefitted by the involvement of technically savvy young people in their campaign organization staff with the skills and know how in personalizing communication to potential voters. A classic example of how the Obama campaign combined both personal involvement with their election strategy took place when the American people were anticipating the announcement of Barack Obama's Vice Presidential running mate. The intensity and build up to the announcement was preceded by the campaign sending out the message that the announcement would soon be made through the general media outlets but--- if you wanted to know the decision earlier, just call and give us your cell phone number and you will know the vice presidential candidate announcement before the media leaks it. The strategy not only served the purpose of direct communication involvement, but it again showed the power a campaign could have when it is not shy or apologetic about its use of the new technology in presenting their candidate's political agenda. This use of technology was tailor made for the populous campaigning style of Barack Obama. The resulting vote in November seems to substantiate the successful tactical campaigning strategies of the Obama team. The voting results reveal that 11% of the voters in the election were voting for the first time and 68% of the

voters indicated that the state of the economy was their number one priority.⁸⁸ Clearly this was an election that would challenge political analysts to reexamine the politics of the vote and what it means to the American political system in the modern age. Most importantly, what it will mean in the future of American politics in light of the historical 2008 presidential election.

A. Contemporary Perspectives on Voting In America

In his journey to America back in 1831, French political historian and American observer Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-1859), ardently noted the following observation about the American people and its political culture. He said; "No sooner do you set foot upon American ground than you are stunned by a kind of tumult; a confused clamor is heard on every side, and a thousand simultaneous voices demand the satisfaction of their social wants."⁸⁹ If Tocqueville is correct in his assessment of the Americans and their 'clamor', what history reflects is that the act of voting is their central means of expressing their will. No wonder then that in modern times as in times of old, the struggle for the right to vote has been both continuous but ultimately a rewarding experience for Americans. For the most part, voting continues to be the primary way that the average American chooses to involve themselves in the democratic process. It is their central means of participation and it is the central means by which an American citizen can

⁸⁸ Source: Election data results published in Newsweek Magazine, November 17, 2008, p.42.

⁸⁹ Tocqueville, 249.

express their will in the selection of government leaders who can through the given authority of elective office shape the policies of the nation.⁹⁰

It was also Tocqueville's assessment that, the American deprived of his chance to take part in political matters would be "deprived of half his existence."⁹¹ If Tocqueville was also correct in this view, there is no wonder that groups being denied the right to vote in American history were willing to do what was necessary to gain this right regardless of the obstacles placed before them--including the loss of their lives if necessary in gaining the right to vote.

In the exercise of the vote and for the cause of political participation, what is the primary motivation for doing so and what are the influencing facts that compel a single voter on this decision making venture. In their study of who votes and why, Raymond E. Wolfinger and Steven J. Rosenstone found that "few people are brought to the polls by the belief that their vote will make a difference between any candidate's victory and defeat."⁹² What they did find was, "what matters is not the calculated effect of their vote on the outcome but the consequences of the act of voting itself on their immediate well-being."⁹³ If it is not the 'calculated' outcome that results in voting fulfillment it seems likely that it is the "feeling that one has done one's duty to society....and to oneself; or the feeling that one has

⁹⁰ Raymond E. Wolfinger and Steven J. Rosenstone, *Who Votes* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1980), 1.

⁹¹ Tocqueville, 250.

⁹² Wolfinger and Rosenstone, 7.

⁹³ *Ibid*, 7.

affirmed one's allegiance to or efficacy in the political system."⁹⁴ Both of these assumptions seem to support Tocqueville's early assessment of the meaning of citizen involvement in the American political system. While these points are well taken, there is another view that must be considered as well. While the act of the voter may reflect upon the influence of his or her feelings toward a particular candidate,⁹⁵ it is not for certain that the act of voting alone will guarantee that the voter will follow the successful elector once they are in office. It is very possible that the vote does not translate into long term support from the once motivated voter.⁹⁶

What is very apparent about the motivation of voters is that the certain factors influencing voter participation and the choice of a voter can be identified and often have remained consistent as numerous studies have conferred. In another study conducted by Wolfinger and Rosenstone,⁹⁷ they identified the following consistent factors that influence voter involvement and choice. (See Table 2).

⁹⁴ William H. Riker and Peter C. Ordeshook, *An Introduction to Positive Political Theory* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1973), 63.

⁹⁵ Angus Campbell, Phillip E. Converse, Warren E. Miller and Donald E. Stokes, *The American Voter* (New York, New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1960), 524.

⁹⁶ Jr., Stanley Kelly, *Interpreting Elections* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1983), 4.

⁹⁷Wolfinger and Rosenstone, 3. Note: Wolfinger and Rosenstone used these variables in the Population Surveys conducted November 1972 and November 1974.

Table 3 - Factors that Influence Voter Turnout and Choice

1. Education
2. Income
3. Occupation
4. Employment Status (employed, unemployed, not in the labor force.
5. Employer (private, government, self)
6. Age
7. Sex
8. Marital Status
9. Race
10. Place of residence (metropolitan area, farm, neither)
11. State of residence
12. Registered to vote
13. Voted
14. Reasons given for not registering or voting
15. Hispanic ethnicity (Chicano, Puerto Rican, Cuban, other)
16. How long at present address
17. How long unemployed
18. Live in a trailer

(Source of Data: Population Surveys conducted by Wolfinger and Rosenstone, 3)

Of all the factors listed in Table 3, education has demonstrated to be the most consistent factor across several studies conducted on voter behavior. The continued argument among critics about the failure of voters to exercise their right to participate principally because they may find it difficult to find the time to do so or find it difficult to decide among the candidates listed on the ballot may be valid.⁹⁸ Whatever the reasons, education emerges as the key factor and determinate for a voter willing and able to participate.

This is not to say that the other factors do not influence voter participation--they do. Researchers Sidney Verba and Norman H. Nie in their famous 1972 study of voting also found that, "...citizens of higher social and economic status participate more in politics. This generalization...holds true whether one uses level of education, income, or occupation as a measure of social status."⁹⁹ But it is education that makes the primary difference in voter behavior and the exercise of ones civic duty whether it entails learning how to register to vote in your county, educating yourself about the candidates and their objectives or studying the policy position of the affiliated political party or just figuring out were to vote and how to get there on election day.¹⁰⁰ Education remains a powerful predictor in the act of voting.

What then does the simple act of voting entail and why has it been so sought after throughout America's long evolutionary journey. Stanley Kelly, Jr. and

⁹⁸ Kelly, Interpreting Elections, 144.

⁹⁹ Sidney Verba and Norman H. Nie, *Participation in America* (New York, New York: Harper and Row, 1972), 125.

¹⁰⁰ Wolfinger and Rosenstone, 8.

Thad W. Mirer may have best outlined the act as it has been practiced under the American democratic model. They explain it this way.

The voter canvasses his likes and dislikes of the leading candidates and major parties involved in an election. Weighing each like and dislike equally, he votes for the candidate toward whom he has the greatest net number of favorable attitudes, if there is such a candidate. If no candidate has such an advantage, the voter votes consistently with his party affiliation, if he has one. If his attitudes do not incline him toward one candidate more than toward another, and if he does not identify with one of the major parties, the voter reaches a null decision.¹⁰¹

B. What the 2008 Presidential Election Tells Us About American Politics and Voting

There is no question that the political culture and climate of America has undergone tremendous change since the Founding Fathers gathered in Philadelphia to preserve and ultimately redraft the Constitution. We have experienced a major democratization of the democratic voting process that now makes it possible for the masses of American citizenry to participate openly in the electoral voting process. The cross coalition of voters, young, old, of all

¹⁰¹ Jr., Stanley Kelly and Thad W. Mirer, "The Simple Act of Voting," *American Political Science Review* 68 (June 1974): 572-591.

ethnicities and economic status and from cities and suburbs and regions of the nation demonstrated that the 2008 Presidential election and campaign crossed a historical landmark in electing the first African American to serve as the 44th president of the United States.

While most in the country celebrated this milestone in American history there was much to learn about the painful journey that democracy has forged in a nation that started with a half slave and half freedom manifesto. It was a legacy that would not be easily overcome without a war that pitted both north and south against each other. A brother fighting a brother in a bloody civil war that resulted in over 200,000 dying in a war overseen by a beleaguered, depressed Abraham Lincoln, the nation's 16th president who agonized over the devastation and loss. But in its aftermath there would be as Lincoln promised, "A New Birth Freedom" in a nation that might now come to terms with its hypocrisy and hollow promises of freedom. Of course it would not be that simple. There were still painful events to come before this nation of America would fully recognize its full potential as a practicing democracy.

On election night November 4, 2008 it was difficult not to celebrate the maturing of America as CNN News announced at 11:00 p.m. (Eastern time) as a crowd of over 100,000 people gathered in Chicago's Grant Park erupted into cheers, tears and jubilant celebration that Barack Obama had been elected to the American Presidency. Perhaps Poet and Author Maya Angelou said it best, as she has so often in the past capturing the essence of what many Americans of all nationalities were feeling on that cool November evening. She simply said,

"Today, my country has grown up". One hundred and forty-five years after the Emancipation Proclamation was issued to free the slaves and forty-three years after the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, America had elected its first African American President.

While the nation may have 'grown up', the Presidential Election of 2008 was a fascinating and sometimes shocking journey that incorporated a new style of politics with some of the old bad politics that we have come to recognize in American politics. From the start of the campaign to the end on November 4, 2008 evening when President-elect, Barack Obama acknowledge his victory and the rest of the world sat in front of television monitors to mark this historic event, the memories of the painful yet insightful messages of the campaign would momentarily be put aside for the celebration. But there was much to learn about the meaning of the election and its relationship to the practice of democracy in America.

First, it must be recognized that "over the past hundred years much about consumer culture and the practice of politics has changed, [and is now] ... such an established fact of political life that it hardly attracts notice."¹⁰² If anything typified the election campaign of 2008 it was the commodification of the election process. The use of cell phones for networking campaign updates and fundraising activities. The use of the internet as a means for the candidate

¹⁰² Liette Gidlow, *The Big Vote: Gender, Consumer Culture, and the Politics of Exclusion 1890's - 1920's* (Baltimore, Maryland: John Hopkins University Press, 2004), 198.

(Obama) to give his pre-presidential 'fire-side chats' popularized by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt during War War II but this time communicated by the internet not radio waves. The use of the internet and cell phone technologies were designed to convey a personal touch in the campaign which proved to be quite successful for the Obama Campaign. The branding of the candidate was also apparent in the use of an identifiable insignia used on all campaign literature. It became instantly recognized by the youth who have been exposed to such commercial branding throughout their lives. For older and more experienced senior voters and critics of the political process it was an introduction to a new variation of an old theme, this time more commercialized and more widespread.

The new consumer politics may prove to be a poor replacement for the role that political parties once played as the central means of presenting the candidate to the American public but it appeared that the political parties, most notably the Democratic party, did not bemoan the dissolving of the old political boss style of politics and decided it's only choice was to join in on the parade of political consumerism that clearly benefitted the candidacy of Barack Obama. Even former Secretary of State Colin Powell had to acknowledge during an interview on *Meet the Press*, "That Obama has brilliant people surrounding him and advising him."¹⁰³ It wouldn't take long for others to make the same acknowledgement about the brilliant campaign organization skills of the Obama

¹⁰³ Former Secretary of State General Colin Powell (Retired), *Meet the Press*, NBC, October 19, 2008. Comment: Powell formally announced his endorsement of candidate, Barack Obama for President.

campaign team which included David Axelrod, who helped him get elected to the U.S. Senate and who also encouraged him to make a run for the White House. A team that included; David Plouffe, Steve Hildebrand, Valerie Jarret, Robert Gibbs and many other experienced political aides who managed to stay focused particularly during the political party primary election season as a more experienced and politically astute candidate, Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton (former First Lady) waged an 'all out battle' for the Democratic Nomination for the Presidency. She proved to be a formidable opponent who according to all political polls at the time, started out way ahead in the early season of the primary campaign. In fact, it was common knowledge her campaign had been gearing up support for a bid for the presidency for months, some proclaimed even years. She had strong support initially from the Democratic party and had won the respect of many of her Senate colleagues as a smart and hardworking Senator representing the State of New York. It also initially didn't hurt, at least early in the primary, to have the strong support and name notoriety of her husband and former President, Bill Clinton.

As the primary progressed, Obama desperately needed to win the primary in the state of Iowa. But the question was how would he accomplish this with Hillary Clinton having more money at the time and certainly more experience in the campaign trenches of hard-line politics. Obama decided to run on an anti-war theme and again his campaign organization with the infusion of young talent organized a ground campaign organization in Iowa. Obama began to attract large crowds in Iowa. His goal was began to inspire people who attended the rallies in large numbers with a message of "change". Iowa with its majority white

voter population would prove to be a major testing ground for the candidacy of Obama. It also required the Obama team to focus in on the political party caucus vote. The team took nothing for granted in Iowa and their efforts paid off when it was announced that Obama had won in Iowa.

The win in Iowa was the turning point Obama needed in the election. The win in Iowa sent a message to the nation that if an African American candidate could win in Iowa, then Barack Obama certainly has earned the right to be taken seriously as a viable candidate for the presidency. The Iowa voter had decided that the nationality of the candidate didn't matter to them and that his message crossed all ethnic boundaries.

Obama's win in Iowa, with a 90% white voting majority, shocked the Clinton team and from that point on, things began to intensify. Senator Clinton's husband Bill, took on a more public persona in the campaign and the heated rhetoric leveled at Obama took on a negative tone that did not play out well in the media. It became a very heated campaign when Bill Clinton took on a more prominent verbal combative approach which took the focus off his wife Hillary, who seemed fully capable of defending herself if only her husband would step back and allow her political expertise to shine in the spotlight rather than his own. The nature of the phenomenon of a husband and wife campaigning for the presidency was both unsettling and often confusing to the American voter. Who would the American people actually be voting for if they cast a vote for Hillary Clinton. Some voters, particularly in the African American community, were now saying publicly that a vote for Hillary was a good thing because she would

have her husband the former president close at hand as an advisor. A sort of 'two-for-the-price-of-one-deal'. But after several weeks of Bill Clinton lecturing the voting public on why they should vote for his wife Hillary and not for Obama--the charm of the Clintons became a 'bitter taste in the mouth' of African American voters, many of whom fully supported Bill Clinton in the Presidential Elections of 1992 and again in 1996. At that time, for some, Bill could do no wrong but now he was perceived as attacking Barack Obama's qualifications for the presidency which didn't sit well with the African American community and certainly did not help garner support in large numbers for his wife Hillary. During one of the primary election debates between Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama, candidate Obama paused wearily, looked at his notes and then looked into the camera and when it was his turn to respond to Mrs. Clinton he said with sincere candor, "I can't tell who I'm really campaigning against, you or your husband." It was a good move on the part of the candidate-- the American voter seemed to be confused as well.

As the primary season continued, the Clinton campaign seemed to lose its stride though they were able to win a series of primary elections in the Midwest and east, notably in Pennsylvania, but it was not enough to recapture the initial momentum and confidence that characterized Hillary Clinton's initial campaign fervor and confidence. To compound the problem, Super-delegates named to cast their votes at the upcoming Democratic Convention scheduled for Denver,

Colorado were showing signs of breaking rank and were now leaning toward supporting Barack Obama for the Democratic nomination.¹⁰⁴

By early summer, it was clear that Barack Obama was on his way to making history as the nominee of his party. While the Clinton team stumbled and lost focus near the end of the campaign; in contrast, the Obama campaign never seemed to forget the assets that their candidate brought to the candidacy and that was his unflappable persona, his cool under fire. It would also be this same 'cool' that would get Obama through the general election campaign season when the Republican candidate, John McCain, clearly not a student of the new emerging consumer politics, would call upon a barrage of old style political tactics, one after the other, including stirring up fear about electing a 'rookie' to the presidency.

Stirring up old racial fears is certainly not new to the American political landscape. This fear tactic is as old as America. One classic example can be dated back to the series of debates in 1858 between Abraham Lincoln and Stephen A. Douglass. Douglas had the ambition of running for president in the 1860 election, having lost his bid in 1857, but first he needed to defend his Senate seat against Abraham Lincoln. During the series of debates, Douglas successfully stirred up fears about Lincoln's views on slavery that would follow Lincoln into his campaign for the Presidency in 1860. During the debates, Douglass caused

¹⁰⁴ Note: The Super delegates of the Democratic Party are not like regular party delegates at the Convention. They are free to vote for any candidate for the party nomination regardless of the popular vote in the state primaries and caucuses'.

whites to fear the election of abolitionist, Abraham Lincoln. Douglass successfully painted a vivid picture in the minds of the voters of the aftermath of emancipation and the resulting empowerment of newly freed slaves. It was a vivid picture that stirred up fears in electing Mr. Lincoln. The interjection of racial fears in the election certainly worked to Douglass's advantage-- he won re-election to his Senate seat in Illinois once again illustrating the ultimate objective in American politics, winning the election and the seat of power, sometimes at all costs.

It's not that the McCain/Palin Campaign openly referenced racial divides but the candidates' lack of resolve at several scheduled campaign rallies throughout the country cast a cloud of suspicion on their behavior when angry crowds at the rallies started yelling negative things about candidate Obama. At one rally the cry of "kill him" could be heard in the crowd. Not that Mc Cain and Palin directly instigated such an outburst, but on several occasions they failed to denounce these cries during the rally. Even Reporter Kathleen Parker of the *National Review*, during an interview on *Larry King Live*, proclaimed that, 'The politics of anger' had taken over the tone of the presidential race during the remaining few weeks, some 26 day before the election.¹⁰⁵

'Mud throwing' at the end of a hotly contested campaign is certainly not new to American politics. What was new this time, is that an African American male

¹⁰⁵ National Review Reporter Kathleen Parker, interview by Larry King, "What the Last Few Weeks indicate About American Politics Today," *Larry King Live*, CNN, October 8, 2008.

had won the Democratic nomination for president and was very much a serious candidate for the presidency. Would this be the year when America would elect its first African American President? This is the fact that made this campaign different from any in American history. This time racial mud slinging mattered and mattered seriously. This time there was a qualified African American in the race for the White House. An African American candidate that had just won the endorsement of one of our major political parties--the Democratic Party. In the waning weeks of the campaign the polls were also indicating that Obama had taken the lead over McCain as the economy took a dive, the worst economic down turn since the election of Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1932. Adding to all the election drama, John McCain appeared to be acting erratically in the remaining weeks of the campaign. Not surprisingly, McCain was now being linked in the minds of the voter to the failed policies of the Bush Administration. In the end, it would be the fear of the souring economy that concerned the voter more than the ethnicity of the candidates. Money fears obviously 'trumped' the racial fears of the voter during the last weeks of the campaign.

For better or for worse, "presidential elections in the United States are ritual reaffirmations of our democratic values..."¹⁰⁶ And the 2008 Presidential Election demonstrated that no matter how commodified politics become through time, it is still the American voter and the "intensity and partisan direction of attitude" that accounts for his or her choice between "rival candidates for President."¹⁰⁷ The

¹⁰⁶ Paul R. Abramson, John H. Alderich and David W. Rode, *Change and Continuity in the 2004 Elections* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly, Inc., 2006).

¹⁰⁷ Campbell, Converse, Miller, 120.

Presidential Election Campaign of 2008 was no exception to this rule. Ultimately, it was the voter who made the choice between the rival candidates and it is this intensity that should be used to examine why the voter in 2008 selected Barack Obama over the other rival candidates. Was it the cry for change? Was it the failed policies of the Bush Administration? Or was it the level of concern about the souring economy at the end of the campaign season. All may have contributed to the willingness of the voter to turn out and vote for change. What is clear though is that the diversity of voters who turned out was notable and will remain a factor in all future elections. What did the vote reveal? An analysis of the voter turnout in the November 2008 General election revealed that 66 percent of the voters were between the ages of 18 to 20 years of age. 66.1 percent were White, 64.7 percent were Black, 49.9 percent were Hispanic and 47.6 percent Asian.¹⁰⁸ These numbers represent a milestone in the history of voting participation in America given the history of voter discrimination and exclusion. The cross ethnic, demographic levels of voter participation and the ability to participate in large numbers represents the hallmark and foundations of the true meaning of American democracy.¹⁰⁹

What should be remembered most about the 2008 Presidential race is the realization of the struggle for maximum democratization of voting rights long denied. And that now, the only excuse factor keeping most voters away from the polls would be their own negative attitude toward the process or the selection of candidates presented to them. Sadly, it might even be the failure of a voter in

¹⁰⁸ Source of Data: The U.S. Census Bureau, and the Pew Research Center.

¹⁰⁹ See Appendices for 2008 Comprehensive Election Results.

realizing that for better or worse that political issues in the modern era, have come to 'intrude' into their personal lives whether they realized it or not and as such, requires their involvement and participation.¹¹⁰ In keeping this all in perspective remember that in 2008, there were no mindless literacy tests nor other restrictions on race and gender presenting obstacles to participation and this in itself marks a major achievement in the American electoral process.

Finally, in the move toward participation in a democratized electoral process, it seemed ironic yet appropriate that in the 2008 presidential race on the ballot were two new phenomenon's in America's political history and that was a qualified African American male and a politically savvy female, both recognized and acknowledged as serious candidates for the highest elected office in the United State of America. It was a choice the American people never had before and regardless of your political views--one had to be impressed by how the American nation had evolved to this important moment in history. It was impressive and yes-- a 'grown up' act on the part of the American voter.

¹¹⁰ Norman H. Nie, Sidney Verba and John R. Petrocik, *The Changing American Voter* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1976), 109.

Appendix - A
Sabbatical Proposal

The History and Politics of Voting in America

A Sabbatical Leave Proposal
Fall 2008 – Spring 2009

(Revised)
12/19/07

Submitted by:

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*“Freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor;
it must be demanded by the oppressed.”*

- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Rationale for the Project Study

I am requesting a sabbatical leave for the purpose of expanding my personal knowledge base about the history of voting in America and its significance to us today.

Currently, I teach five sections of Political Science 1 (Introduction to American Government) where enrollment levels are always at full capacity and questions about American democratic ideals, principles and institutions are the central themes of discourse in my classes. Students are asking some very challenging and meaningful questions about the topic of voting and how democratic is the process. These questions have inspired my need to re-examine the “democratization of voting rights in American history”. The sabbatical leave would allow me the opportunity to re-examine this important component of American political history.

It seems like an excellent time for me to revisit the struggle for equal participation in what has been defined as the ‘basic right of citizenship’ by decades of political and civil rights activist movements. However, many of my students seem sadly unaware of the historical struggle associated with the privilege they now enjoy. Like many other preoccupations – students assume that voting rights came about without struggle or extreme sacrifice on the part of many Americans; nothing of course could be further from the truth. I am proposing to revisit the heart of the struggle of groups and individuals in obtaining their full citizenship rights (voting) in America. My primary objective is to become better prepared to address this area of discussion in my classes in a unique and meaningful way that will hopefully move the students towards a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the “democratization of voting” over time.

Project Study Presupposition

Because of the lack of knowledge about the historical struggle for voting rights in America, this citizenship right has been gravely taken for granted.

Project Study Criteria

The central questions I want to address during my sabbatical leave will include:

- Identifying specifically how and why certain American voting populations were excluded from the process.
- Examining the democratic foundations and ideals that underlie the core values of the American foundation for citizenship and participation.
- Examining the civic mobilization strategies undertaken to gain access to voting rights in America with emphasis on the African American Civil and Voting Rights Movement and the Woman Suffrage Rights Movement.
- Assessing the response of government, political institutions and political leaders to address the needs and demands for change and inclusion of excluded groups.
- Explaining the significance of the following federal actions in the advancement of Voting Rights in America:
 - The 15th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution (Adopted in 1870) and extending voting rights to African American males.
 - The 24th Amendment to the Constitution; which made poll tax collection as a requirement for voting rights illegal.

- The Voting Rights Act of 1965; a federal law passed to help end formal and informal barriers to African American suffrage. (*Note: Native Americans and Hispanic Americans also benefited from this nondiscriminatory policy.
 - The 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution; adopted in 1920 to guarantee women the right to vote. (*Note: See the Appendix for references listed above).
- Document the significance of the “vote” today and its value in a democratic society. Develop a presentation of findings using Microsoft PowerPoint software. This can be used by faculty in class or for the annual Constitution Day presentation on campus.

Project Methodology/Activities/ and Timeline

I will utilize a descriptive analysis approach in analyzing books, periodicals, journal articles and professional papers related to the history and politics of voting in America. I have included a list of core readings related to each topic but it is anticipated that with the voluminous amounts of literature in this field of study, more reading sources will be added to the list during the research phase of the study. The sabbatical research findings will be written as three extensively researched position papers (25 –30 pages in length) and a Power point presentation will be developed for each of the three position paper themes to be used for classroom and/or seminar use. The three position paper themes are as follows:

Position Paper #1 - Examine the history and foundation of democratic principles as it relates to voting rights in America.

The number of books and articles that deal directly with the subject of democracy is enormous. To accomplish this task I will read, review and analyze the following literature sources. This is an incomplete brief list of sources but they are definitive sources on the topic of democracy and participation rights.

(Timeline: August 2008 – October 2008)

Agard, Walter R. What Democracy Meant to the Greeks. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1965.

Barber, Benjamin R. Strong Democracy: Participatory Politics for a New Age. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984.

Vanhanen, Tatu. The Process of Democratization: A Comparative Study of 147 States, 1980-88. New York: Crane Russak, 1990.

Held, David. Models of Democracy, 2nd ed. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996.

Pateman, Carole, Participation and Democratic Theory. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970.

Sen, Amartya. "Freedoms and Needs." New Republic, January 10 and 17, 1994, 31-38.

Rae, Douglas W. The Political Consequences of Electoral Laws. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967.

Gutmann, Amy. Democratic Education. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987.

Position Paper #2 – Examine the history and politics of disenfranchisement in America and the struggles of groups to gain their voting rights. This position paper will focus on the struggle of African Americans and Women in gaining their voting rights and freedoms. It will also examine how Federal legislation and Constitutional mandates lead to dramatic changes in voting rights. How did the American political institutions meet the demands of mobilized activist groups?

The literature on the modern African American struggle for voting rights and the literature on the Woman Suffrage Movement is voluminous. Considering this fact, I will make judicious use of journalistic and participants' accounts,

and works by social scientists. This is a list of selective books and articles I will read and analyze.

(Timeline: November 2008 [Winter Break] – March 2009)

Nieman, Donald G. Promises to Keep: African Americans and the Constitutional Order, 1776 to the Present. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991.

Kluger, Richard, Simple Justice. New York: Knopf, 1976.

Kyvig, David. Authentic and Explicit Acts: Amending the U.S. Constitution 1776 – 1995. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1996.

Scher, Richard and James Button, "Voting Rights Act: Implementation and Impact" Implementation of Civil Rights Policy, ed. Charles Bullock III and Charles Lamb, Monterey, CA Brooks/Cole, 1984.

Davidson, Chandler and Bernard Groffman, eds., Quiet Revolution in the South: The Impact of the Voting Rights Act. 1965 – 1990. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994.

Flexner, Eleanor , Century of Struggle: The Women's Rights Movement in the United States, 3rd ed. Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press, 1996.

Lemons, J. Stanley, The Woman Citizen: Social Feminism in the 1920s. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1973.

Position Paper #3 – This third and final position paper will include a discussion of voting rights today. What can we learn from the often slow and frustrating history of voting rights and failure of access by some of its American citizenry? What is the contemporary discourse about the issue of voting? What lessons can be conveyed to students, faculty and the community about the relevance of voting? I will read and analyze the following sources to address these questions and concerns.

(Timeline: April 2009 – June 2009)

Campbell, Angus, et. Al. The American Voter. New York: Wiley, 1960

Abramson, Paul R., John H. Aldrich, and David W. Rohde. Change and Continuity in the 2004 Elections. Washington, D.C. Congressional Quarterly Press, 2006.

Kelly, Stanley G. Interpreting Elections Princeton, NJ.: Princeton University Press, 1983.

Martin, Fenton S. and Robert U. Goehlert. How to Research Elections. Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press, 2001.

Nie, Norman H., Sidney Verba, and John R. Petrocik. The Changing American Voter, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976.

Wolfinger, Raymond E., and Steven J. Rosenstone. Who Votes? New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1980.

U.S. Department of Commerce, Statistical Abstract of the United States, 2006 Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2006.

Benefit to the College

Under federal legislation passed by the U.S. Congress and now mandated by the Federal Department of Education, all educational institutions receiving Federal funding are required to hold an educational program pertaining to the United States Constitution on September 17 of each year. The Division of Humanities and Social Science has been sponsoring this annual program through the Department of History, Art History, Geography and Political Science. I anticipate that my sabbatical leave project findings will prove to be beneficial in our department planning for future required Constitution Day events. (See a copy of the Federal mandate in the Appendix section)

I am also hopeful that my sabbatical project findings will aid the college in any future revenue bond initiative campaign drives as we urge the community to “get out and vote” in support of facilities construction and financing needs, as Mt. Sac continues to grow and expand its campus facilities to meet the needs of our diverse student populations.

Personal Benefit

I will gain a more extensive knowledge of the history and theory of democracy politics and voting.

- My field of studying is changing constantly and the sabbatical will provide me with the opportunity to research and read extensively into this important foundation of American government.

I will develop a solid foundation for explaining the significance of voting and participation.

-The Power Point presentation that will be developed on each of the three position papers will give me some tremendous tools for presenting the finding in a more meaningful way when I return to continue teaching my Political Science 1 courses.

I will return with numerous references and resources that can be used in my political science 1 lectures, discussions and assignments.

-The extensive research, and writing will expose me to numerous questions, concepts and teaching strategies that can be used immediately in my teaching.

I will be able to share my findings with my department colleagues through the resulting Power point presentations that may also be used in the annual campus wide Constitution Day event.

-I have already discussed ideas about future Constitution Day workshops with my fellow department members and they seem very excited about the sabbatical results being used for that purpose upon my return.

The History and Politics of Voting in America

(Abstract)

This project will examine the civic mobilization strategies undertaken to gain access to voting rights in America with emphasis on the African American Civil and Voting Rights Movement and the Woman Suffrage Rights Movement. The objective of the project is to explore the history and foundation of democratic principles as it relates to voting rights in America. The study will include an extensive analysis of the 15th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution (Adopted in 1870) extending voting rights to African American males and the 19th Amendment (Adopted in 1920) extending voting rights to women. The study will also focus on the Voting Rights Act of 1965, mandating changes in voting practices and standards.

The foundation of the study will be directed to a thorough literature review of the history and politics of disenfranchisement in America and the struggle of these groups to gain their voting rights. The project results will be shared in three extensively researched position papers with the following three themes: (1) Voting Rights and Democracy, (2) The History of Disenfranchisement and, (3) Contemporary Issues and Voting Rights Today.

To make this information useful to students, faculty and staff, a Power Point presentation will be developed for each of the three position papers along with recommendations for using these presentations in class or for special on campus workshops and seminars.

Appendix - B

State of Louisiana Literacy Test

The State of Louisiana

Literacy Test

This test is to be given to anyone who cannot prove a fifth grade education.

DIRECTIONS: Do what you are told to do in each statement, nothing more, nothing less. Be careful as one wrong answer denotes failure of the test. You have 10 minutes to complete the test.

1. Draw a line around the number or letter of this sentence.
2. Draw a line under the last word in this line.
3. Cross out the longest word in this line.
4. Draw a line around the shortest word in this line.
5. Circle the first, first letter of the alphabet in this line.
6. In the space below draw three circles, one inside (engulfed by) the other.
7. Above the letter X make a small cross.
8. Draw a line through the letter below that comes earliest in the alphabet.
Z V S B D N K Y T P H C
9. Draw a line through the two letters below that come last in the alphabet.
Z V B D M K T P N S Y C
10. In the first circle below write the last letter of the first word beginning with "z".
① ② ③ ④ ⑤
11. Cross out the number not necessary, when making the number below one million.
10000000000
12. Draw a line from circle 2 to circle 5 that will pass below circle 3 and above circle 4.
① ② ③ ④ ⑤
13. In the line below cross out each number that is more than 20 but less than 30.
31 16 48 53 47 22 37 98 26 20 25
14. Draw a line under the first letter after "h" and draw a line through the second letter after "j".
a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q
15. In the space below, write the word "noise" backwards and place a dot over what would be its second letter should it have been written forward.
16. Draw a triangle with a blackened circle that overlaps only its left corner.
17. Look at the line below, and place on the blank, the number that should come next.
2 4 8 16 _____

18. Look at the line of numbers below and place, on the blank, the number that should come next.

3 6 9 _____ 15

19. Draw, in the space below, a square with a triangle in it, and within that same triangle draw a circle with a black dot in it.

20. Spell backwards, forwards.

21. Print the word vote upside down, but in the correct order.

22. Place a cross over the tenth letter in this line, a line under the first space in this sentence, and circle around the last the second line of this sentence.

23. Draw a figure that is square in shape. Divide it in half by drawing a straight line from its northeast corner to its southwest corner, and then divide it once more by drawing a broken line from the middle of its western side to the middle of its eastern side.

24. Print a word that looks the same whether it is printed frontwards or backwards.

25. Write down, on the line provided, what you read in the triangle below:



26. In the third square below, write the second letter of the fourth word.



27. Write right from the left to the right as you see it spelled here.

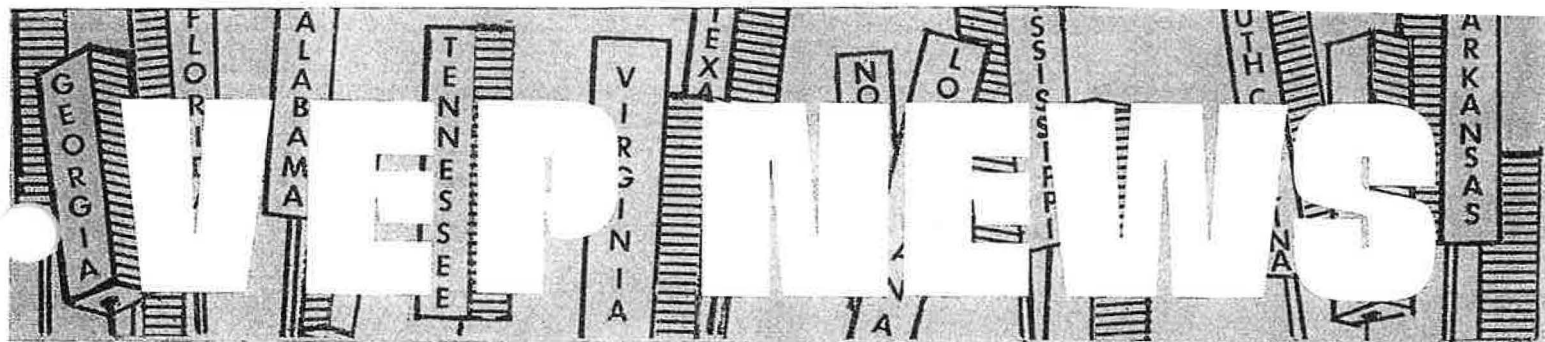
28. Divide a vertical line in two equal parts by bisecting it with a curved horizontal line that is only straight at its spot bisection of the vertical.

29. Write every other word in this first line and print every third word in the same line, (original type smaller and first line ended at comma) but capitalize the fifth word that you write.

30. Draw five circles that have one common inter-locking part.

Appendix - C

**Voter Education Project, Inc. Newsletter
Volume 5, April - June, 1971**



VOTER EDUCATION PROJECT, INC.

5 FORSYTH ST., N.W.

ATLANTA, GA. 30303

VOLUME 5

APRIL — JUNE, 1971

NUMBER 1

VEP VOTING RIGHTS TEAM TOURS MISSISSIPPI

A two-week Voting Rights Tour was conducted June 22 through June 30 as part of a massive Voter Education Project campaign in Mississippi to register black voters. Featured on the Tour were John Lewis, VEP Executive Director, and Georgia State Representative Julian Bond, a VEP Board Member.

Prior to the Tour, the VEP had funded registration campaigns, conducted by local community organizations, in twenty Mississippi counties. Several local projects, facing the problem of reregistration in addition to registering new voters, requested the assistance of the VEP in dramatizing the need for minority participation in the political process.

It was felt by VEP and local registration groups that the Mississippi reregistration process was intended to roll back the black voting rights progress which had been made in recent years. The VEP had protested to the Justice Department and testified before a House Judiciary Subcommittee that the reregistration was unnecessary and was being carried out in violation of the 1965 Voting Rights Act. These objections were ignored and the Justice Department allowed the reregistration process to continue.

Local registration project reports from Mississippi in the months of May and June indicated that, as black voter registration efforts became more effective, incidents of intimidation and reprisal increased accordingly. The reports of violence included four known racial slayings in the Mississippi Delta in a five-day period, the most publicized being the death of 18-year-old Jo Etha Collier of Drew, Mississippi. Registration workers were reportedly shot at, arrested on false traffic charges, had their car tires slashed, and, in one instance, a minister and a nun engaged in canvassing efforts were threatened with a gun. Reports of fear of economic reprisal were commonplace from throughout Mississippi, where whites control black housing, jobs, Social Security checks, welfare, mortgages, etc. The VEP also received numerous reports of harassment and delaying tactics by white registrars.

Traveling primarily by car, the Tour began in Greenville, where Lewis and Bond were given an official police escort, the first of many on the trip, to their speaking engagement. Altogether, they made more than 39 stops in 25 Mississippi counties as they encouraged blacks to register before the July 2 voter registration deadline.

In describing the tour, John Lewis stated, "Our trip is an attempt to conquer the fear that black citizens have and to bring attention to the registration deadline. We must demonstrate to the people of Mississippi that they are not alone in their struggle."

The Tour, designed to mobilize black voter potential through personal contact, included door-to-door and plantation-to-plantation canvassing during the days. In rural and urban areas, Lewis and Bond met with the people on the street, in their homes, in the cotton fields, in pool halls—wherever potential black voters might be found. In the evenings, the black masses crowded into hot churches, schools, clubs and public buildings throughout the state to hear speeches by Bond and Lewis.

Although many of the more-than-200 black candidates for public office in Mississippi came out to the mass rallies, the Tour was strictly nonpartisan. "We did not tell blacks who to vote for or what political party to join," Lewis explained. "We simply told black people that they can begin to control their own destiny and that one of the first steps is to register to vote."

In several Mississippi towns and counties where black registration constitutes a high percentage of the total voting power, the Tour members were surprised to meet white politicians who, perhaps for the first time, were coming out to black mass meetings to woo votes.

Such signs of black political progress brought inspiration and encouragement to the VEP, an organization which had
(Continued on page 4)



(Photo by A. Allen)



TALAHATCHIE COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI—VEP Executive Director John Lewis (left) kneels to discuss voter registration with plantation worker during Mississippi Voting Rights Tour. (Photo by C. Rooks)

BLACK GAINS FORECAST IN LOUISIANA

The State of Louisiana, one of two southern states holding general elections this year, is expected to show a substantial increase in the number of black elected officials, according to the reports of William H. Samuel, Jr., VEP Field Representative.

Since the enactment of the 1965 Voting Rights Act, the number of blacks holding elected office in Louisiana has mushroomed from fewer than 10 to 77. These black elected officials hold offices ranging from Justice of the Peace and Constable to state legislator.

The predominantly black town of Grambling, in Lincoln Parish, has the most black elected officials with a mayor, chief of police, and five aldermen. In West Feliciana Parish, three police jurors (county commissioners) and three school board members are black.

The Voter Education Project, currently funding several local non-partisan voter registration efforts, expect an increasing number of financial requests from the State of Louisiana due to increased election-year activity.

A Louisiana Voting Rights Tour, similar to one held recently in the State of Mississippi, is currently being planned by the VEP. Although details are incomplete at this time, the Tour will probably be scheduled early in the month of August, 1971.

MISSISSIPPI TOUR (Continued)

supported voter registration in Mississippi since its inception in 1962. In the early 1960's, both Lewis and Bond had been founders and officials of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), another organization which sent registration workers into Mississippi. Thus, the agenda for the Voting Rights Tour covered very little new territory for either major participant.

"We received police escorts in towns where we might once have been arrested or harassed as freedom riders, outside agitators, and troublemakers," stated Julian Bond. "In one town where several black men had been killed for first attempting to register and vote, we were welcomed by the white mayor. In another town, we addressed a black mass meeting in the county court house—traditionally a symbol of oppression for blacks."

The signs of an emerging new politics were welcome in Mississippi, a state with a long history of racial violence and exploitation. Since 1965, black voter registration has been increased from 28,000 to more than 280,000 in 1971. Mississippi, with 92 black elected officials, is second only to Alabama in having the largest number in the nation. With the probability that many of the black candidates now running for office will be elected in the fall, Mississippi might well emerge as the leader with the highest number of black elected officeholders.

VEP NEWS Vol. 5 No. 1
VOTER EDUCATION PROJECT, INC.
5 Forsyth Street, N.W.
Atlanta, Georgia 30303

(Address Correction Requested)

Appendix - D
2008 Presidential Election Results

Presidential Election of 2008, Electoral and Popular Vote Summary

This table provides information about the election results between candidates Barack Obama and John McCain

Principal Candidates for President and Vice President:
 Democratic—Barack Obama; Joseph Biden (winner)
 Republican—John McCain; Sarah Palin

	Barack Obama		John McCain		Electoral votes	
	Popular vote	%	Popular vote	%	D	R
Alabama	811,764	38.8%	1,264,879	60.4%		9
Alaska	105,650	37.7	168,844	60.2		3
Arizona	948,648	45.0	1,132,560	53.8		10
Arkansas	418,049	38.8	632,672	58.8		6
California	7,245,731	60.9	4,434,146	37.3	55	
Colorado	1,216,793	53.5	1,020,135	44.9	9	
Connecticut	979,316	60.5	620,210	38.3	7	
Delaware	255,394	61.9	152,356	37.0	3	
District of Columbia	210,403	92.9	14,821	6.5	3	
Florida	4,143,957	50.9	3,939,380	48.4	27	
Georgia	1,843,452	47.0	2,048,244	52.2		15
Hawaii	324,918	71.8	120,309	26.6	4	
Idaho	235,219	36.1	400,989	61.5		4
Illinois	3,319,237	61.8	1,981,158	36.9	21	
Indiana	1,367,264	49.9	1,341,101	49.0	11	
Iowa	818,240	54.0	677,508	44.7	7	
Kansas	499,979	41.4	685,541	56.8		6
Kentucky	746,510	41.1	1,043,264	57.5		8
Louisiana	780,981	39.9	1,147,603	58.6		9
Maine	421,484	57.6	296,195	40.5	4	
Maryland	1,579,890	61.9	938,671	36.8	10	
Massachusetts	1,891,083	62.0	1,104,284	36.2	12	
Michigan	2,867,680	57.4	2,044,405	40.9	17	
Minnesota	1,573,323	54.2	1,275,400	44.0	10	
Mississippi	520,864	42.8	687,266	56.4		6
Missouri	1,439,364	49.3	1,444,352	49.4		11
Montana	229,725	47.2	241,816	49.7		3
Nebraska	324,352	41.5	446,039	57.0	1	4
Nevada	531,884	55.1	411,988	42.7	5	
New Hampshire	384,591	54.3	316,937	44.8	4	
New Jersey	2,085,051	56.8	1,545,495	42.1	15	
New Mexico	464,458	56.7	343,820	42.0	5	
New York	4,363,386	62.2	2,576,360	36.7	31	
North Carolina	2,123,390	49.9	2,109,698	49.5	15	

<u>North Dakota</u>	141,113	44.7	168,523	53.3		3
<u>Ohio</u>	2,708,685	51.2	2,501,855	47.2	20	
<u>Oklahoma</u>	502,294	34.4	959,745	65.6		7
<u>Oregon</u>	978,605	57.1	699,673	40.8	7	
<u>Pennsylvania</u>	3,192,316	54.7	2,586,496	44.3	21	
<u>Rhode Island</u>	281,209	63.1	157,317	35.3	4	
<u>South Carolina</u>	850,121	44.9	1,018,756	53.8		8
<u>South Dakota</u>	170,886	44.7	203,019	53.2		3
<u>Tennessee</u>	1,081,074	41.8	1,470,160	56.9		11
<u>Texas</u>	3,521,164	43.8	4,467,748	55.5		34
<u>Utah</u>	301,771	34.2	555,497	62.9		5
<u>Vermont</u>	219,105	67.8	98,791	30.6	3	
<u>Virginia</u>	1,958,370	52.7	1,726,053	46.4	13	
<u>Washington</u>	1,547,632	57.5	1,097,176	40.5	11	
<u>West Virginia</u>	301,438	42.6	394,278	55.7		5
<u>Wisconsin</u>	1,670,474	56.3	1,258,181	42.4	10	
<u>Wyoming</u>	80,496	32.7	160,639	65.2		3
Total	66,882,230	53.0	58,343,671	46.0	365	173

NOTE: Total electoral votes = 538. Total electoral votes needed to win = 270. Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding and other candidates.

Source: Figures are from the New York Times and CNN.

Voting age population (United States Election Project for Nov. 2008): 231,229,580

Estimated number of voters in the 2008 election was 122,842,626.

Appendix - E
PowerPoint Presentation

*The History and
Politics of Voting
in America*

Maxine Sparks-Mackey, Ph.D.
Professor of Political Science
Mt. San Antonio College

Foundations of Democracy

- What is Democracy?
- Political power resting with the people
- The ability of people to vote in elections to select the policy leaders of the nation

- Philosopher Aristotle proclaimed in his writings, *The Politics* (335 – 323 B.C.)
- At the heart of democracy is liberty
- Today we call it “Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness”.

- Greek philosophers did not conceive of the evolution of democracy in the way it is now practiced by nations.
- Aristotle was an aristocrat who had little faith in wisdom of the lower classes.
- Aristotle also feared the use of unlimited political power in the hands of "one man".

- Aristotle feared tyranny and selfishness by the rule of "one man"
- He understood the weaknesses of a democratic government.
- But he also concluded that a democracy was far more satisfying.

- Democracy in western civilization has developed into both a form of government and a political value.
- Difficult to trace belief of "individuals and their rights" back to thinkers of Athens.
-

- Athenian Democracy was exclusive and included:

1. Solidarity
2. Participation
3. Restricted Citizenship

- Athenian democracy embraced on a small proportion of the population.
- This view changed after 1789 with the emergence of democratization of societies.
- After the French Revolution, there was movement to individualistic perspective on human rights.

- Democracy should be viewed as a remarkable achievement.
- Democracy means an opportunity for:
 1. Deliberation
 3. Debate
 4. Resolution

- Some prominent philosophers on democracy include:

1. Plato (c.427 - 347 BC)
2. Thucydides (c.460 - 399 BC)
3. Aristotle (384 - 322 BC)

- Contemporary authors on democracy take a broader view and perspective,
- But democratic theory is not perfect
- Should not be viewed as a 'means to an end'.

- Democracy is a political method– an institutional arrangement.
- Democracy is an arrangement for arriving at political, legislative and administrative decisions.

- Democracy should be defined by the competition for the peoples' vote.
- It is the act of gaining the decision making authority – voting.
- These components are central to the core of democracy.

- In the book *Democracy In America*, French philosopher Alexis de Tocqueville can be quoted as saying.....

“Democracy does not give the people the most skillful government, but it produces what the ablest governments are frequently unable to create.”

- Athenian political thinking is that democracy must be concerned about the good of the common community.
- They also believed that citizens must be educated and aware of community needs.

- Writer Robert A. Dahl, also says that;

"Only in associations with others can we hope to become fully human or, certainly, to realize or qualities of excellence as human beings."

- Democratic participation does not take place without democratic education.
- Without education, participation is compromised.
- Democracy is optimistic about the ability of citizens to become involved.

- Democracy also places a high premium on citizens being both knowledgeable and articulate.
- Elections have become central in the practice of modern democracies.
- Elections provide the mechanism for controlling elected leaders.

- The job of voting does not end when the ballot is cast.
- Citizens must continue to participate and monitor the actions of the elected leaders.
- Citizens who do not participate, may be experiencing hopelessness or a state of satisfaction with government leaders.

- Democracy does not take place over night.
- There is always a price to pay on the journey to achieve anticipated freedoms.
- Holding elections only may not be the first step in establishing democracy- it is usually not this simple.

- Writer Walter R. Agard says that a successful democracy exists when,
 - "The members of a community possess the spirit of freely participating in a common cause, the fruits of which they will share, there true democracy functions."

• So what are the essential elements in a functioning democracy?

1. When each individual has essential importance and worth
2. If people can be trusted to work out useful solutions when they have sufficient education and responsibility

3. If the judgments of all the people Long term are both sounder and safer than any one person or group
4. The collective interest must be protected against any individual or group which jeopardizes them

5. When democracy recognizes no validity in the practice of class, race, or religion.
6. If the community is most productive when all its abilities are utilized.

- Summary Review and Essay on Democracy
- Can you write a short essay on the meaning of democracy and what it means to you personally?

The History of Voting in America

What were the American Founding Fathers Thinking?

- 55 men gathered in Philadelphia in 1787
- No talk about universal suffrage rights
- No discussion about complete emancipation of the African slave populations

- The 55 delegates were the elite of colonial society.
- They were both wealthy and influential
- They were well educated
- Shared a solidarity of interests

- The Founders were far removed from the idea of full and equal treatment under the law for all Americans
- Did not perceive of all American being given equal opportunities

- The Founders feared central tyranny in the design of a new America
- Were not able to correct the structure of government under the original, *Articles of Confederation*
- Developed a new design of government that would incorporate both a central and decentralized form of government

- They feared returning to a British design of government with a central monarchy.
- They drafted a new Constitution to address their fears
- Created a new structure of government that didn't exist under the *Articles of Confederation*

- What was the view of democratic practice (voting)?
 - By the end of the Revolutionary War (1760-1780) the practice of colonial voting patterns ended.
 - Office holding was viewed as a right that belonged to the elite

- Embraced the idea of republicanism— a system that gives people the power of consent
- But the issue of voting inclusion vs. exclusion is where the Founders faltered
- Showed great wisdom in the distribution of political power and in the design/ structure of government

- It was over the question of citizenship and the rights of participation that the Founding Fathers sent us down a 'dark road' of denied rights.
- They demonstrated a fear of majority rule and an overwhelming need for stability

- Did they understand the consequences of their decisions and what it would mean to the young nation?
 - Pragmatically, it may have been the best choice at the time to save the nation in political and fiscal chaos at the time but.....
 - The history of the struggle to gain universal rights, tells us a different perspective.

The history of African American suffrage (voting rights) in America can be traced back to the detrimental decisions of the Founders.

The Founders condoned slavery in the Constitution

Strengthened the hand of its advocates

- Slavery officially ended on December 6, 1865
- Freed African slaves were still denied their full citizenship rights
- Rights were also denied to:
 1. Indentured servants
 2. Women
 3. Men who did not own property

- It would take 74 years for African Americans to finally gain the right to vote
- The U.S. Congress passed the Voting Rights Act of 1965 to grant this right

- The American Civil War redefined America and placed the nation on a new path to freedom
- Such rights would not come without great pain and sacrifice

- The Civil War Amendments to the Constitution
 - Thirteenth Amendment = Forbid slavery
 - The Fourteenth Amendment = Forbid states from denying citizens certain basic rights
 - The Fifteenth Amendment = Gave voting rights to emancipated African American males

In the long painful journey, America lacked the will to permanently alleviate the injustices

Millions of Americans were disenfranchised until the advent of the modern day Civil Rights Movement.

- Southern states would develop methods of denying African Americans the right to vote.
- The methods included:
 1. The Poll Tax
 2. The All - White Primary
 3. Literacy Tests

4. Intimidation
5. Discriminatory Registration Practices
6. Election Law Changes

- Southern resistance continued in defiance of federal mandates
- Physical intimidation also continued
- African Americans were tortured and murdered when trying to register to vote

- Northern indifference would continue until members of the African American community organized to protest in acts of civil disobedience.
- The media covered events would challenge the conscious of the American citizen- they questioned their own rights under the Constitution.

- Congress and the Judiciary exhibited a reluctance to act
- They eventually passed the Civil Rights Act of 1964.
- It was not sufficient in addressing the denial of voting rights in the South.

- Civil rights leaders were persistent
- President Lyndon B. Johnson heavily lobbied the Congress to pass the Voting Rights Act of 1965.
- There was continued opposition in the South

- Passage of the Act alienated the South from the Democratic President and his party
- But its passage resulted in significant registration of African American citizens in the South

- President Johnson accomplished more legislatively on the issue of Civil Rights than any of his predecessors
- But he would live office overshadowed by the legacy of the Vietnam War

- And what about Women and Their Fight for the Vote?
- Women would remain disenfranchised until passage of the Nineteenth Amendment (1920)
- It would not come about without the organized lobbying of government decision-makers.

- The movement for Women's Rights dates back to 1848
- Elizabeth Cady Stanton & Lucretia Mott met in Seneca Falls, New York.
- Drew up first public protest in America against women's political and social inferiority treatment

- The struggle for women's rights would not come about easily.
- Women's Rights Organizations included:
 - The National Women's Suffrage Association (NWSA)
 - The American Women's Suffrage Association (AWSA)

- The National-American Women's Suffrage Association (NAWSA)

- The Women's Movement is noted for:
 1. Experimenting with pressure politics
 2. Initiated effect lobbying of Congress
 3. Traveled extensively throughout the states to advocate for change in policies

- The Women's Movement relied on 'goodwill and gentlemanly' approach to politicians and government officials
- Relied on 'indirect influence' rather than the raw exercise of political power to gain voting rights.

- Last years of the Women's Movement were aided by rapid changes in America that would melt away old fashioned ideas about the roles of women in society.

Contemporary Voting and Politics

- French Observer Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-1859) said the following about voting in America.

"No sooner do you set foot upon American ground than you are stunned by a kind of tumult..."

- The struggle for the right to vote has been a continuous yet rewarding battle.
- Voting continues to be the primary way that the average American chooses to involve themselves in the democratic process.

- Tocqueville also observed that to deprive a citizen of their right to participate is to them of, "Half his existence".
- No wonder that the vote was so important
- No obstacle to high to achieve the right to vote. Even the loss of life was offered in the cause of voting rights.

What is the primary motivation for voting ?

- What matters is the act of voting
- The feeling that one has done their duty
- That one as affirmed one's allegiance

- The vote may not transform into long term support for the successful elector

Factors that Do Influence Voter Turnout and Choice

1. Education
2. Income
3. Occupation
4. Employment Status

6. Age
7. Sex
8. Marital Status
9. Race
10. Place of Residence
11. State of Residence
12. Registered to vote

13. Voted
14. Reasons given for not registering or voting
15. Hispanic ethnicity
16. How long at present address
17. How long employed
18. Live in a trailer

- Education is the most consistent factor
- Education the key factor and determinate for a voter willing and able to participate
- Education is a powerful predictor

- Citizens with high economic status participate in politics
- But education makes the primary difference in voter behavior and the exercise of civic duty

- The political climate of America gone through tremendous change since the Founding of the Nation.
- There as be a major movement toward the democratization of the voting process
- It is now possible for the masses of people to participate

- A broad cross section of voters young, old, of all ethnicities and economic levels and from cities and suburbs—can now participate
- The results of the 2008 Presidential race indicates that fact

- The 2008 Presidential Race was historical
- The First African American President, Barack Obama was elected as the 44th U.S. President
- History reflects a long journey to this historical landmark point in history

- There is much to learn about this painful journey
- It was a painful journey in the practice of democracy
- On election night, November 4, 2008 Obama would be proclaimed the President

- When interviewed Poet/Author Maya Angelou would proclaim, "Today, my country has grown up."
- 140 years after the Emancipation Proclamation
- 43 years after passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965

- There was much to be learned from the 2008 Election
 1. A new style of politics mixed with the old
 2. The use of technology by the Obama team
 3. The co-modification of candidates
 4. The branding of candidates with identifiable insignias and merchandise that attracted the youth

- Obama surrounded himself with brilliant people in his campaign including:
 - David Axelrod
 - David Plouffe
 - Steve Hildebrand
 - Valerie Jarret
 - Robert Gibbs

- Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton waged an 'all out battle' for the Democratic nomination
- She proved to be a formidable opponent
- Early in the race she was the front runner

- Clinton had strong support initially from the Democratic Party.
- She had won the respect of her Senate colleagues
- And was supported by the former President, Bill Clinton (Her husband)

Behind in the early primaries, Obama desperately needed a win in the State of Iowa
Decided to run on an anti-war theme

- Began to attract large crowds in Iowa at campaign rallies
- Inspired people who attended the rallies
- He needed to win in Iowa- a majority white voter population (90% of voters).

- Obama's win in Iowa shocked the Clinton Campaign
- The win in Iowa changed the campaign and showed that Obama was a viable candidate for the Democratic nomination

- The campaign intensified when Bill Clinton took on a more active verbal role in the campaign
- Hillary Clinton seemed capable of defending herself
- The voters wondered who was actually campaigning?

- In one of the televised debates candidate Obama also said to Hillary Clinton, "I can't tell who I'm really campaigning against, you or your husband."

- The Clinton campaign lost its momentum
- She would win several primaries in the Midwest and Eastern states, notably in Pennsylvania- it would not be enough
- Super-delegates to the Democratic convention were now leaning towards Obama

- By early summer, Obama had emerged as the frontrunner
- The Obama campaign never seemed to lose focus
- Candidate Obama became known for his cool, unflappable style and personality

- After getting the Democratic nomination in Denver, Colorado in August 2008 Obama faced off with Republican nominee John McCain
- The campaign took on an ugly racial tone when both John McCain and his running Sarah Palin failed to denounce negative out cries about Obama at their campaign rallies.

- It would not be the first time the issue of race would be used in a campaign
- This time race mattered because a qualified African American candidate had officially won the nomination of a major political party in America

- In the final weeks of the campaign Obama took the lead over McCain as the economy took a dive
- It would be the worst economic turndown since the election of Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1932

- With the news of the worsening economy, John McCain appeared to be acting erratically
- McCain was now linked in the minds of the voter with the failed policies of the Bush Administration

- In the end the voter would prove to be more concerned about the souring economy than that of the ethnicity of the future president.
- The diversity of voters who turned out on November 4, 2008 was notable.

- 66% of voters were between the ages of 18 and 20 years of age.
- 66.1% - White
- 64.7 % - Black
- 49.9 % - Hispanic
- 47.6 % - Asian

- What should be remembered most about the 2008 Presidential Election?
- The results of the maximum democratization of voting rights for all American citizens
- Gone were the major obstacles of the past that restricted voting rights

- On the primary ballot there were two new phenomenon's in American electoral history

One, a qualified and savvy politically astute female by the name of Hillary Rodham Clinton and,

Two, a qualified, intelligent African American male with a cool, calm leadership persona, Barack Obama

- It was an historical voting opportunity never before seen by the American voter
- Maybe Maya Angelou was correct after all- America finally had a chance to 'grow up'.

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