

FIGHTING FOR THE RIGHT TO CHOOSE:
THE MODERN AMERICAN AFRICAN-AMERICAN FEMALE
REPUBLICANS

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Abstract

The United States has experienced major changes in race politics. With the recent election of the first African American President and the first African American head of the Republican National Committee, many doors have been opened for African Americans that were previously closed. Along with these changes, there has been a shift towards a more conservative African American population in the United States. African American males are quickly separating themselves from the Democratic Party, and many African American females seem to be following this trend as well. While the female African American Republican population within the United States is still relatively small, this group is growing. This conservative shift among African Americans was previously ignored, but has now sparked the interest of many. This paper will attempt to shed some light on the characteristics and motives of the 21st century female African American Republican, as well as profile several prominent figures who maintain this particular political affiliation.

When you hear the words “fighting for the right to choose” you think of reproductive rights or perhaps equal marriage, but surely you do not think of partisanship. Nonetheless, every day thousands of individuals within the United States are fighting a silent battle in the hopes of changing a long standing standard of voting participation. The individuals I am referring to are the modern day African American Female Republicans, often disregarded by political scholars, they are gaining in numbers and proving to be not just a fad.

Being a Republican and being African American is very rare in the United States, yet being African American, Republican, and a woman is even rarer. Some even refer to this group as an “oxymoron.” According to voting polls only 8% of all African Americans voted for George W. Bush in the 2004 presidential election (Blanchfield, 2006, pg. 1). So where does this 8% of African Americans in the United States stand and who exactly are they? This group is often ignored by political scholars. According to a study carried out by Brinck Kerr of the University of Arkansas (2005), “the neglect is largely due to the fact that most political scholars presume there is little partisan or ideological variation among African Americans in the American electorate” (pg.1). Therefore, in addition to attempting to examine the beliefs of these women and the overall obstacles they face, especially those seeking political office, I will also examine why this group is not acknowledged by the vast majority of scholars and the media.

In order to understand the party politics of a small percentage of the African American female population one must first understand partisanship and the history and current state of party affiliation within the African American population.

Previous to the historic Voting Rights Act of 1965 passing into law, African American suffrage in the United States was very limited. Georgia, South Carolina, and Virginia allowed suffrage only for “Whites.” While Maryland, North Carolina, and Pennsylvania allowed voting rights only for “freemen,” notice the exclusion of women in the voting process, regardless of race, also present during this time period. If that were not enough, many states instituted “other requirements such as literacy, freeman status, and citizenship, together with the deep-seated racial prejudice exhibited by the citizenry [which] effectively prevented the majority of the free Black population from voting” (Valelly, 2006, pg.2).

In 1860 the United States Republican Party campaigned a very radical idea, to halt the expansion of slavery; nevertheless, they failed to campaign for the rights of African Americans, fearing it would alienate some of the party. Anticipating the abolition of slavery, the Republican Party made its first initial attempts to gain support from African Americans. African American suffrage would take a great deal of time to become a reality. During this period in the United States, the Democratic Party was seen as the “conservative party,” while the Republican Party was seen as more “liberal,” especially in its controversial support for African Americans.

The Democratic Party ruled in the southern states. In fact, from 1900 to 1960 not a single Southern Republican was voted into the Senate and only a very small number was voted into the House of Representatives. Interestingly enough, 90% of African Americans resided in the south during the early 1900s, and by 1960, 60% of African Americans still lived in the south (Valelly, 2006, pg. 23). Since African American strongly supported the Republican Party during this time, southern Democrats would

have done anything to keep them away from the voting polls. As a result of this intimidation, only a very small percentage of African Americans voted in presidential or any other elections. Ironically enough it would be Democratic President Lyndon Baines Johnson, the first southern elected president in over 100 years, to sign the Civil Rights Act of 1957 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (Valelly, 2006, pg. 33).

After the passage of the Voting Rights Act, African Americans became a real force within United States politics. During this period, African Americans were coming to the polls in record numbers, and actually “participating in politics at higher rates than Whites of similar socioeconomic background” (Chong & Rogers, 2005, pg. 347). This led to a complete realignment of the political parties within the United States. More and more African Americans within the United States began to side with the Democratic Party, whereas the old Southern “Dixiecrats” were becoming Republicans. Realignment in the 1960s, according to Political Scientist Earl Black, occurred because, “as the older Democratic segregationists departed, they were increasingly replaced by younger White Democrats who understood that cultivating biracial coalitions was essential to their survival. Many of the White Republicans who began to win congressional elections positioned themselves as more conservative on racial issues than their Democratic opponents” (Black, 1998). This party identification has remained ever present in modern times as Geographer Fred Shelley recognized, “with the exception of Jimmy Carter in 1976 and Bill Clinton in 1992 and 1996, no Democrat has won electoral votes in the South since 1968” (Shelley, Zerr, & Proffer, 2007, pg. 13). Even with the election of Democrat Barack Obama in 2008 this remains true.

It is important to note that Republican conservatism in the South was not simply about race. An even greater influence on political conservatism is believed to be religion. Church attendance in the United States is highest in the southern states which results in much more conservative thinking among these groups. In fact, “exit polls taken after the 2004 election ...showed that one of the best predictors of a voter’s decision is frequency of church attendance. According to these polls, 60% of Americans who reported attending religious services at least once a week voted for Bush in 2004, whereas only 36% of those who never attend religious services voted for Bush. Of these voters who regarded themselves as ‘evangelical’ or ‘born again,’ 78% cast a ballot for Bush; those who did not regard themselves as ‘evangelical’ or ‘born again’ gave Kerry a 56%-43% majority” (Shelley, Zerr, & Proffer, 2007, pg 19).

While discussing the political differences between northern states and southern states it is interesting to note that geographic location also has differing effects on African Americans’ political ideals. African Americans living in southern urban areas are more likely to vote independent than those living in rural southern areas, whereas, in the north it is the opposite, rural Blacks are more likely to vote independent than urban Blacks. Also, African Americans living in large cities overall are less likely to vote Republican than African Americans residing in more rural environments (Luks and Elms, 2005, pg. 748).

Socioeconomic status is also an important factor in voting behavior. Poor African Americans living in southern states are the group most likely to identify themselves as Republican. Still, both wealthy and poor African Americans residing in the north are most likely to identify themselves as Republican. Overall, the African Americans of the

south seem to be shifting more towards Independent identification, whereas the African Americans of the north tend to lean slightly more towards the Republican Party (Luks and Elms, 2005, pg. 749). It is also interesting to note that African Americans with a college degree are more likely to vote than White voters with the same education status (Black Republicans, 2000, pg. 9).

Another indicator of voting habits is age. Interestingly enough, African Americans between the ages 18 and 29 are the least Democratic. Older African Americans are more likely to vote Democrat than younger. In fact, the older an African American is the more likely it is that they identify themselves as Democrat. This is probably due to the affect that older African Americans have had more experiences with the Democratic Party and more political experience in general than younger generations (Luks & Elms, 2005, pg. 744). Also, older African Americans witnessed the Civil Rights movement first hand.

Partisanship is also important in the United States elections process. Partisanship is one's identification with a certain political party. Humans have a natural need to belong. Being a part of something reinforces good feelings within individuals. Human beings naturally receive a certain amount of satisfaction from being a member of a group, and this is no different with political party identification. According to *The New American Voter*, along with satisfying the constant need to belong, humans will seek out membership into organizations like political parties for guidance. Therefore, by joining a political party, individuals will gain the opinion of the majority within that party.

Not only do humans enjoy being part of a group but they also like things presented to them in simple terms. The brain naturally tries to simplify ideas so that it can

more easily categorize them. This, in turn, makes it easier for political candidates to tailor their campaigns to address the needs and issues of one party or another. According to political analysts William Keefe and Marc Hetherington, “for most people, party provides a useful shortcut to understanding a complicated political world” (2003, pg. 171). Therefore, by identifying with one party, voters are able to simplify all of the competing political messages to simply focus on the ones that fit with their particular party’s interests. Rather than thinking for themselves, most Americans simply allow the elites to shape the ideas and stances of both parties. Political party identification personifies both of these ideas. By being a part of a political party an individual can have ideas presented to them and to others about themselves in a way that is easier to understand, while at the same time they share a sense of belonging with other individuals who feel the same way they do about a wide range of issues.

Republicans are actually more successful candidates for political office because Republican loyalty seems to be higher than Democratic loyalty. While this number has grown and decreased in past elections it remains constant that more self identified Republicans will vote for a Republican candidate then self identified Democrats will vote for a Democratic candidate. Also, Republicans are more likely to vote overall. This seems to be due to the fact that the majority of Republicans enjoy a higher socioeconomic status than the majority of Democrats and people with higher income and education are more likely to vote than poorer, less educated individuals (Keefe & Hetherington, 2003, pg. 176) According to *The American Voter* religion, race, class, education, and occupation all affect party identification.

Another factor that affects partisanship is parental identification, in fact, according to several political analysts, “over 90% of the explained variance in respondent partisanship was accounted for by parental partisanship” (Carmines et al. 1987, pg. 384). Party identification can arise as early as childhood from the ideas presented by family members. However, even if established in childhood it does not necessarily mean that political identification will remain the same into adulthood. By the age of about 25 most individuals have formed their own political ideas and declared one party or another, regardless of their parent’s affiliation (Franklin, 2001, pp. 474).

Originally partisanship was seen as something that was unchangeable and remained constant. Though, for a roughly twenty year period after the 1960s more and more voters were beginning to alienate themselves from both of the major parties in the United States and identifying themselves as “independents.” This did not occur overnight, “for over four decades the American public had been drifting away from the two major political parties” (Wattenberg, 1996, ix). Though, in the late 1980s and early 1990s partisanship once again began to rise and in 1996 it was almost 60% higher than in 1978 (Bartels, 2000, pg. 35). Currently partisanship plays a very important role in the voting process within the United States; undoubtedly “the strength and direction of party identification are facts of central importance” (Campbell et al. 1960, pg. 121)

Table 1 attempts to compare the partisanship strengths between White voters and Black voters between 1960 and 2002. Based on this information more African Americans identify themselves to be strong partisans than Caucasian voters. This would be of interest to whoever was receiving the majority of the African American vote because by earning their vote the party ensures strong partisanship; in other words, you have citizens

within the party who are not easily swayed to other parties. Most of the other categories are generally very close, with the exception of the percentage of weak partisanship which is higher among Caucasian voters.

Table 1

| Strength of Partisanship | 1960-1969 | 1969-1976 | 1977-1980 | 1981-1992 | 1993-2002 |
|---------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Blacks - Independent | 14.8% | 11.5% | 10.6% | 10.8% | 9.9% |
| Whites - Independent | 11% | 14.9% | 16% | 12.5% | 10.9% |
| Blacks - Leaning Independent | 8.9% | 12.5% | 15.4% | 18.5% | 19.6% |
| Whites - Leaning Independent | 15.8 % | 21.8% | 24.1% | 24.4% | 25.9% |
| Blacks - Weak Partisan | 31.3% | 35% | 30.6% | 28.9% | 25.5% |
| Whites - Weak Partisan | 40.7% | 38.4% | 38% | 35.1% | 33.2% |
| Blacks - Strong Partisan | 45% | 41% | 43.4% | 41.9% | 45% |
| Whites - Strong Partisan | 32.6% | 24.9% | 21.9% | 27.9% | 30% |

(King, 2006, pg. 21)

Table 2 presents the percentage of White and Black voters' strength of political identification among the three major parties between the period of 1960 and 2002. While the number of African Americans who identify themselves as strong Democrats has risen throughout these years, the number of Whites who identify themselves as strong Democrats has decreased. As a result, of this the number of Whites who identify themselves as Republicans overall has decreased and the number of independent Republican-leaning African Americans has increased. However, it is evident from the

percentage of increase and decrease among both races in all categories that African Americans vote with more consistency than their White counterparts.

Table 2

| Seven-Point Partisan Identification | 1960-1968 | 1969-1976 | 1977-1980 | 1981-1992 | 1993-2002 |
|--|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Blacks - Strong Democrat | 41.6% | 38.6% | 40.5% | 40.2% | 43.5% |
| Whites - Strong Democrat | 20.3% | 14.2% | 13% | 14.6% | 14.3% |
| Blacks - Weak Democrat | 25.7% | 32% | 28.4% | 26.1% | 22.8% |
| Whites - Weak Democrat | 25% | 22.8% | 23% | 18.5% | 16.7% |
| Blacks –Independent Democrat | 7.3% | 10.9% | 12.8% | 14.1% | 15.6% |
| Whites – Independent Democrat | 8.4% | 11.4% | 13.3% | 11.2% | 13.4% |
| Blacks -Independent | 7.8% | 9.9% | 8% | 8.8% | 8.8% |
| Whites - Independent | 9.7% | 13.7% | 13.9% | 11% | 10.1% |
| Blacks – Independent Republican | 1.6% | 1.7% | 2.7% | 4.4% | 4% |
| Whites – Independent-Republican | 7.4% | 10.5% | 10.8% | 13.2% | 12.5% |
| Blacks - Weak Republican | 5.6% | 3% | 2.2% | 2.8% | 2.7% |
| Whites - Weak Republican | 15.7% | 15.6% | 15% | 16.7% | 16.4% |
| Blacks - Strong Republican | 3.4% | 2.3% | 2.9% | 1.7% | 1.5% |
| Whites - Strong Republican | 12.3% | 10.7% | 8.9% | 13.3% | 15.7% |

(King, 2006, pg. 23)

Now I will attempt to identify the differences of partisanship between the sexes. Women, just as African Americans, are underrepresented in the United States. Women may be not a minority like African Americans, but as far as political representation they

are defiantly underrepresented in the United States. Women, like African Americans, had to fight for the right to vote and have continued to make political gains since, such as equal pay and reproductive rights. In the 1980s a gender gap began to occur and ever since women have been more likely to vote Democrat than males. Yet, the most interesting fact about this gender gap is that it appears to be caused by the men and not the women. The percentage of female Democrats has remained fairly stagnant over the past 30 years whereas the percentage of male Democrats has decreased, thus the percentage of male Republicans has increased. This means men, not women, are becoming more conservative. Men are more conservative than women on issues of spending on public assistance programs, and more likely to “favor a smaller government role in creating jobs and providing for health care. In addition men tend to place greater emphasis on these issues than women typically do” (Keefe & Hetherington, 2003, pg. 178).

The Democratic Party clearly takes advantage of this gap by doing more to reach women. Groups like EMILY’s list, the biggest Political Action Committee (PAC) for women in the United States, have no real Republican counterparts. Political Analyst Margie Omero notes, “even a casual glance at the two major-party Web sites confirms this. The Democratic National Committee (DNC) web site has a full list of issues under their “Women” tab. The Republican National Committee (RNC) web site for “Women’s team” is much sparser, taken up mostly by a cartoon of a pink elephant wearing a pink dress and pink sneakers, sweating as she walks” (Felcher, 2008, pg. 10). Despite the fact that both parties had female candidates in the last presidential election it is clear where most American women’s political support lies. Though, it is interesting to note that race

is greater determinant than gender in political ideology. Therefore, if the two happen to intersect then race will almost always trump gender as the determinant of political party identification.

An often overlooked fact about female political participation is that women actually represent the majority of the voting population in the United States. In fact, 52% of voters in the United States are women, and this number has remained fairly stagnant since the 1970s. Women also register to vote and come out to the polls in greater numbers than men. This change began in the 1970s when women started to become much more active in the political arena and seek more political offices. Another reason for this higher presence of female voters is the increase in education among women in the United States. As I discussed earlier, higher education usually indicates greater political participation. However, even when men and women hold the same education status women are still more likely to vote than men. The only groups within the categories of male and female voters in which women are not higher is the category of married individuals. Married people, both male and female, tend to vote in almost the same percentages. Whereas, single women and young women tend to vote in higher numbers than single men and young men (Felchner, 2008).

Let us next take a deeper look into the two party system within the United States. It can be very difficult to define the exact details of what each party specifically stands for because the platforms are intentionally vague so as to attract as many voters as possible. Also, platforms will vary greatly from election year to election year depending on what is important to the citizenry at that specific time. Much has been done recently to ensure that both parties become more “responsible.” This means everything from

campaign spending, to delegate selection, is much more controlled and fair than in previous years where parties had free range to do as they pleased (Keefe & Hetherington, 2003, pg. 204).

So far we have determined that both women and African Americans are more likely to vote Democrat. In fact, it has been determined from studies conducted on the last three presidential elections that African American women are the category most loyal to the Democratic Party. This is due to the fact that Black women show greatest interest in issues like health care, education, jobs, and childcare, issues that are most often at the forefront of the Democratic ticket. Not only are African American women loyal, but they also vote in greater numbers than African American males. This is believed to be largely due to the fact that so many African American men are or have been imprisoned and have thus lost the right to vote. African American males make up 12.3% of the United States population. At the same time they make up an astonishing 43.7% of the incarcerated population (Human Rights Watch, 2002).

Conversely, it is interesting that younger Black men are the least loyal group to the Democratic Party. According to Bositis, “they [younger African American males] are self identified independents, which means they don’t have any emotional attachment to the Democratic Party” (Fisher, 2004, pg. 3). This is a stark contrast considering the role of African American females in the Democratic Party. African American females are also more politically involved than White females. According to research conducted by political analyst David Bositis, 35% of Black elected officials are female, while only 21% of White elected officials are female (Fisher, 2004, pg. 2).

According to statistics female African American Republicans should be almost nonexistent. Nonetheless, not only do they exist they are actually growing in numbers. Despite this growth there are almost no Black female Republicans in any prominent elected offices. The very few positions held by these women are moderately small local or statewide offices. It is hard for African American female Republicans to gain seats because of the negative views associated with this group, they are often ostracized by other African Americans and referred to as “sell outs” or “Uncle Toms,” for siding with a party that is viewed by many African Americans as the “enemy.” These negative feelings, as well as the fact that it is harder to get elected to any office if you are African American or a woman, coupled with the fact that there are so few African American Republicans in the United States at all, makes it exceedingly hard for these individuals to get elected to any office. Nevertheless, there are many widely respected conservative African American women who work within the political field but; due to lack of media coverage, go largely ignored by the general public.

African American conservatism is not something that grew up over night. In reality, according to Peter Eisenstadt’s *Black Conservatism: Essays in Intellectual and Political History* (1999), “conservative ideas have formed Black social and political thought since the late eighteenth century. [However], rebellion and resistance are so often seen as the touchstones of African American history that for many, the very notion of a Black conservative is oxymoronic” (pg. 5). The main idea that sets conservatives apart from liberal African Americans is the idea that Conservatives place their “focus on individual achievement rather than on government action and redress” (Eisenstadt, 1999, pg. 6) Black conservatives tend to focus less on the past and more to the future, with the

kind of attitude that if we play by your rules that we will get what we deserve, “one accepts the present with conviction and hope that things will get better” (Eisenstadt, 1999, pg.7). Eisenstadt believes that LBJ’s landslide victory of 1964 marked the essential turning point for the Democratic Party in terms of African American participation. Despite their gains since, many Republicans see the loss of the African American vote as a “critical source of weakness” (1999, pg. 233).

According to political scientist Pauline Terrelonge Stone’s study *Ambition Theory and the Black Politician* (1980), “Black politicians are not alike in their motivations to seek office, and ...these differences...are a function to a large extent of the social and political backgrounds which unite and divide them” (pg. 107). Stone believes that African Americans will be more likely to attempt to gain office if they have “social credentials” like education, political backing, and political experience.

Therefore, if African Americans want to see more representation within their own race, they are going to have to find people who can perform and produce in the political arena. If there are more African American elected officials as a whole it will become much easier for any African American, regardless of political affiliation to get elected. A result of this will be a more vested interest in African American politics by both parties, and in turn this could lead to a potential increase in African American participation in the Republican Party. As presented earlier, Republicans are more likely to vote than Democrats, so more Republican African American candidates running for office would most likely lead to an increase in the number of African Americans gaining political office.

Dr. Condoleezza Rice has become the poster child for Black female Republicans in the United States. She did serve as President George W. Bush's Secretary of State and was often regarded as "the most powerful woman in the world" (Ruffin, 2005, pg. 22). Though, Rice had to overcome the White male dominated stereotype often associated with such a high profile job. While many people know of her political stance, few understand her journey to the Republican Party. To understand this one must first truly understand who Dr. Condoleezza Rice is and where she came from.

Dr. Rice grew up in the midst of racial injustice of her native Birmingham, Alabama. In fact, in 1954 when a group of Ku Klux Klan men bombed a Black church in Birmingham killing four little girls, one of Rice's friends included, she was only a few miles away herself. Rice no doubt witnessed the horrors of racism on an almost daily basis. She was raised in a middle class African American household, a child of two educators, Reverend John Rice and Angela Rice (Buncombe, 2001, pg. 25). "Birmingham [Alabama] was odd. It was completely segregated. But the Black community built its own world. I went to ballet classes and took French lessons and etiquette classes. My father had a picture of me when I was about four sitting on Santa Claus's lap and I have this really odd look on my face, and I wonder if that's because I'd never been that close to a White person before (BBC News, 2004)."

Dr. Rice's parents decided it would be best for Condoleezza to be homeschooled, at least for the beginning of her education, so that she would be able to receive the type of education they felt she needed. Because of this Rice remained very close to her family and her parents, especially her mother, maintained a very watchful eye over her and

whom she associated with. Rice was soon enrolled in private school and continued to maintain a strict schedule with music, tennis, and skating lessons.

When Dr. Rice's father got a job offer from the University of Denver to become the vice chancellor he jumped at the opportunity and relocated the family to Colorado. Rice was enrolled in a Roman Catholic High School where she continued to excel in White dominated society despite what people like her Guidance Counselor, who told her she was not college material, thought:

I was going to be so well prepared. And I was going to do all of these things that were revered in White society so well, that I would be armored somehow from racism. I would be able to confront White society on its own terms. My family is third- generation college-educated. I should've gotten to where I am (BBC News, 2004).

Dr. Rice skipped the first and seventh grade and was able to graduate and began college at the very conservative University of Denver at a mere fifteen years old. Her original goal was to become an accomplished concert pianist, and after that fell through she decided she would change her major to international-relations. She met Professor Josef Korbel, who was the head of the University of Denver's international relations program and immediately became hooked. Korbel served as a mentor to Rice throughout her studies. She was even invited to Korbel's home on several occasions where she was introduced to his daughter Madeleine Albright, would grow up to be the United States Secretary of State under President Bill Clinton. Who could have guessed the two would end up with such distinctly different political ideologies?

Dr. Rice went on to graduate in 1974 and then enrolled at the University of Notre Dame, where she attained a master's degree in Economics. She then returned to the University of Denver for her Ph.D. She decided to specialize in Soviet Politics, which she

had long been fascinated with, so much so that she learned the Russian language and became extensively well versed in their culture.

In 1981, Dr. Rice began teaching at Stanford University in the principally White and male dominated political science department, not to mention she was on a tremendously liberal campus with very conservative viewpoints. She was well known for pushing her students to excel and in her time at Stanford she was rewarded for her efforts with the department's two highest honors, the 1984 Walter J. Gores award for excellence in teaching and the 1993 School of Humanities and Sciences Dean's Award for Distinguished Teaching. In addition to teaching while she was at Stanford she wrote three books dealing with Soviet Politics.

Stanford was so impressed with Rice she was named provost in 1993. She became the youngest provost in Stanford's history as well as the first female and African American. While still a professor Rice began working with other foreign relations experts within the United States government. President George H. W. Bush nominated her as the director of Soviet and East European affairs with the National Security Council, special assistant to the president for national security affairs, and senior director for Soviet Affairs. During her time working under the senior President Bush America witnessed the Berlin wall separating East and West Germany for decades finally being torn down. Dr. Rice was actively involved in this process and helped regain a smooth transition with the removal of Soviet powers in Germany.

Dr. Rice returned to Stanford in 1991 and regained her position as provost. However, all the while she longed to return back to Washington D.C. to dip her feet in

the governmental waters once more. In 2000 President George W. Bush requested Rice help him on the campaign trail by serving as his foreign policy advisor. Once Bush was elected Rice became the first African American woman to serve as national security advisor and later Secretary of State (H.W. Wilson, 2009).

Dr. Rice's parents are also Republicans, and her own father is one of the prime reasons that she identifies herself as a Republican. During his own youth he attempted to go vote in a local election and the Democrats would not allow him to vote. Therefore, he chose to vote as a member of the Republican Party and remained with the party ever after. This influenced Dr. Rice to become a Republican herself. Interestingly enough, Rice has not always identified herself as a Republican. Up until the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980 she was a Democrat and even voted for Jimmy Carter in 1976. However, she was very dissatisfied with the way he handled the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and thus decided to switch parties (H.W. Wilson, 2009). Rice states, "I found a party that sees me as an individual, not as part of a group... In America, with education and hard work, it really does not matter where you come from - it matters where you are going" (BBC News, 2004).

Dr. Rice was raised in the church and still holds her faith very highly. She was taught from an early age that she would succeed at whatever she put her mind to. This very educated woman rose through the ranks to become what she is today (Buncombe, 2001, pg. 25). Kimberly Craven, Secretary of the Hawaii Federation of Republican Women, said this of Rice "Dr. Rice is an excellent choice for Secretary of State. She is an incredible role model for me and other young women because she overcame the hardships of growing up Black in a segregated city. She showed me that hard work really

does pay off and that you can accomplish your dreams in the United States of America if you work hard enough, no matter where you were born, whether rich or poor, Black or White, male or female. President Bush could not have chosen a more perfect representative of freedom than Dr. Rice” (Rice, 2004).

Despite all of the praise for Rice, not everyone has a positive view of her. When Hurricane Katrina struck down in Louisiana many people were greatly turned off by Rice after it was found out she was spending her day shopping. In fact African American commentator Michael Eric Dyson, in Spike Lee’s Documentary “When the Levees Broke” remarks, “While people were drowning in New Orleans, she was going up and down Madison Avenue buying Ferragamo shoes. Then she went to see Spamalot!” To her defense Rice has replied, “I was watching on the news what was going on. I wasn’t getting the reports of what the hurricane was going to do or anything like that. And so I responded like the Secretary of State which is worry about the foreign contributions...but it was less than 24 hours before I realized it was time to get back...I didn’t think about my role as a visible African-American national figure. I just didn’t think about it” (Rice, 2004). Whatever the real story, many African-Americans lost a great deal of respect for Rice with her failure to act appropriately in this situation.

Rice may have made significant gains with the Republican Party but most Democratic African Americans do not think very highly of her. According to researcher David Bositis, “Black women are not looking to Condi Rice because their primary voting motivations are not issues having to do with foreign policy or national security. The bottom line is she does not affect social policy and its social policy that is hurting African

Americans” (Fisher, 2004, pg. 3). Perhaps this explains why not one of Dr. Rice’s prominent positions held in government has been an elected one.

Not only are there very few African American Republicans in general, but there are also very few elected into political offices. Only 8% of African American women classify themselves as Republican (Kerr, 2005, pg. 20). Therefore, there is simply not a large enough group to make any real political gains. The only way for this group to possibly gain a stronger footing would be to gain more supporters. This will be very difficult as the African American population as a whole has experienced a great loss in voter turnout.

Not only do African Americans not want to vote but according to a Pew Research Study (Elder 2006 pg. 1) conducted during the 2004 elections, 29% of African Americans believe that their vote will be miscounted, as opposed to only 8% of White voters. Additionally, after the 2000 election voting scandal prominent Black figures like Jesse Jackson were telling African Americans to fear and put down Republican candidates.

“Today we stand surrounded, Jeb Bush on one hand, Miss Harris on the other, George W. and Cheney comin’ from behind, the Supreme Court of Florida. But we will not surrender. Our hopes are alive. Our dreams are alive. Our faith is alive. God will see us through. It’s dark, but the morning comes. Don’t let them break your spirit,” said Jackson (Elder, 2006, pg. 1).

Although, at the same time there have been some successful attempts to get African Americans to switch to the Republican Party. In fact one such incident is described in Hanes Walton’s *African American Power and Politics: the Political Context Variable* (1997). In the southern city of Savannah, while Republicans were looking to recruit upper and middle-income African American conservatives they in fact attracted low income, unemployed African Americans “who were tired of being robbed, murdered,

and opposed by their own people.” And in turn the first African American Republican mayor was elected in the city’s 263 year history (Walton 1997, pg. 207).

Every political organization has an ultimate goal of gaining political power so that their thoughts and beliefs are uphold with greater society, and African American Republicans are no different. Black Republicans already face two major hurdles when trying to become elected “winning over Blacks who typically vote Democratic and reaching out to Whites who are more comfortable voting for someone their own color. Therefore, African American women face the additional problem of trying to get people of all races to vote outside of their gender.

However, another reason why there are fewer African American female elected officials is the fact that these women have a harder time raising campaign funds. There have been several political action committees created for the specific purpose of raising the funds to get more African Americans elected. One such PAC was helped created by Carol Moseley Braun, a former United States Senator, after she attempted to run for president and had to give up her bid due to lack of campaign funds. She created Future PAC, in the hopes that other Black women would not face a similar situation (Fisher, 2004).

Besides Future PAC there are also many other organizations created to help all African American Republicans gain office. Another such organization is the African American Republican Leadership Council (AARLC) which seeks to “break the liberal Democrat stranglehold over Black America” and “increase African Americans support for common sense Reaganite Republican public policies...to a strategic target of 25 percent” as this is the amount they feel is necessary to become a true presence within the

Republican Party. They work closely with many Republican Politicians, both Black and otherwise, to try to increase party membership among African Americans and insure that the African American voice is heard (Sourcewatch, 2008).

Another such group is Republicans for Black Empowerment, which focuses more on the unity of Black Republicans. They seek to create social and political networks among one another where they can create a dialogue for change within their political community. They also seek to create community organizations where they can discuss and institute change within their local area. Though, it is interesting to note that most of the leadership in this organization is male, as is that in the AARLC (Arnell, 2005). There are very few females holding high positions in either organization.

African American females running for public office have the added disadvantage of being two minorities, a woman and an African American. Black women compose less than 3% of U.S. State Representatives and there are still no African American women in the U.S. Senate. African Americans make up 11% of voters in the United States however, less than 2% of all elected officials are African American. Still, women are also underrepresented within the political sphere. While women compose more than 50% of the voting population there is a much lower percentage of female elected officials. Even though both groups are steadily gaining leadership, neither are anywhere near they need to be to achieve descriptive representation (Philpot & Walton, 2007).

Although, it is advantageous that African Americans are more likely to vote within their own race than to vote for a White candidate. This is because African Americans have a strong sense of identity and identify strongly with members of their own race. Black women are also more likely to vote for African American females. They

are actually more likely to vote for Black women than White women are to vote for White female candidates. This means that if African American candidates want to gain election they need to be running in areas with a large percentage of African American voters. Perhaps this is why the number of female African American elected officials has been steadily rising within recent years. In this respect, African American women are fairing far better than their Latino and Asian American counterparts (Philpot & Walton, 2007).

Dr. Ada Fisher, who ran for the United States House in North Carolina's 12th district in the 2002, 2004, and 2006 elections and lost all three times, is a Black female Republican. "I've been a Republican for more than 30 years. It's nothing I've ever tried to hide," she says. "On the other hand, people know I'm not rich. I've always supported myself and paid my own way through school through a combination of hard work and persistence, and I remain very active in the community" (Blanchfield, 2006, pg. 10). She has faced opposition, even within her own party. She was walking towards the Republican Party booth at the county fair when a White male Republican told her to go back to the Democratic booth "where she belonged." She even overheard White members of her own party tell their friends to vote straight ticket "except for the Black woman." And when she hired Black college students to campaign for her run on their college campus they were referred to as "uncle tom's" (Time, 2008, pg. 1). What are you supposed to do when your party doesn't want you and your racial community doesn't accept you either?

Despite all of this opposition, Dr. Fisher is one of the few examples of African American female Republicans branching out into the political arena and trying to attain

elected positions. Frances Rice, the Chairman of the National Black Republican Association, explained the plight of the African American Republican like this, “If you work hard, you’re accused of ‘selling out.’ When polled on values questions, [Black voters] align with the Republican Party. Nonetheless, when you ask their party affiliation, it’s almost always 100 percent Democrat” (Blanchfield, 2006, pg. 10). Rice (2006) concludes the greatest reason for this is the fact that Blacks receive overwhelmingly negative messages about the Republican Party. Rice continues, “The problem that Republicans have is that, for the last 40 years, inner-city communities have been run by Democrats, so African Americans aren’t hearing good things about Republicans” (Blanchfield, 2006, pg. 10). Therefore, an overwhelming majority of African Americans in this country in general vote Democrat and are seen as disgracing their race if they choose to associate themselves with any other party. This explains why Dr. Ada Fisher only received a low 33% of the vote in the 2006 House election (Blanchfield, 2006, pg. 10). Her opponent was also African American, though he was a Democrat, male, and to make matters worse, the incumbent.

In 2002 Yvonne Brown was elected the first female Black Republican mayor of Tchula, Mississippi. Along with being female and Republican, Yvonne had to overcome the long history of segregation and hate towards Blacks that has become associated with deep southern states like Mississippi. “As is perhaps true for any new mayor, Brown has faced many challenges her first year in office. Some you might expect, like a sizable deficit, and others like hate mail and telephone death threats, you might not” (Bailey, 2002). She is doing her best to turn the city around, and already has received many sizeable grants from the federal Government to rebuild much of the city’s infrastructure.

“It doesn’t bother me. But I know that people are watching and waiting to see if I fail,” says Brown. “People don’t like change. I think some people felt threatened by my aggressive vision. And I make no apologies for my aggressive nature” (Bailey, 2002).

Another prominent African American female Republican is Mississippi’s own Stephanie Summers-O’Neal. She has been a businesswoman her entire life and spent her childhood traveling the globe with her father, who was employed by the World Mental Health Organization. She has spent her life establishing one of the most successful domestic and international business development companies. All of these accomplishments and she is merely 34 years old. O’Neal served on Mississippi Governor Haley Barbour’s inaugural committee and was asked to run for Congress in 2004. She outperformed her opponent in fund raising, \$70,000 dollars to her opponents mere \$33,000. Despite the loss she has no plans to stop running, this would be a major step for this small minority and the Republican Party as a whole. She cares a lot about her home of the Delta, and the people who inhabit it, and wants to see it grow to its full potential. “I believe in self-sustainability. My family has always lived that way...the government is not responsible for taking care of people, but it is responsible for making sure everyone has access to quality education and health care, and that we all have an opportunity to reach our potential,” said O’Neal (Jeter, 2004, pg. 3).

O’Neal comes from a long line of Black entrepreneurs who fought for their wealth and came out victorious and it echoes in her beliefs about the role of the government in finances. While she has supported some Democratic candidates, she said she has always classified herself as a Republican (Jeter, 2004, pg. 3). All she has to do

now is get elected, which means overcoming the stereotypes associated with African American Republicans, this is especially true of the deep southern states, like Mississippi.

Florida's State House of Representative member Jennifer Carroll is one of the few African American female Republicans who have gained elected office. She was actually born in Trinidad and grew up in New York City. Elected in 2003, she was the first Black female Republican elected in the Florida Legislature ever. She has also served as majority whip from 2004-2006. Her beginnings are somewhat different from her counterparts. Carroll served in the United States Navy for 20 years as a jet mechanic. She rose in the ranks to eventually retire as Lieutenant Commander Aviation Maintenance Officer, and was given several medals for her service. This is a huge accomplishment not only for an African American, but for a woman as well. In 2001 Carroll was given an Excellence in Leadership Award from the Center for New Black Leadership.

Carroll has strong beliefs about the economic situation facing the African American community. She believes the welfare system keeps Black families apart, and has made the African American community too dependent on the government for its success thus has hindered their growth as a people. She stated in her speech at the Republican National Convention in 2000 that it is only "the Republican Party who offer[s] real hope and opportunity for every child" (Carroll, 2000, pg. 1). Carroll has also stressed her strong disagreement with abortion throughout her time in office. It is interesting to note that her opponent in the 2000 election was another African American female, Democrat Corrine Brown, who was also the incumbent.

There has been a massive increase in the number of African American Republicans running for elected office in Florida and throughout the Deep South

(Bennefield, 2005, pg. 10). “Republicans have been putting the squeeze on Democrats running and the Democratic Party in these areas,” says Keith Reeves, a professor of Political Science at Swarthmore College and author of *Voting Hopes or Fears? White Voters, Black Candidates & Racial Politics in America* (1997). “You can look at the Democratic shift in the South and see the Republicans gaining a stronger foothold there” (Bennefield, 2005, pg 10). Even though more African Americans have taken shelter with the Republican Party there are still issues internally, within the party itself, facing African Americans in the South. The party as a whole has been very welcoming to former segregationists and struck down ideas such as affirmative action.

According to Political Scientist Rosalee A. Clawson of Purdue University, the African American females residing in this particular part of the nation have had their ideas shaped by three major “factors: the civil rights movement, the women’s rights movement, and the Black church” (Clawson, 2003, pg. 211). Black women have faced twice the discrimination of any other group in the United States, both for being women and being Black. They have had to fight harder for respect and leadership positions than their Black male and White female counterparts. This constant struggle to get their voices heard has led many African American women to pursue careers as political activists. The Black church holds an important role in the upbringing and shaping of these young women. It is in the Black church that Black women are first able to hold leadership positions and shape their policy opinions that will help guide their political ideologies later in life, especially dealing with the idea of abortion. However, the role is not nearly as great as it used to be.

Judge Luke A. LaVergne, a former Louisiana Democrat who recently switched parties, describes himself as a “Colin Powell Republican” (Bennefield, 2005, pg. 10). This is a feeling he shares with many former African American Democrats who recently switched parties. He recognizes the problems within the party itself and is trying to fix them but he realizes that this is something that must be changed internally (Bennefield, 2005, pg. 10). This would require getting an electoral foothold of African Americans within the party itself. This would be difficult since there are currently only three African Americans on the 150 member Republican National Committee (RNC) (Harris, 1993). Black Republicans, especially women, will have to prove their worth to make a strong stand in the decision making process. “If we are going to keep a presence in the GOP, we’re going to have to fight for it,” declares Milton Bins (Harris, 1993), chairman of the Council of 100, a national African American Republican lobbying group.

To Bins this means gaining more votes by recreating the base of the Party so that it is representative of all Americans, regardless of race, gender, or socioeconomic status. “Without the support of the Black community, Black Republicans have little leverage within the party,” said senior advisor to the RNC, Thaddeus Garrett Jr. “They have no power to get young, aspiring Black Republican legislators into office (Harris, 1993). This means young powerful African American women as well. Kristin Clark Taylor, who was the director of media relations for former President Bush, hopes the boost from the so called ‘Year of the Woman’ will help “women of color to gain leadership roles in the GOP” (Harris, 1993). Yet, there have been no real clear messages from the Republican Party that they want to change the face of the party as it is today. There has never been a serious effort taken by the party itself to try to encourage minorities to join. This is

something that Garrett sees as a complete contradiction to the Republican Party's idea that they were "founded on the ideals of freedom of inclusion" (Harris, 1993).

Though, the Republican Party recently took a big step in the right direction by electing African American Michael Steele to head the Republican National Committee. However, it actually made some African Americans upset because they felt it was simply a ploy by the Republican Party to regain African American support after the recent election of African American President Barack Obama. Steele was only recently elected therefore he has had little time to share his policies and ideas with the Republican Party. Still he has said he wants to do a major public relations campaign with the Republican Party in "urban-suburban hip-hop settings" (Katz, Sisk, & Saltonstall, 2009, pg. 1) in order to attract more African Americans, as well as Hispanic voters. This will include television, internet, and radio advertising to this target demographic.

Steele believes there is a negative image of the Republican Party with African Americans because Democrats want to maintain power. Steele states, "[people] look at the [Republican] party as the bastion of racism which is isn't...But, just look at the inner-city school systems and the poverty levels have been high for years. It's systematic, and you can't blame Republicans for that. I haven't heard Barack Obama talk about the recidivism rate among youth in the prison system, or drug addiction...We're going to offer something more" (Time, 2008, pg. 3).

Nevertheless, many African Americans remain very skeptical of Steele's intentions. Prominent African American Reverend Al Sharpton said of Steele, "He needs to deal with the substance of his party and its policies, which do not represent the interests of minorities" (Katz, Sisk, & Saltonstall, 2009, pg. 1). It is going to take much

more than hip-hop lingo and television Commercials to gain African American voters. It is going to take a true vested interest and an individual that is willing to show how the Republican Party is capable of facilitating the needs of African Americans far better than the Democratic Party is. Most people agree that actions speak louder than words, therefore, if the Republican Party wants to truly prove it cares about minorities it is not only going to have to say it, but show it through its actions in upcoming policies and elections.

This is not the first major attempt by the Republican Party to attract African Americans. At the 2000 Republican National Convention there were more African Americans present in the processions the very first night than had been in previous years combined. Outside of Republicans themselves, this attempt at broadening their minority status was unsuccessful in gaining additional support for the Republican Party. The Republican Party still focuses too much on imagery and not enough on actually stating any differing opinions on racial issues like affirmative action, which remain very important to most African Americans (Philpot, 2004).

An often disregarded fact is that if the Republican Party would simply attempt to attract more minorities and women they would hold the majority in the United States government. According to Kerr, (2005) a mere 20% of the African American vote would allow them this control. There have been some small attempts made to draw them, often using President Lincoln as a ploy, or President Bush's appointments in his recent term of such prominent officials like Condoleezza Rice and Colin Powell. Yet of "all the partisan social groups in the United States, many Republicans simply feel that African Americans are a waste of resources. African Americans remain the most loyal to their party, in fact

they have actually become more loyal to the Democratic Party” (Kerr, 2005, pg. 2) over the years. However, many people believe the Democrats take this loyalty for granted. Former Clinton pollster Dick Morris points out, “the Democratic Party has always treated the African American vote like a golfer’s handicap. A Democrat always takes the Black vote for granted, and a Republican, until recently, takes its loss as a given” (Carter, 2007).

There are no real “raced based initiatives” within the Republican Party itself (Carter, 2007). As journalist Doug Heye puts it, “no political party can build itself for future elections by ignoring any potential voters...It will not be easy, but engaging the African American community [in the Republican Party] is the right and smart thing to do” (Heye, 2008, pg. 2). In the last election Presidential hopeful Senator John McCain made several attempts to reach out to the African American community such as speaking with organizations such as the NAACP and several African American media sources despite the fact his opponent, Senator Barack Obama, was himself Black. While McCain did reach out to African Americans, many believe the real reason he lost African American votes was because he failed to acknowledge their needs specifically.

Don Scoggins is a Black man and has been a member of the Republican Party for almost 40 years. He holds leadership positions in African American Conservative organizations and still supported Barack Obama in the last election. He believes that the choice of Sarah Palin as a running mate was one of McCain’s downfalls, “[Palin] was the nail in the coffin. She didn’t exude any intellectual acuity...In the Black community the biggest problem is the deterioration of the Black family. McCain wasn’t interested in that-and I don’t think he could have ever been the person to articulate it” (Time, 2008,

pg. 2). Scoggins has not switched parties by any means but he, as well as many other Black conservatives, believes there's much more to be done internally before the party will ever gain a majority of African Americans. Renee Amooore, a very politically active female Black Republican agrees, she believes the Republican Party has to reach out not only during election times, but "do it 24/7" (Time, 2008, pg. 2).

Not all of the African American female Republicans fit the cookie cutter image of what most perceive to be a Republican. Ohio Lieutenant Governor Jennette B. Bradley is pro choice and pro gay rights and has received quite a bit of negative remarks from others, even within her own party, regarding these opinions. Bradley told *the Cincinnati Enquirer* in her defense,

"I'm pro choice, but I only talk about it when I'm asked about it by a reporter. It's already federal law, so it's not an issue for me. It's not my platform, and the fact that I have that position doesn't mean I'm not a Republican. I believe in fiscal responsibility and making government more responsive. I'm an African American woman. I've faced resistance. I can understand challenges. There are philosophical differences. We ought to be able to disagree on issues."

In 2003 Bradley became the first African American woman to hold the position of lieutenant governor in the entire United States. When asked how she felt about being only one of only two prominent African American officials in Ohio she replied, "[it] doesn't intimidate me. If it serves as an incentive for other women and people of color to become involved in government and public policy, I'm happy to open that door" (Answers, 2003).

Perhaps one of the more widely recognized of the Republican African American women is Angela McGlowan, widely known and respected political analyst. She ironically grew up in a Democrat household, despite her strong Republican roots. Her father, James Thomas McGlowan, worked during the segregation era in Mississippi

helping African Americans gain better education opportunities, and then worked to promote integration in the civil rights movement. McGlowan used this strength and dedication to push herself through the ranks to become the widely respected woman she is today (McCain, 2007, pg. A02).

As a teen she competed in several beauty pageants and even took the title of Miss District of Columbia USA in 1994. “A girlfriend of mine said, ‘Angela, you’re beautiful, you’re brilliant you should go for Miss District of Columbia. It’s about access in this town; it’s about who you know.’ I said, I’m smart. I don’t need to be in a beauty pageant.’ But I learned the hard way,” (McCain, 2007, pg. A02). Yet, winning the pageant also introduced McGlowan to many people and it opened many doors for her. Before the pageant she was barely making ends meet working for eight dollars an hour as a secretary. McGlowan’s experiences only pushed her harder to fight for other Americans who were struggling to survive. Her book, *Bamboozled: How Americans Are Being Exploited by the Lies of the Liberal Agenda*, is the product of years of frustrations with Liberal politicians. “Liberals always say they are representing the little guy, but if the little guy makes it, then who will the liberals represent? So they have to keep us down, so they can stay up and we will have allowed it” (McCain, 2007, pg. A02).

McGlowan believes the Democratic Party has a very patronizing attitude towards Blacks and women especially. She also wants to stop the rising trend of children being born out of wedlock in the United States. “Why is it today that seven out of ten babies [born to Black women] are born out of wedlock? Seventy-five percent of all children born out of wedlock will grow up under the poverty line...” (McCain, 2007, pg. A02). McGlowan strongly believes that this trend needs to be stopped, as does the dependency

on government aid. She has created several programs to help young women and minorities with an empowerment and self sufficiency message (McCain, 2007, pg. A02).

When she was interviewing individuals for her book, “the general question, was which policy prescriptions have created a better America for women and people of color, Democrat or Republican” (McCain, 2007, pg. A02). To McGlowan the answer to this question was obviously Republican, and the individuals that she interviewed agreed. She believes the huge loss for the Republican Party was exactly what they needed to get themselves back on track as a party. “We’ve got to get back to our basics...to the principles of this party, to the principles that helped found the nation” (McCain 2007, pg. A02).

In fact, up until Hurricane Katrina, the Republican Party had been steadily gaining African American voters, because McGlowan feels that most African Americans believe that President Bush did not act correctly and this then placed the blame on the Republican Party. According to a poll conducted by the Associated Press, “89% of African Americans said they did not approve of the performance done by President Bush, and 83% did not approve of the performance of Congress, in general” (McCain, 2007, pg. A02). The war in Iraq has only raised these numbers. All of these together have made most African Americans very upset with our present government and this unhappiness was reflected in the last midterm election in 2006 where the Democrats finally took back the majority. McGlowan believes that what will help the Republican Party the most is getting the message out to both women and minorities that they do care about people, especially those in poverty (McCain, 2007).

Still, some people, like African American Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas, only the second African American ever to hold such a position, believe that it is in the best interest of African Americans to join the Republican Party. Like Dr. Rice, Thomas grew up in the midst of segregation in the United States. He also grew up in a very religious household ingrained with the message that hard work is the key to gaining anything worth attaining. Thomas believes in order for the Republican Party to gain more African Americans they must simply “stop discouraging them; when they are treated as a diverse group with differing interests; and when conservatives stand up for what they believe rather than stand against Blacks” (Thomas, 1987, pg.2). That means truly let the message of the Republican Party be heard, rather than wasting energy trying to dispel the Democratic Party. Thomas, like many, recognizes that the Republican Party is actually much more aligned with the thoughts and beliefs of many African Americans than the Democratic Party. They simply do not do a good enough job explaining why this is. Thomas says, “Blacks just happen to represent an interest group not worth going after. Polls rather than principles appear to control. We must offer a vision, not vexation. But any vision must impart more than a warm feeling that ‘everything is just fine—keep thinking the same’” (Thomas, 1987, pg. 8). It comes down to support, the Republican Party is failing to show that it truly supports the ideas and principles of African Americans and truly has their best interests at heart.

Thomas also discusses another issue within the African American Population, the utter hatred of the Republican Party in general. Any African American who chooses to become a part of the Republican Party is ostracized and put down by other African Americans. Thomas says, “We were treated with disdain, regularly castigated, and

mocked; and course we could be accused of anything without recourse and with impunity. Any Black who deviated from the ideological litany of requisites was an oddity and was to be cut from the herd and attacked” (Thomas, 1987, pg. 6). Not only are Black Republicans treated as outsiders by their own race, but Thomas discusses how when he first entered politics in the early 1980’s he was treated differently by many of his White Republican colleagues. “There was a general refusal to listen to the opinions of Black conservatives. In fact, it appeared often that our White counterparts actually hid from our advice. Those of us who had been identified as Black conservatives were in a rather odd position” (Thomas, 1987, pg. 5). Conversely, at the same time the Democratic Party was, and still is, accepting of African Americans and their opinions with open arms.

To sum it up there is a relatively small group of African American female Republicans in this country. For those of this group who are seeking public office there is great opposition against them. They first must face the obstacle of trying to convince the public to vote for a woman and then on top of that they face the stereotypes that many people, both African American and otherwise, have created about this specific type of party affiliation. There have been some small gains for Black Republicans in general, but it will take some time and a lot of hard work before we will see an African American Republican woman in our United States Congress.

Based on my research I have concluded that much of the growth of African Americans within the Republican Party is partly due to the increase in upper class African Americans within the United States. As more and more African Americans seek to increase their socioeconomic status I believe the number of African Americans within the Republican Party will increase. Since upper class America and the so called

“Religious Right” are the two groups that most identify with the Republican Party, and African Americans continue to make up more and more of these two groups, I see no reason why there will not be a major shift towards the Republican Party by African Americans in the near future.

There are many preconceived notions about female African American Republicans in the United States. If people would merely accept such differing opinions and accept other people’s right to choose the party they most identify with there would be much more willingness by African Americans to choose the party they best identify with rather than just pick the one their parents chose, or their friends chose. Or perhaps, African Americans, like many Americans, are simply fed up with both major parties and perhaps we are in the midst of an independent party growth.

This next election will be a critical one for the Republican Party with the recent election of African American President Barack Obama and the selection of Michael Steele. The Republican Party is going to have to not only show that they are a party of diversity by choosing minorities for positions but they are going to have to voice it through their actions by speaking about issues that are important to minorities. People are not going to simply flock to a party because they see faces that look like theirs; they want to hear voices that sound like theirs as well.

Michael Steele cannot simply expect to use “hip-hop” lingo to attract African American voters. He is going to have to make himself approachable and show the similarities between himself and the average African American voter in the United States. The vast majority of the Republican African Americans profiled in this paper came from middle to upper class households in which both parents were present throughout their

upbringing. This simply is not the case with the vast majority of today's African American voters. They need someone that they can identify with and share similarities with. Finding candidates like this will be a true test for the Republican Party, it will be interesting to see if they can live up to the challenge.

While the future of the two dominant parties within the United States is unclear, it is clear that there are many African American female Republicans fighting for what they believe in this country. If these women continue to fight for what they believe is right their hard work will eventually pay off.

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