REASONS FOR CHANGE:
SHIFT OF THE AFRICAN AMERICAN VOTE
DURING THE 1930'S

THESIS

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By

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Dedicated to the loving memory of Grandma Janie Lagunas and Uncle Gerard Banda.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Within the power structure of American democracy, political parties serve the

primary purpose of formulating public policy.[1] In formulating public policy, political

parties bring together an array of sectional differences and ideologies. Political parties

attract supporters depending on their particular stance on public policies. Thus, voters

may identify with a particular party for a number of reasons including the party's

philosophy, family tradition or identification with religious, ethnic or cultural group.[2]

Until the presidential election of 1936, African Americans had identified with the

Republican Party. The Republican Party was the party that ended slavery and created the

Thirteenth, Fourteenth and Fifteenth amendments. Republican leaders like Abraham

Lincoln, Charles Sumner and Thaddeus Stevens embedded images of freedom and

suffrage. The Democratic Party, in contrast, was predominantly associated with the

South, which was synonymous with slavery and racial oppression. Explaining why

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[1] V.O. Key, *Politics, Parties, and Pressure Groups* (New York: Thomas Crowell Co., 1950) 209.

[2] James L. Sundquist, *Dynamics of the Party System: Alignment and Realignment of Political Parties in the United States* (Washington: The Brookings Institution, 1986) 5.

African Americans switched party loyalty in the face of such strong historical precedence is the aim of this thesis.

In the process of examining the shift of the African American vote to the Democratic Party, it is necessary to examine realignment theory. In many ways, realignment theory explains the political occurrence of African Americans leaving the Republican Party. Realignment, as defined by political scientist James L. Sundquist, "is a shift in the distribution of basic party attachments."[3] Adding to this definition, political scientists Lawrence McMichael and Richard Trilling state, "Partisan realignments are significant and durable changes in the distribution of party support within the electorate."[4]

Thus, realignment is a political process by which a large portion of the electorate changes party support. According to Sundquist, realignments can have three types of effects on political parties, the destruction of the old party and the creation of a new one (1856), absorption of the third party by one of the older parties (1896), or realignment within the old political parties (1930).[5] In this thesis the realignments of the 1850s and 1930s will be examined.

Reasons for realignment are generally associated with the existence of a political issue which polarizes the electorate into separate and distinct groups.[6] According to

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[3] Ibid., 6.

[4] Lawrence McMichael and Richard Trilling, "The Structure and Meaning of Critical Realignment: The Case of Pennsylvania, 1928-1932," in Bruce Campbell and Richard Trilling ed., *Realignment in American Politics: Toward a Theory* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1980) 25.

[5] Ibid., 19-34.

[6] Ibid., 23-24.

Donald Strong, there must exist a new political issue, which "cuts across all existing lines of party cleavages."[7] In Sundquist's view, the issue of slavery provided the catalyst for realignment during the 1850s while the Great Depression provided the catalyst during the realignment of the 1930s.

Signaling the occurrence of realignments were the critical elections of 1860 and 1932. Critical elections, as defined by political scientist V.O. Key, are those elections, which "reveal a sharp alteration of the pre-existing cleavages within the electorate."[8] More specifically, critical elections reveal the existence of realignment in progress.[9] For African Americans, realignment would not take place during the critical election of 1932. The election of 1936 witnessed African Americans leaving the Republican Party and aligning with the Democratic Party.[10]

This thesis is divided into four main parts: History of the Republican Party, The Great Migration, Franklin Roosevelt and the New Deal and the Conclusion. Chapter two is an analysis of the history of the Republican Party from its creation in 1856 through 1900. Pivotal to the analysis of the Republican Party is its relationship to African Americans. Was the slavery question debated on behalf of African Americans or on behalf of whites? Were influential leaders such as Abraham Lincoln really fighting for African American freedom and equality or were there other motives? Chapter two will

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[7] Donald S. Strong, *Issue Voting and Party Realignment* (University: University of Alabama Press, 1977) 27.

[8] V.O. Key, "A Theory of Critical Elections," *The Journal of Politics,* Vol. 17, Issue 1 (February, 1955), 4.

[9] Ibid., 24.

[10] Nancy Weis, *Farewell to the Party of Lincoln: Black Politics in the Age of FDR* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983) 205.

also analyze the language of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments. The aim is to uncover why these amendments did not grant African Americans the freedoms that they outlined. Finally, chapter two will examine why the Republican Party abandoned African Americans and ultimately attempted to exclude them from party politics.

Chapter three will examine the political implications of the first Great Migration from 1910-1920. The Great Migration involved the movement of more than five hundred thousand African Americans out of the South from 1910-1920. Central to this examination will be the causes and political ramifications of the Great Migration. Specifically, how did the Great Migration change the political socialization of those African Americans who migrated away from the South? Were voting patters different? Finally, chapter 3 will examine the machine politics of Chicago Illinois, which will provide a model example of African American voter relationships in urban areas of the North.

Chapter four will analyze the political effects of the Roosevelt Administration on African American party loyalty. Included in this examination will be the Great Depression and its adverse effects on African Americans. Also, the policies and actions of both Herbert Hoover and Franklin Roosevelt will be discussed. Central to the analysis will be the effect of Hoover's inaction and Roosevelt's pro-action. In the face of New Deal discriminatory practices, why did African Americans regard Roosevelt in the same way as they regarded Lincoln?

Chapter five will restate the key reasons why African Americans changed their party loyalty during the 1930s. Chapter five will also examine the lasting effects of the

1930s realignment on the African American electorate. Finally, chapter five will examine the significance African Americans play within the Democratic Party today. Are African American votes still solidly Democratic or is Republican Party making significant inroads in the African American electorate?

CHAPTER II

REPUBLICAN PARTY 1856-1900:
FORMATION TO ABANDONMENT

Beginning with Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation in 1864 and

continuing through the Civil Rights amendments of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and

Fifteenth amendments, the Republican Party benefited African Americas more than any

other political party. It's no wonder that Frederick Douglass commented, "The

Republican Party is the ship, all else is the open sea." However, the Republican Party's

ship, which Douglass referred to, contained no room for African Americans.

This chapter will first examine the formation of the Republican Party during the

1850's. Special attention will be paid to the Republican Party's position on African

American suffrage and equality from the 1850s through the 1870s. Next, this chapter will

examine the Radical Republican Reconstruction and the Southern Restoration of the

1870's. The goal of this chapter is to show that the Republican Party, while supporting

African American suffrage during Reconstruction, abandoned African Americans when it

appeared that the Republican Party would benefit more from a southern white

constituency.

Within the function of our party system, it is a fundamental principle that parties

bring together an array of sectional differences and interests.[1] In bringing together

differences and interests from various political factions, political parties also perform the

necessary task of coalition building. For those who wished to create a political party to

counter Democratic dominance during the 1850s, coalition building would prove no

small task. Nevertheless, the emergence of a new political party signaled the impending

realignment of the 1850s.[2] Galvanizing all political factions together was the issue of

slavery. By the mid 1850s, the issue of slavery had created the catalyst for the creation of

the Republican Party. The new Republican Party viewed the issue of slavery from three

different perspectives.

On one extreme stood the radicals. A number of radicals were abolitionists whose

deep religious and moral convictions refuted the very existence of slavery as a moral

wrong. Men such as Charles Sumner, Benjamin Wade, Joshua Giddings and Thaddeus

Stevens saw in the fight against slavery a life long battle that foresaw no compromise on

the issue. Other radicals who opposed slavery had belonged to political parties such as

the Free Soil, Whigs and Barnburners. In all, radicals "held a utopian vision of a nation

whose citizens enjoyed equality of civil and political rights secured by a powerful and

beneficial national state."[3] In terms of geographical appeal, radical Republicans drew the

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[1] V.O. Key, *Politics, Parties and Pressure Groups* (New York: Thomas Crowell Company, 1950), 231-232.

[2] James L. Sundquist, *Dynamics of the Party System: Alignment and Realignment of Political Parties in the United States* (Washington: The Brookings Institute, 1983) 74-106.

majority of support from small towns in New England through rural areas of New York and areas West, which were settled by New England migrants.[4] Although the Republican coalition did not initially advocate the radical's views on black suffrage and equality, they nonetheless provided the best opportunity to further antislavery ideals into a national political party.

In the middle stood the moderates. Moderates portrayed the Kansas Nebraska Act of 1854 as the South's attempt to nationalize slavery. Disagreeing with slavery's expansion, moderates (most of whom were Whigs) such as William Pitt Fessenden, James Grimes, John Sherman, and Abraham Lincoln agreed that the union's preservation was paramount. Thus while not agreeing with the existence of slavery, moderates could agree on the non-extension of slavery. Moderates also saw little benefit in compromising their stance on the non-extension issue. In many ways this culminated in the belief that slavery was more of an economic threat to whites than a wrong to African Americans. Siding with other former Free Soilers, moderates also warned of the effect that slavery's expansion would have on the small farmers and independent entrepreneurs. Moderate sentiment dominated areas including states bordering the south and western states of Illinois, Iowa, and Ohio. For it was within these states that the small farmer was dominant.

Lastly, there stood the conservatives. For conservatives the issue of slavery was of secondary importance. Leaders of the conservative position such Henry Clay and Daniel

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[3] Eric Foner, *A Short History of Reconstruction* 1863-1877 (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1990) 105, see also David Montgomery, *Beyond Equality: Labor and the Radical Republicans 1862-1872* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981) 72-89.

[4] Eric Foner, *Free Labor, Free Soil, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party Before the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995) 106.

Webster advocated "sectional considerations must give way if the integrity of the Union was in danger."[5] Politically the conservatives did not disagree with existence of slavery but did disagree with the blatant evidence of southern dominance in the federal government. Time after time conservative measures such as tariff protection, Pacific; railroad, and internal improvements failed because of the southern Democrats. Thus, the battle that the conservatives waged was one of gaining political power. They believed that once a Republican was elected the issue of slavery would take a back seat to the conservative agenda of internal improvement, which included the Pacific Railroad and a protective tariff. Reflecting these beliefs New York politician E. Pershing Smith stated, "The first thing is to destroy the southern domination by electing a Republican president and Congress. That done...we will begin to think of our bread and butter and not before."[6]

Clearly, the issue of slavery as an economic threat to free labor became a dominant issue within the formation of the Republican Party. The issue of slavery also became the catalyst for the creation of the Republican Party. However, as William E. Gienapp points out, "they [Republicans] were concerned less about slavery than the Slave Power, that it was white slaveholders—not black, that they feared most."[7] The slave power, according to antislavery leader Salmon P. Chase, consisted of all southern slaveholders who organized politically. In Chase's view southern slaveholders conspired

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[5] Ibid., 187.

[6] Ibid., citing E. Pershing Smith to Henry C. Carey, June 20, 1858.

[7] William E. Gienapp, *The Origins of the Republican Party 1852-1856* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987) 357.

to control national politics by making slavery the ruling interest of the nation.[8] By using Chase's rationale, Republicans also portrayed the southern slave system as a system that sought to limit the freedoms and liberties of northern whites.[9]

Side stepping the plight of African Americans would pose problems for the Republicans as they tried to solidify their support from the portion of the African American community that could vote. Attacking the Republican Party's stance on slavery Frederick Douglass stated:

> "This is the danger of the Republican movement. Its design is what? To put down the slave oligarchy on Kansas; to limit slavery to the states in which it is, and confine it there...It does not even propose to emancipate the slaves in the District of Columbia, or to abolish the commerce of slaves between the different States...It aims to simply limit slavery, and drive it from one point..."[10]

For Frederick Douglass and other abolitionists the Republican Party's stance on slavery was flawed because it did not seek to end slavery on behalf of African Americans. Yet, the political reality of the 1850's showed that political alternatives to fight slavery were scarce. The antislavery Liberty Party, Radical Abolitionists Party, Whigs and Know Nothing (American Party) were all losing national appeal and influence. Joining the Republican movement was the only viable political alternative open. In mid August of 1856 Frederick Douglass reversed his position and called for blacks to support the Republican Party.

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[8] Ibid., 73- 102.

[9] Ibid., 360.

[10] Philip S. Foner, *The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass*, vol. 5 (New York: International Publishers, 1975) 386.

Although Republican candidate, John C. Fremont, lost the election in 1856 the Republican Party had been successful in drawing a good number of free African Americans to join the Republican Party. From conventions in Ohio, Boston and New York, free African Americans gathered to endorse Fremont. While giving their support, many free African Americans also warned the Republican Party that their support was tentative. "We do not pledge ourselves to go further with the Republicans than the Republicans will go with us," proclaimed the Boston convention.

The Republican Party of the 1850's generally advocated two plans for African Americans. First, promoting the non-extension of slavery meant that African Americans in bondage would stay in bondage. The second plan called for the colonization of African Americans away from the United States. The issue of colonization had long existed since the creation of the American Colonization Society in 1816. While early efforts focused on sending African Americans back to Africa, the new effort sought to use federal money to send African Americans to South and Central America. The underlying intent of promoting colonization was to appeal to all non-slave holding classes. According to one of colonization's strongest advocates, Francis P. Blair, "If on the other hand, Northern Congressmen coupled gradual emancipation with the prompt removal of free Negroes from the country the whole yeomanry of the South would join in putting down the oligarchy of masters which have so long oppressed then."[11]

Lincoln's views on slavery and racial equality represented a paradox. In terms of slavery he would write, "I confess I hate to see the poor creatures hunted down and

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[11] Ibid., 317, citing Blair Family Papers; William E. Smith, *The Francis Preston Blair Family in Politics* 1st vol. (New York, 1933) 371-373, 443-452.

caught, and carried back to their stripes, and unrewarded toils; but I bite my lip and keep quiet."[12] Continuing through his senatorial debates with Stephen Douglas, Lincoln's views on racial equality changed from one city to the next. In Chicago he would say, "let us unite as one people throughout this land, until we will once more stand up and declare that all men are created equal." When he spoke at Charlestown South Carolina he clarified his "all men are created" idea when he stated:

> "I am not, nor ever have been, in favor of bringing about in any way the social and political equality of white and black races...I am not in favor of making voters or jurors of negroes, nor qualify them to hold office, nor intermarry with white people...And inasmuch as they cannot so live, while they do remain together there must be the position of superior and inferior, and as any other man in having the superior position assigned to the white race."[13]

Lincoln was against the institution of slavery for a number of reasons none of which concerned racial equality.[14] In fact Lincoln's view of the status of African Americans, as either man or property, was difficult to ascertain. In a speech given in Peoria, Illinois in 1854 Lincoln debated the position of self-governments right to subject man to slavery. In Lincoln's view the right of self-government ceases to be justified when a man subjects another man to slavery. In his speech, however, Lincoln avoids classifying African Americans as men:

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[12] Larry Shapiro ed., *Abraham Lincoln: Mystic Chords of Memory* (New York: Book-of-Month-Club, 1984) 24.

[13] Richard Hofstadter, *The American Political Tradition and the Men Who Made It* (New York: Vintage Books, 1974) 149, citing the Lincoln Douglas debates of 1858.

[14] Benjamin Quarles, *Lincoln and the Negro* (New York: Oxford University Pres, 1962) 35-36. Quarles list of reasons include: the threat to white labor; threat to democracy; contrary to the beliefs in the Declaration of Independence and moral grounds.

"If he [African American] is not a man, why in that case, he who is a man may, as a matter of self government, do just as he pleases with him. But if a Negro is a man, is it not that extent, a total destruction of self government…when a white man governs himself that is self government; but when he governs himself, and also governs another man, that is more than self government—that is despotism."[15]

For the most part, Lincoln's position on African American equality and suffrage reflected the prevailing social conditions that existed in nineteenth century America. As Leon F. Litwack points out, "discrimination against the Negro and a firmly held belief in the superiority of the white race were not restricted to one section but were shared by an overwhelming majority of white Americans in both the North and the South."[16]

The Republican Party of the 1850's and 60's had little concern for the condition of African Americans in slavery. With little or no concern for the plight of African Americans, Republicans attacked slavery as the threat to whites. The only issue that most radicals, conservatives and moderates could agree on was that slavery could exist as long as it was not allowed to spread. For abolitionists and free African Americans the Republican position on race went against their fundamental tenants of racial equality and suffrage. Nevertheless, the Republican Party was the only viable political party that stood in opposition to the slaveholding Democrats of the South.

Few could question the reasons for African American party loyalty to the Republican Party after the Civil War and subsequent years during the Radical Reconstruction. After all it was the Republican controlled Congress that pushed through many pieces of positive legislation on behalf of African Americans. While more radical

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[15] Ibid., 27-28.

[16] Leon F. Litwack, *North of Slavery: The Negro in the Free States 1790-1860* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961) vii.

than the mainstream Republican Party, Radical Republican legislation laid the primary

groundwork for African American citizenship.

On the surface the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments seem to be

sound documents. As history has shown, these documents failed to guarantee many of the

fundamental freedoms that they outlined. Nevertheless, a detailed assessment of the

Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments is necessary to understand the

political gains attained by African Americans after the Civil War.

Ratified December 6, 1865, the Thirteenth Amendment became the first step in

outlawing slavery. Section one of the Amendment, Congress clearly outlawed slavery

and involuntary servitude, except for the punishment of a crime. Section two provided

Congress the ability to enforce Section one by "appropriate legislation." When the

Fourteenth Amendment was finally ratified on July 9, 1868 it expanded the protections

not granted in the Thirteenth Amendment. First, under Section one, "All persons born or

naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the

United States..." From this point forward African Americans could no longer be denied

the same "privileges" and "immunities." Section one also forbade States from denying

any person of "life and liberty or property without due process of the law, nor deny any

person...equal protection of the laws."[17]

Section two of the Fourteenth Amendment was two-tiered; not only did it replace

the Three-Fifth Compromise in Article I but it also gave Congress remedy for states that

violated the rights of persons to vote. If individuals in any state were found to have their

rights to vote violated Section two provided that "the basis of representation therein shall

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[17] U.S. Constitution, amend. 13, sec. 1.

be reduced in the proportion which the number of such male citizen shall bear to the whole number of male citizens twenty-one years of age in such State."[18] All citizens were to be counted in the census for the purposes of appropriating House seats. If a state was found to not have taken the proper steps to address voting violations, then Congress had the right to reduce the number of House members from the state in question. Section three limited the President's power to pardon leaders of the Confederacy. Section four invalidated the debt contracted by former Confederate states and prohibited compensation to those that owned slaves. Section five reaffirmed Congress's right to enforce the Amendment with all necessary legislation.

Ratified on February 3, 1870, the Fifteenth Amendment secured the right of all citizens of the United States to vote. More importantly, the Amendment clearly states that this right may not be "denied or abridged by the United States or any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude."[19] The implications of the Amendment were far reaching. First, states would no longer be able to restrict African Americans from voting. Second, the Fifteenth Amendment gave Congress the power to enforce the Fifteenth Amendment through necessary legislation under Section two.

Along with these amendments came the push to end segregation in public places, schools, juries, churches, cemeteries and accommodations. Taking a lead in the fight in Congress, Charles Sumner first introduced a bill against segregation in public accommodations in 1871. After much maneuvering and compromising, the Civil Rights Act was finally passed on March 1, 1875. Although Sumner never survived to see his bill

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[18] U.S. Constitution, amend. 14, sec. 2.

[19] U.S. Constitution, anemd. 15, sec. 1.

receive final passage, the Civil Rights Act was certainly revolutionary for its time. The

Civil Rights Act of 1875 went further than the Fourteenth Amendment of equal

protection and due process by stating:

> "That all persons within the jurisdiction of the United States shall be entitled to the full and equal enjoyment of the accommodations, advantages, facilities, and privileges, of inns, public conveyances on land and water, theaters, and other places of public amusement; subject only to the conditions and limitations established by law, and applicable alike to citizens of every race and color, regardless of any previous condition of servitude."[20]

Anyone found guilty of violating the Section1 of the Civil Rights Act of was ordered to

pay fines "no less than five hundred dollars" and "no more than one thousand dollars."

Section 4 of the Civil Rights Act was also important because it forbade courts from

disqualifying jurors because of race. Section 4 specifically stated:

> That no citizen possessing all other qualifications which are or may be prescribed by law shall be disqualified for service as grand or petit juror in any court of the United States, or of any State, on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude...[21]

The Civil Rights Act of 1875 had many critics. Many conservative northern

Republicans and Southern Democrats feared the ramifications of trying to enforce the

legislation. Many in the South felt that the Radical Republicans had gone too far. During

arguments over the bills passage Representative John Harris (Dem.) of Virginia stated:

> "It [Civil Rights Bill] is based upon the purpose, the theory, of the absolute equality of the races. It seeks to enforce by law a doctrine which is not accepted by the minds nor received in the hearts of the people of the United States—that the Negro in all things is the equal of the white man. And I say there

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[20] *United States Statutes at Large*, Vol. XVIII, p. 335.

[21] Ibid., p 335.

is not one gentleman upon this floor who can honestly say he really believes that the colored man is created equal."[22]

The South, already decimated by war and near economic ruin, turned the Thirteenth Amendment on it head. With President Johnson restoring former rebels to full political participation, state legislatures across the South began to institute *Black Codes.* The goal of these codes was to establish a systematic and legal rational for limiting newly freed slaves to perpetual slavery and peonage.[23] One way in which States circumvented the Thirteenth Amendment was by simply changing the term "slavery" to "freedmen." Under *Black Codes,* states severely limited the ability of newly freed slaves to vote, sit on juries and testify against whites.[24]

Within *Black Codes* there existed laws against movement, intermarriage, vagrancy, and unfair legal punishment for "special crimes." The Mississippi *Black Codes* provided the model example from which other southern states soon followed. For example, the Mississippi Vagrancy Act provided that African Americans carry proof of employment. If employment could not be proved, the punishments ranged from excessive fines to imprisonment. With no way to pay the fine, the guilty party would have no alternative but to work off the fine.[25] What made these codes more effective was the fact that many newly freed slaves were not economically independent. With no land or few

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[22] Congressional Record of the 43rd Congress., 1st Session, 455-58 cited in Emma Thornbrough, Black Reconstruction, (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1972) 90.

[23] C. Vann Woodward, The Strange Career of Jim Crow, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966) 13.

[24] Donald Critchlow and W.J. Rorabaugh, *America: A Concise History,* (Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing, 1997) 291.

[24] David M. Oshinsky, *Worse than Slavery: Parchman Farm and the Ordeal of Jim Crow Justice* (New York: Free Press Paperbacks, 1997) Chapter 2.

skills beyond agriculture many were left dependent on the same people that they had

depended on before the Civil War. Thus, according to Oshinsky, "Emancipation had

ended slavery but had not destroyed the assumption upon which slavery was based."[26]

The language of the Fourteenth Amendment forbade states from due process

restrictions but what about individuals? After the Civil War a number of white terrorist

and military groups sprang up throughout the south. These groups had many names; most

notable were the Jayhawkers, Knights White Camelia and the Klu Klux Klan. The

primary aim of these organizations was to intimidate and terrorize anyone who disagreed

with the image of the old South.

Glorifying a time when slavery and white supremacy ruled the day, these

organizations were also aligned with the Democratic Party. Using intimidation as

motivation, the KKK and the Knights of the White Camelia offered protection if African

Americans voted Democratic in Louisiana. One example was the *Planter's Banner* which

read:

> Blank certificates will be prepared, and every colored person who
> votes the Democratic ticket in November, in St. Mary, will have one of
> these certificates filled and duly signed, as proof that he is in harmony
> with the white people of the country, and it will entitle him always after to
> be considered the friend of the white man, an entitled to the white man's
> friendship and protection. Those colored people who stick to the
> carpetbaggers till after the election will have the door shut in their faces.
> They will be too late.[27]

As the KKK grew in size and significance it became more difficult for local authorities to

handle. Along with the KKK many other armed groups used armed violence against

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[26] Ibid., 17.

[27] Emma Thornbrough, *Black Reconstruction*, (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1972)

African American and Republicans throughout the South. In an effort to curb violence

Congress reacted by passing a series of legislative measures.

Beginning with the Enforcement Act of 1870 Congress made it a crime for

private individuals to use force to intimidate or threaten people from their Fifteenth

Amendment right to vote. Penalties ranged from a five thousand dollar fine and up to ten

years imprisonment. In April of 1871, Congress directed its attention toward the KKK

(Klu Klux Klan Act) by making it illegal for two or more persons to conspire or deprive

persons of their equal protection of the law. These legislative measures were significant

in that they provided federal remedies against private individuals, an action that had been

an exclusive power of the states.[28]

While there may have been laws aimed at eliminating the effectiveness of the

KKK and other terrorists groups, the federal government was unable to combat all groups

at the same time. For the most part it was up to the states to guarantee the safety of many

targeted groups.[29] In a number of southern states armed bands of individuals took up

arms against the Radically controlled state governments. In Louisiana there was

mounting evidence of armed militiamen slaughtering and murdering African Americans

across the state. In Colfax, Louisiana some one hundred African Americans were killed

in the month of April 1873. By 1874 matters had escalated to an all out attack by a group

of white militiamen known as White Leaguers. Calling for an end to Republican control,

the White Leaguers organized to take New Orleans. With little chance for compromise

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[28] Donald Nieman, *Promises to Keep: African Americans and the Constitutional Order, 1776 to Present*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991) 83.

[29] Targeted groups generally consisted of African Americans, Republicans, Scalawags, and Carpetbaggers.

President Grant was forced to call in federal troops. In other parts of the South including Mississippi, South Carolina, Texas, Arkansas, and Alabama armed militiamen continued to terrorize the south.

By the mid 1870's support for military intervention in the South was waning. Making the matters worse an economic depression set in by 1873. The Republican Party for the most part began to rethink its strategy. Although Radical Republicanism represented a minority faction within the Republican Party, the fact remained that Radical or not, a Republican was a Republican. President Grant, in his effort to reconcile sectional differences, became frustrated with southern hostility toward the Republican Party. More specifically, President Grant realized that calling out the federal troops in support of Radical Republican governments in the South was leaving the South more embittered toward federal intervention. Further interference of the federal government was also causing rifts within the Republican Party. Commenting on the frustrating situation in 1874 President Grant stated, "I begin to think it time for the Republican party to unload." "There has been too much dead weight carried by it.... I am tired of this nonsense.... This nursing of monstrosities has nearly exhausted the life of the party. I am done with them, and they will have to take care of themselves."[30]

Politically, the Republican coalition of conservatives, moderates and radicals began to dissolve. Although it is true that the party was never really unified in its policies on the South, there existed a general agreement toward the protection of African American suffrage rights in spite of state disapproval. The two different factions who surfaced during the Reconstruction, the Stalwarts and Liberal Republicans symbolize the

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[30] Brooks Simpson, *The Reconstruction Presidents*, (University Press of Kansas, 1998) 168.

two most visible national factions. Men such as Benjamin F. Wade, Oliver P. Morton, Zachariah Chandler maintained that the Stalwarts success lie in "promoting economic programs that advocated high tariffs and internal improvements in the Northwest."[31]

As for the Liberal Republicans, their focus seems to have undergone two different phases. In the first phase influential men such as Salmon P. Chase, Horace Greeley, George W. Julian, Carl Schurz and Lyman Trumbull had been many of the original authors of Civil Rights legislation in Congress. Bills such as the Civil Rights Bill of 1866 and the Freedmen Bureau Bills were authored by Trumbull. Julian authored numerous pieces of legislation for the distribution of public land for African Americans including his strong support for the Homestead Act of 1866[32]. During the second phase, which began in 1871 these men moved away from their strong support for African Americans and toward reconciliation with the South.

Known as the "New Departure" Liberal Republicans advocated an end to federal interference and a return to local governmental control in the South. For them the job of Radical Reconstruction was over. To establish a more positive relationship with Southern whites, Liberals also spoke out against the perceived existence of "Negro domination" and "Carpetbaggers." With the legal foundations of the Civil War Amendments and Civil Rights Acts in place, it was up to African Americans to fend for themselves. It was also their belief that reconciliation with the South would mean that the Republican Party would flourish in the South. One of the most vocal opponents of African American suffrage was Carl Schurz. By 1870 he felt that "uneducated Negroes were an easy prey

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[31]Patrick Riddleberger, "The Radicals' Abandonment of the Negro During Reconstruction," *Journal of Negro History*, Volume 45, Issue 2 9April, 1960), 88-102.

[32] Ibid., 88-102.

for spoilsmen...and anyone who tried to stir up sectional passions [to aid blacks] had yielded to the worst elements in the Republican organization."[33]

While the above represents a small discrepancy among many within the Republican Party, it is important to stress the significance of the change among those that were initially proponents of granting African American suffrage. More specifically it was the Liberal Republicans who called for the full abandonment of federal intervention on behalf of African Americans by discontinuing federal legislation. Men such as Schurz continued political their career under President Hayes who made substantial compromises with the South in 1876. In all the Republican Party by the 1870's had abandoned all of its efforts to ensure the protection and promotion of African American suffrage.

Pushing the Republican Party further away from its radical past, the presidency of Rutherford B. Hayes represents the pinnacle of detachment. Interestingly, Hayes had supported Radical legislation during Reconstruction. He believed that the legal gains made under the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments had at least afforded African Americans many of the basic rights associated with citizenship. However, his elitist sentiments toward the uneducated gave him reservations about radical policies. In particular, he supported educational voting requirements such as literacy tests for both whites and African Americans.[34] As southern reaction intensified Hayes began to rethink federal intervention into state affairs. It was this sort of thinking that attracted northern conservative Republicans and former Whigs in the South.

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[33] Ibid., 127.

[34] Ibid., 200.

Republicans who supported Hayes during his administration were more
conservative when it came to the southern question of race. These conservative
Republicans favored a stronger relationship with industry both north and south. In their
view, reconciliation with the South rested on strengthening ties with former southern
Whigs, who also favored an end to military reconstruction. More importantly economic
prosperity was more important than the defense of African American rights. One has to
look no further than the negative reaction of the South and the resurgence of Democratic
Party after Reconstruction. It was also the belief of conservative and commercial interests
that internal improvements (especially the railroad) coupled with a more educated elite
control of the South would improve the viability of the southern Republican wing. [35]

Hayes's southern policy represents a model example of conservative intentions.
Hayes's southern policy consisted of the complete withdrawal of federal troops from the
South and a reliance on white conservatives in the South for Republican support. [36] Hayes
goal was to make the Republican Party more acceptable by "reducing and if possible to
eliminate Negro and Carpetbagger leadership" to better "conciliate southern conservative
whites."[37] This also meant that Hayes would make conciliatory overtures to the
Democratic Party.

In moves that alienated traditional liberal Republican supporters, Hayes appointed
many Southern Democrats to federal posts. Most notable appointments include David M.

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[35] Stanley P. Hirshson, *Farewell to the Bloody Shirt: Northern Republicans and the Southern Negro 1877-1893* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1962) 21-45.

[36] For more information see, C. Vann Woodward, *Reunion and Reaction: The Compromise of 1877 and the End of Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), chapter 1.

[37] Ibid., 73.

Key, a former Confederate officer, to Postmaster General. Lastly, Hayes instituted a "home-rule" doctrine on racial issues. As Hayes saw it, it was up to the states and not the federal government to deal with issues of race. Commenting on the Civil Rights Bill of 1875 Hayes wrote, "I, of course don't believe on forcing whites and blacks together...the let alone policy seems now to be the true course."[38]

Success of Hayes's southern policy had mixed results. In many ways Hayes reliance on commercial and industrial ties would be a constant within the Republican Party. As for strengthening ties among the most militant southern Democrats Hayes overtures were met with general skepticism.[39] There was also the problem caused by uniting the Republican Party with Southern Wigs, whose affiliation with commercial, industrial and railroad interests, did not appeal to the majority of the poor white agricultural population of the South.[40]

Hayes desire to rid the Republican Party of African Americans manifested itself as racial factionalism within Republican Party. Across the South new Republican constituencies attempted to rid the party of African Americans. Nevertheless these actions did not stop African American political leaders from participating in the Republican Party. What transpired was a visible split along racial and ideological lines.

One of the most publicized fights between African Americans and whites occurred during the Republican convention in 1888 when a group of whites attempted to

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[38] Ibid., 201.

[39] Ibid., 78.

[40] Michael M Brewer "Poor Whites and Negroes in the South Since the Civil War," *Journal Negro History,* Volume 15, Issue 1 (January, 1930), 26-37.

exclude the African American delegation. African American Norris Wright Cuney, who controlled the Texas state party from 1883 until his death in 1896, fittingly named the group lily-whites. In turn those African Americans and whites that remained were named the Black and Tans. Although both groups were Republican, their ideologies were different. According to Hanes Walton, lily-whites "denounced the Negro in general and his participation in Southern politics in particular."[41] Black and Tans, on the other hand, endorsed African American suffrage, participation in politics, equality and opposition to segregation. Eventually, however, Black-Tans constituencies would suffer as Southern states passed restrictive measures against African American voting during the 1890's. Republican appeal among whites would also falter as the Republican Party continued to be labeled as the Negro Party.[42]

The power and influence of African Americans within the Black and Tan faction tended to benefit a small minority and not the African American community as a whole. As E. Franklin Frazier points out, "The only rewards that Negroes received from their support of the Republican Party were a few federal appointments that went to middle class Negroes."[43] Those that served in the Black and Tan organization also realized their limited role. A lieutenant in Perry Howard's Black and Tan organizations summarized it best when he stated, "We proselytize these few scores of Negroes to vote and after pocketing the handouts from the party slush fund we put our committee back into moth

[41] Hanes Walton, *Black Republicans: The Politics of Black and Tans* (Metuchen: Scarecrow Press, 1975) 45.

[42] V.O. Key, *Southern Politics: In State and Nation* (New York: Vintage Books, 1949) 286.

[43] E. Franklin Frazier, Black Bourgeoisie (New York: Free Press Paperbacks, 1957) 106.

balls to await another election." When asked if they had a local program he responded, "We got no local program, we are preachers and barbers. We make enough money to buy enough liquor to wash the inconvenience of being a nigger out of our brain."[44] Thus the fight for suffrage and equality succumbed to the political realities of survival. For the most part Black and Tan organizations existed for the benefit of individual African Americans rather than the whole group.

The Republican Party was first and foremost a white party for whites. Even during the conception of the Republican Party, slavery was attacked for its threat to free white labor and not African Americans. Even Abraham Lincoln did not dare to attack slavery for its effects on African Americans. Although one cannot deny the revolutionary spirit of the Republican backed Civil Rights Amendments of the nineteenth century, one can certainly question their desire to protect and promote the Civil Rights Amendments. In a sense Republicans who turned a blind eye to racial injustices occurring in the south were as much at fault as those causing the injustice. C. Vann Woodward's explanation of northern capitulation in the face of industrial and commercial expansion provides a fair assessment of northern and Republican intentions. President Hayes's desire to make the southern wing of the party more "respectful" signaled the official withdraw of Republican support.

While African Americans struggled for patronage crumbs in the Black and Tan organizations the majority of African Americans continued to suffer. The party that once proclaimed freedom and equality was nowhere to be found by the 1870's. However, the

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[44] Neil R. Mc Millen, "Perry W. Howard, Boss of Black-and-Tan Republicanism in Mississippi 1924-60," *The Journal of Southern History*, vol. 48, Issue 2 (May, 1982) 210.

Republican Party would misjudge African American's inability to move out of the South.

As the twentieth century approached, new economic and political opportunities would

avail themselves as African American began a Great Migration out of the South.

CHAPTER III

GREAT MIGRATION AND POLITICS

During the later part of the nineteenth century, conditions worsened for African Americans living in the South. If it were not for the natural conditions of flood, drought, and boll weevil, then it was Jim Crow. Lynching and mob rule dominated the administration of southern justice. Demanding political recourse proved futile as southern states quickly disenfranchised African Americans to political insignificance. As conditions worsened both economically and socially, movement away from the South became a viable alternative.

The purpose of this chapter is to explain the first Great Migration of 1910-1930's and how it affected African Americans politically. Specifically, to what degree did the migration of African Americans from 1910-1930 affect national party politics? Pivotal to this evaluation is the degree to which Northern machine politics changed the perception that many African Americans had toward the Republican Party. Ultimately, it was this change in party perception that laid the groundwork for the Democratic Party and Franklin Roosevelt's drive for the African American vote during the 1930's.

Migratory movements of African Americans had existed as a constant in American history.[1] Many African American migrations differed in direction, degree and success. However, previous migrations did not equal the large-scale movement of African Americans that comprised the Great Migration (1910-1930). Census numbers from 1920 indicate that more than five hundred thousand African Americans left the South since 1910.[2]

The Great Migration was more than simply the movement out of the rural South.[3] For the five hundred thousand or more African Americans who joined in the movement it must be added that for some the Great Migration culminated in series of movements. For some this meant migrating to a southern city first and then to a northern city. For others the migration was a direct migration as they moved directly from the rural South to the urban North. There is also evidence that those who migrated out would migrate back once they secured a sufficient number of assets. Thus, the Great Migration in more ways represented a number of movements, be it in-migration or out-migration, of both the North and the South.[4]

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[1] Carter G. Woodson, *A Century of Negro Migration* (New York: AMS Press, 1970) 1-17.

[2] *Fourteenth Census*, 1920, vol. ii, 38-46.

[3] See Table 3.1.

[4] Earl Lewis, *In Their Own Interests: Race, Class, and Power in Norfolk, Virginia* (Berkley: University of California, 1991) 30.

Table 3.1

Percentages of Blacks Living in Urban and Rural Areas, 1890-1920

	United States		South		North and West	
Year	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
1890	20	80	15	85	62	38
1900	23	77	17	83	70	30
1910	27	73	21	79	77	23
1920	34	66	25	75	84	15

Source: Reynolds Farley, *The Growth of the Black Population* (Chicago: Markham Publishing Co., 1971), 50.

Along with knowing the numbers of African Americans who migrated, it is also essential to uncover where the great majority of African Americans migrated. Table 3.2 reveals cities that experienced the largest population increases of African Americans from 1910-1920. Comparing the numbers of percentage increases from both northern and southern cities, it becomes visible that northern cities contained the highest percentage increases. Among the most notable percentage increase was Detroit, Michigan with 611%, followed by Cleveland 307.8% and Chicago 148%. As for as population, New York, Chicago and Philadelphia all contained over one hundred thousand African Americans. Southern cities with the largest increases in population percentages included Norfolk 73.3%, Houston 41.9 and Jacksonville 41.7%. Southern cities with over one hundred thousand African Americans included Washington D.C., New Orleans and Baltimore. Knowing where and how many migrated provide significant parts but not the overall account of the Great Migration. It is also necessary to examine why African Americans migrated. To examine why the Great Migration occurred it is necessary to uncover the various "push" and "pull" factors that caused migration.

Table 3.2

African American Population and Percent Increases from 1910-1920

City	Population		Percent Increase
Northern	1910	1920	1910-1920
Detroit, Mich.	5,741	40,838	611.3%
Cleveland, OH	8,448	34,451	307%
Chicago, Ill.	44,103	109,458	148.2%
New York City	44,103	152,467	66.3%
Indianapolis, Ind.	21,816	34,678	59.0%
Philadelphia PA.	84,459	134,229	58.9%
St. Louis MO.	43,690	69,854	58.9%
Cincinnati, Oh.	19,639	30,079	53.2%
Southern			
Norfolk, VA.	25,039	43,329	73.3%
Houston, TX.	23,929	33,960	41.9%
Jacksonville, Fla.	29,293	41,520	41.7%
Birmingham, Ala.	52,305	70,230	34.3%
Baltimore, Md.	84,749	108,322	27.8%
Atlanta, Ga.	51,902	62,796	21.0%
Washington D.C.	94,446	109,966	16.4%
New Orleans La.	89,262	100,930	14.6%

Source: *Fourteenth Census*, 1920, vol. ii, tables 13, 14 and 17.

Under the "push" category one finds a great multitude of factors. Overall agreement among authors of the Great Migration of which "push" factor provided the greatest stimulus is debatable.[5] Among the many pushes, one can include the southern agricultural framework, social oppression, low educational opportunities, and low economic opportunities. According to a 1917 Department of Labor study the list and order of factors included: economic, ill treatment by whites, unfair tenant farming system and publications by the black press.[6]

[5] Daniel Johnson and Rex Campbell, *Black Migration in America: A Social Demographic History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1981) 80.

[6] Department of Labor Division of Negro Economics, *Negro Migration 1916-1917* (New York: Negro University Press, 1969) 100-110.

Fundamental to the economic "push" is the position blacks held in southern agricultural economy. Ever since the end of the Civil War African Americans had been embroiled in a constant struggle for land ownership. As the South restored itself agriculturally, African Americans were left in practically the same economic position that they were since the days of slavery. According to Leon F. Litwack, "whites owned the land and the blacks worked the land."[7] In fact, whites controlled all of the necessary apparatuses for farming. If one wanted to start a farm one of the first thing he or she would need was capital. Capital was the fundamental necessity for not only the purchase of the land but also the necessary farming equipment such as tools, seed, and fertilizer, and farm animals. In the days of the nineteenth century such capital was not available to African Americans.

With no ownership of land the great majority of African Americans eventually became either a tenant farmer, sharecropping, or field worker. By 1900 the percentage of African Americans farmers as either tenant or sharecropper stood at 75.3 percent.[8] One of the largest problems with tenant and sharecropping during this time was that it was not profitable. The reason goes back to the problem of attaining capital. In order to attain capital many tenants and sharecroppers used their future crop yields to borrow from the landowner or the banker. In the meantime if food or equipment was needed the tenant or sharecropper would buy or borrow from the local commissary which was also owned by

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[7] Leon F. *Litwack, Trouble in the Mind: Black Southerners in the Age of Jim Crow* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998) 121.

[8] Ibid., 122.

the landowner or the banker. In turn the landowner or banker usually charged high prices and high interest rates.[9]

The majority of the time crop yields either broke even or caused the tenant or sharecropper to go into debt even further debt. Compounding the problems of high debt and crop failures stood the negative reaction of southern whites if African American crops were successful. One way white landowner reacted was by undercounting tenant and sharecropper yields. To question the tabulation process usually resulted in eviction or death.

Physical violence and oppression also provided viable reasons for leaving the South. In the Department of Labor report investigator W.T.B. Williams noted, "The treatment accorded the Negro always stood second, when not first, among the reasons given by Negroes for leaving the South...This is the all absorbing, burning question among Negroes."[10] Two of the most deadly forms of violence directed against African Americans in this era were mob violence and lynching. From 1882 to 1936 some 3,383 cases of lynchings were reported.[11] Protection against lynchings and mob violence by the police was absent in the South. If the police did not partake in the lynching they usually turned a blind eye toward the events. As Ray Stannard Baker reported in his study, "I was astounded by the extraordinary prevalence in all these lynching counties, North as well as

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[9] Thomas J. Woofter, *Negro Migration: Changes in Rural Organization and Population of the Cotton Belt* (New York: W.D. Gray, 1920) 84-86, also Peter Gottlieb, *Making Their Own Way: Southern Blacks' Migration to Pittsburgh,* 1916-30 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press 1997) chapter 1, also Leon F. Litwack, *Trouble in the Mind: Black Southerners in the Age of Jim Crow* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998) 132-136.

[10] Ibid., 101.

[11] Monroe N. Work, "The Negro and Lynchings," in *Negro Year Book,* 1937-38 ed.

South, of crimes of violence, especially homicide, accompanied in every case by a weak enforcement of the law."[12]

Another "push" identified by African Americans was the discriminatory practice of the South. The de facto discriminatory laws of Jim Crow had reduced African Americans to second-class citizens. Being on equal footing with whites was a determining factor for a number of migrants. As a Florida women stated, "Negroes are not so greatly disturbed about wages. They are tired of being treated as children; they want to be men."[13]

A deep desire to educate their children also provided a substantial "push." Disenfranchised and unable to partake in any educational planning for their community, African American children received little if any education in the South.[14] On the whole African American children in the south received three to five months of schooling while Southern whites receive nine months.[15] Schools that did exist were hampered by poor facilities, underpaid and under qualified staff. Ironically, African Americans were still required to pay taxes to fund these very schools. In the worst cases taxes were paid and

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[12] Ray Stannard Baker, *Following the Color Line: American Negro Citizenship in the Progressive Era* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1964) 183.

[13] Florette Henri, Black Migration: Movement North 1910-1920 (Garden City: Anchor Press, 1975) 56, citing Fishel and Quarles, "The Wartime Negro Exodus," 394-96.

[14] For more information see James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1895* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988).

[15] Louise Venable Kennedy, *The Negro Peasant Turns Cityward: Effects of Recent Migrations to Northern Centers* (College Park: McGrath Publishing Co., 1930) 51.

schools were never built. As one migrant stated, "I didn't think there was any justice in paying school taxes and had no fit school to send my children."[16]

In the South the African American vote was not desired. Through an elaborate system of literacy tests, grandfather clauses, poll taxes and white primaries African American voting was non-existent. Louisiana presents a fair example of how effective disenfranchising measures were on voter registration. In 1896 national election 130, 344 African Americans registered by 1900 that number had fallen to 5,320.[17]

Table 3.3 is a breakdown of various counties in Louisiana, which contained the highest levels of African American voters (Black Belt Counties) in 1930. What becomes clear is the low level of voting among African Americans in Louisiana. Only Iberville and Morehouse counties combined to produce a total of five African American voters. These numbers become more striking when one also notices the large number African American voters who lived in the counties listed below. Not even East Baton Rouge County with a total African American voting age population of 16,824 garnered one single vote.

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[16] Sam Marullo, "The Migration of Blacks to the North," *Journal of Black Studies*, vol., 15, Issue 3 (March, 1985) 299.

[17] Paul Lewinson, Race, Class, Party: History of Negro Suffrage and White Politics in the South (New York: Russell & Russell Inc., 1963) 83.

Table 3.3

Voting Tendencies in a Selected List of "Black Belt"
Counties in Louisiana 1930

County	African American Voting Age Pop.	% Total African American Pop.	Number of African American Voters
Bossier	9,489	62.9	0
Clairburne	7,915	55.9	0
Concordia	5,333	71.9	0
De Soto	8,943	62.0	0
E.BatonRouge	16,824	43.1	0
E. Carrol	7,061	74.8	0
E. Feliciano	5,899	68.1	0
Iberville	7,287	50.9	3
Madison	5,701	64.5	0
Morehouse	7417	50.9	2
Tensas	6,209	71.6	0
W. Feliciano	4,282	78.6	0

Source: Leo Alilunas, "Political Participation of the Negro in the North and South," *Journal of Negro History*, vol., 25, Issue 2 (April, 1940), 192, citing *Negroes in the United Sates 1920-1932*, 741-745, also "Statement of the Registered Voters of the State of Louisiana, October 1930," *Report of the Secretary of State, State of Louisiana*, Janurary1, 1931, 358.

Underlining all of the above factors together, it becomes clear that African Americans of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century had little if any opportunity to better themselves in the South. Trapped in a society that disenfranchised, terrorized and oppressed them, African Americans sought movement away from the South. In leaving they sought to improve their political and economic status. What was needed was an economic opportunity that would support a large-scale migration out of the South. World War I would supply the opportunity African Americans needed.

The greatest "pull" during the Great Migration was provided by the industrial needs of WWI war industry. Intensifying the "pull" was America's entry into WWI in

1917, coupled with a decline in European immigration. Prior to 1917 European immigrants made up the majority of the northern industrial workforce. However, from 1913 to 1917 European immigration had fallen from 1,197,892 to 110,618 respectively.[18] America's entry into WWI further created shortages as potential American labor entered into military service.

Along with a greater potential for employment came the greater potential for higher pay. Comparing the average wages of southern workers with those of northern workers, there exist substantial differences. In general, northern employment offered three to four times as mush pay as southern employment. Women who earned $2.10 a week in domestic work could make the same amount a day while men who earned $1.00 to $1.25 a day could earn $2.50 to $2.75 a day in various industries in the north.[19]

While the "pulls" of employment and wages were significant, they were not possible without the "pull" of information. Whether by word of mouth, personal letters, newspapers, or labor agents, getting the information to potential southern migrants proved pivotal. Throughout the Great Migration many family members who went to the North kept in constant contact with family and friends in the South. Personal letters of migrants having positive experiences were shared throughout the African American community. Other times the news of better opportunities in the north came up in simple conversations.[20]

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[18] Ibid., 43.

[19] Emmett J. Scott, *Negro Migration During War* (New York: Arno Press & The New York Times, 1969) 17.

Various African American newspapers also provided influential information about opportunities in the North. One of the most influential African American newspapers of the time was the *Chicago Defender*. In its national edition the *Defender* continually amplified the negative conditions of the South while portraying the North as the "Land of Hope" and the "Promised Land." Commenting on southern social conditions the *Defender* stated:

> "Turn a deaf ear to everybody. You see they are not lifting their laws to help you, are they? Have they stopped their Jim Crow cars? Can you buy a Pullman sleeper where you wish? Will they give you a square deal in court yet? When a girl is sent to prison she becomes the mistress of the guards and others in authority; and women prisoners are put on the streets to work—something they do not do to a white woman..."[21]

Targeting southern laborers the *Defender* also contained substantial information about employment opportunities with attractive wages. For example:

> "Huntsville, Alabama, January 19. Fifteen families, all members of the race, left here today for Pittsburgh, Pa., where they will take positions as butlers and maids, getting sixty to seventy-five dollars a month against fifteen to twenty paid here..."

The popularity of the *Chicago Defender* was so high that its very existence was illegal in a number of southern states. By 1920 the Chicago Defender had increased its circulation to 283,571 from 10,000 in 1910.[22]

Moving North African Americans experienced a number of successes and failures. Many times the high expectations of a better life in the North were met with

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[20] John Bodnar, Michael Weber, Roger Simon, "Migration, Kinship, and Urban Adjustment: Blacks and Poles in Pittsburgh, 1900-1930," *The Journal of American History*, vol. 66, Issue 3 (December, 1979) 553.

[21] Ibid., 31.

[22] Ibid., 65.

harsh realities of unfair labor practices, segregation, and high cost of living. "Perhaps the first thing the newcomer learns is thrift. He realizes that it costs more to live in Detroit than down in the Yazoo Delta," commented E.V. Wilcox.[23] The work may have also been plentiful but usually consisted of jobs that whites typically refused. However, African Americans that moved North realized early that they had one thing that they didn't have in the South, the right to vote.[24] As the large concentrations of African Americans in the industrial cities of the North increased so too did their potential for political action.

A common practice in northern cities since the end of the Civil War was to delegate certain parts of the city for whites only. Thus, upon arrival a large majority of African Americans settled in areas already inhabited by prior generations of African Americans. Whether through a restrictive covenant, refusal to sell, or the inability to secure loans from the bank, the existing white community was effective in keeping African Americans out of white neighborhoods.

Upon arrival, African Americans also came to learn that their vote was not only allowed but also encouraged. While the memory of Lincoln and the negative memories of a Democratic controlled South influenced many to vote Republican, the Democratic controlled machines of the North made significant inroads towards the African American voter. Unlike national elections, which usually garnered out a handful of federal appointments for Republican support, relationships with the local political machine

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[23] Malaika Adero, *Up South: Stories, Studies and Letters of This Century's Black Migration* (New York: New Press, 1983) 53.

[24] Prior to the *Smith v. Allwright* decision in 1944, African Americans were largely prohibited from participating in southern politics. For more information see Everett Carll Ladd, *Negro Political Leadership in the South* (New York: Atheneum, 1969) 1-47.

brought more direct and tangible benefits. As Ralph Bunche points out, "Whereas in Chicago, New York, Cleveland, Philadelphia, St. Louis and Detroit, his vote [African Americans] is an important factoring determining election results, he does get improved facilities and service, though seldom in proportion to the real importance of his vote."[25]

While the emphasis so far has been on Northern cities, it must also be added that urban cities in the South also allowed African Americans to vote. In many ways the Great Migration fostered a general trend towards urbanization. Those African Americans who did vote in the South generally lived in the city.[26] Within large urban areas, there existed a certain level of anonymity. Along with a greater degree of anonymity, African Americans also came into contact with local and national civic organizations. National organizations such as the National Advancement of Colored People and the National Urban League had established chapters in large southern cities like Houston, Baltimore and Atlanta by the 1920s. African Americans in southern urban areas were also able to establish working relationships with the existing power structure in urban areas.[27]

During the nineteenth century, political machines and their leaders dominated urban politics. Political machines were the vote driving entities that played a primary role in electing political officials. The function of the boss, as Robert Merton states, "is to organize, centralize and maintain in good working condition the scattered fragments of

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[25] Ralph Bunche, "The Negro in the Political Life of the United States," *Journal of Negro Education*, vol., 10, Issue 3, (July, 1941), 579.

[26] Paul Lewinson, *Race, Class, and Party: A History of Negro Suffrage and White Politics in the South* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1963) 132-133.

[27] Ibid., 138-146.

power."[28] Acting as a middleman between industry and politics, urban political machines and their bosses provided many of the basic functions that an ever-expanding European immigrant population required. Primary among many of the basic functions was that of attaining employment for the immigrants. Other minor functions included public services, securing bail and housing. For immigrants the political boss provided security in a very uncertain urban atmosphere. What the political machine in return for all of these services required was the vote.[29]

As large movements of African Americans continued to migrate north political bosses saw a potential pool of voters. For Republican machines the influx of historically Republican supporters would translate into continued political dominance. However, in a number of northern cities the Democratic Party was also appealing to the African American vote. Most noticeable of Democratic machines was New York City's Tammany Hall, which attempted to win votes through the creation of the United Colored Democracy as early as 1898.

A common course of action of political machines was to identify an influential African American individual within the community. Usually they were of the upper middle class. The majority were doctors, business leaders, religious leaders or lawyers[30]. A number had also lived in the areas prior to the Great Migration. The next step was to

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[28] Bruce Stave ed., *Urban Bosses, Machines, and Progressive Reformers* (Lexington: D.C. Heath and Co., 1972), 28.

[29] Ibid., 27-37.

[30] Ira Katznelson, *Black Men, White Cities* (New York: Oxford University Pres, 1973) 92.

influence that individual of the benefits of working with the political machine.[31] Promises

of political positions, jobs for the community or simply promising municipal services

would be offered if the individual could garner a large number of African American vote.

In Chicago, the work of William Hale Thompson[32] and his efforts to secure the African

American vote will provide a model example of machine politics in action.

Ever since his alderman days in 1900 William Hale Thompson sought the

electoral support of African Americans. Noticing the significance of the African

American vote, which was concentrated in Chicago's second ward, Thompson appealed

to the African American electorate in many ways. One way was by building up strong

relationships between influential people in the second ward. One of these relationships

involved that of Reverend Archibald Carey, head of Chicago's African Methodist

Episcopal Church in 1900. Rev. Carey's relationship with Thompson brought many

benefits to Carey's church congregation in the form of municipal jobs. "I'll give you

people the best opportunities for jobs you've ever had if you people elect me," remarked

Thompson at a political rally in 1915. The number of municipal jobs for African

Americas increased as Thompson gained more power and influence. Five years after

Thompson was elected to mayor the number of African Americans in municipal

employment had risen to 959 from 224.

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[31] The individual was also reminded of the negatives of not working with the political machine. As John Nail, an African American saloonkeeper discovered in his experience with Democratic Tammany Hall, "What was I to do. I had been a Republican. But there were too many ways these fellows could make it hard for you, like licenses, taxes, assessments, ect."

[32] Chicago Mayor from 1915-1923 and 1927-1931.

Although the great majority of municipal jobs were in occupations such as porters, cooks, messengers, clerical, and waste there were also number of high-level appointments.[33] Among these appointments included appointments in the city's law department and the civil service commission. In 1927 Carey was appointed to head the civil service commission.[34]

Thompson also took other opportunities to appeal to African Americans on a strictly racial basis. As mayor he banned the showing of the Klu Klux Klan film *Birth of a Nation.* He also attended many African American civic events and attended funeral with in the African American community. For many the simple recognition of the African American community filled a void that had existed in politics. This bond was only strengthened when the Thompson machine sent Oscar Du Priest to Washington as the first northern African American Congressman.[35]

Evidence of the Thompson's electoral success among African Americans can be found in his continued electoral success. In the Republican primary of 1915 Thompson won by a slim majority of 3,500. Of that slim margin the second ward gave Thompson 6,000 votes. Continuing through the general election of 1915 Thompson carried the second and third wards by a ratio of two to one. In the four primary elections that Thompson ran for mayor he received 80% of the second ward's votes.[36]

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[33] Ibid., 100.

[34] Harold Gosnell, *Negro Politicians: The Rise of the Negro Politics in Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1935) 201.

[35] Samuel Lubell, *White and Black: Test of a Nation* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1964) 50.

[36] Ibid., 41.

In Thompson African Americans received many tangible benefits. Jobs,

appointments, and recognition were a cornerstone of the Thompson machine. However,

Thompson's actions did more than give African American a favorable candidate in local

politics. In bringing African Americans to the polls, the Thompson machine performed

the task of political socialization.[37] Although a Republican, Thompson's actions fostered

a greater sense of political awareness among the African American electorate. Over the

Thompson era the rate of African Americans registered to vote stood at 72%.[38]

The great majority of African Americans still lived in the South. However, the

small minorities of those living in the North were able to become politically significant.

In the northern centers African Americans were also learning how to organize politically

and socially. In choosing politicians it became more accepted to choose candidates on

their views rather than their party affiliation. As the 1932 election approached, African

Americans continued to access the value of supporting the Republican Party, which

continued to be racially indifferent to the needs of the African American community.

Unlike past generations, African Americans of the 1920-30's expected the same direct

and tangible benefits that they received at the hands of the northern political machines.

In conclusion the Great Migration warned the political parties of the growing

importance of African Americans. In elections that were close, African Americans

proved their importance by providing the deciding vote. In exchange for their vote they

were given tangible benefits in the form of jobs, housing and services. Machine politics

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[37] Herbert Hyman, originator of the concept political socialization, defines it as the nature, scope and significance of an individual's political learning and how that learning would affect the political system. For more information see, Herbert Hyman, *Political Socialization* (New York: Free Press, 1959).

[38] Ibid., 43.

also provided a greater sense of political awareness among the African American community. In the process a new African American leadership emerged. Although one could argue that these individuals usually represented the upper and middle class, the symbolic nature of having an African American linked to the white political structure provided a sense of belonging which was highly unlikely in the rural South. Thus, the Great Migration played a large party in changing the psychological attachments many African Americans previously had toward political parties. Unlike traditional relationships with the Republican Party, urbanization fostered new relationships and expatiations. Through the link of urban politics Roosevelt and the New Deal would have the greatest effect as the Republican Party continued to take the African American vote for granted.

CHAPTER IV

ROOSEVELT'S INCLUSION OF AFRICAN AMERICANS:
NEW DEAL AND NEW LOYALTY

As the 1920's came to a screeching halt with the market crash of 1929, Americans

began to prepare for the worst. Unemployment soared, factories and business shut down

and America began to feel the domino effect of an economic fall out. Some 70,000

businesses failed and 5,000 banks closed. By 1932 twelve million Americans were left

unemployed.[1] With no relief in sight, the situation seemed hopeless. For African

Americans the economic and social problems of the Great Depression proved most

destructive.

Economically, African Americans still dominated the areas of unskilled and

agricultural labor in 1930. Socially, as the Great Depression worsened, race hatred

intensified as whites began to compete for jobs in industries formerly dominated by

African Americans. Politically, neither political party contained a platform for addressing

the economic and social plight of African Americans during the 1932 presidential

election. Since the South still dominated the Democratic Party, African Americans once

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[1] Harvard Sitkoff, *Fifty Years Later: The New Deal Evaluated*, (Temple
University Press: Philadelphia, 1985), 3.

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again chose the "lesser of two evils." However, by 1936, African Americans would break their historic ties to the Republican Party.

The reasons why African Americans joined the Democrats in 1936 will be the focus of this chapter. Specifically I will examine what the Republican Party did to lose the support of African Americans prior to the 1936 election. Next, Franklin Roosevelt and his New Deal programs will be analyzed to gauge their effects on the African American electorate. In particular, why did African Americans leave the Republican Party when the Democratic Party contained the same stance on racial legislation?

Before the actions of the Republican Party are examined it is necessary to examine the labor status of African Americans before the Depression. During the 1920's African Americans found many economic opportunities in the urban areas of the North and South. Escaping depressed wages and harsh living conditions in the rural areas, African Americans became part of America's urban landscape. However beneficial this union may have been initially, African Americans would face unyielding unemployment once WWI industry slowed. As the Depression of the 1930's set in African Americans would be the first to feel the pinch as employers cut much of their low-skilled labor force, which accounted for the majority of African American labor.[2] Reflecting on this situation Robert Weaver held:

> [After WWI] the black worker was only on the fringe of the American economy. True postwar expansion in the middle and late Twenties brought him more jobs and income, but his occupational distribution in the North was such as to make him most vulnerable to displacement incident to a major economic decline...In both North and

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[2]Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy,* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishing, 1944), 296 citing U.S. Bureau of the Census, Alba M. Edwards, *Social-Economic Grouping of the Gainful Workers on the United States, 1930* (1938) 36-59.

South, his principle source of job opportunities was in the service and casual unskilled operations. And these were the very types of jobs that are first dispensed with when an economic depression sets in.[3]

Adding to this point of view Gunnar Myrdal in his evaluation of African American labor in the 1930's held, "Indeed the low occupational status contains a greater danger for future employment than is usually realized. It means generally that his chances not only getting ahead but keeping any employment at all are more restricted."[4]

Examining census reports on unemployment rates for both whites and African Americans during the 1930's one notices the differences between race and unemployment. In Table 4.1 we are presented with unemployment rates for African Americans and whites (male and female) for January 1931. These rates were taken from large metropolitan areas including seven northern cities (Manhattan, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Chicago, Detroit) and three southern cities (Birmingham, Houston, New Orleans). In Table 4.1 we see that African American Males were twice as likely to be unemployed as whites. More alarming, African American women were three times as likely to be unemployed. Those in skilled labor found little protection either, as their wages became subject to unequal cuts. According to McElvaine skilled workers in Harlem were forced to take a fifty percent cut in pay.[5]

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[3] Robert Weaver, "Negro Labor Since 1929," *Journal of Negro History*, Volume 35, Issue 1 (January, 1950), 20-21.

[4] Ibid., 296.

[5] Robert McElvaine, The Great Depression: America, 1929-1941 (New York: Times Books, 1993) 187- 188.

Table 4.1

Unemployment Rates for Ten U.S. Cities
January 1931

	Unemployment Rates %	
	Whites	Blacks
Males		
All Ten Cities	27.2	40.5
Seven Northern Cities	27.8	41.7
Three Southern Cities	18.6	35.9
Females		
All Ten Cities	16.8	43.4
Seven Northern Cities	16.9	45.6
Three Southern Cities	14.4	36.2

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Fifteenth Census: Unemployment*, vol. 2, 370-373.

In many respects African Americans were not afforded the same advantages as whites. Prior to the Great Depression they were excluded from labor unions and received little if any protection from the federal government. To make matters worse job scarcity caused whites to compete in many low-skilled positions predominately held by African Americans. Whether it was a bellhop in hotels or bus boys at restaurants, white workers filled jobs usually held by African American.

Adding to the problems of African Americans, desperate whites intensified racial attacks on African Americans. In Atlanta, for example, unemployed whites joined together to form a racist group called Black Shirts. Chanting racist slogans as "No Jobs for Niggers Until Every White Man Has a Job," the Black Shirts represented one of many

attempts by angry unemployed whites to discourage African Americans to seek employment in the city.[6]

Other movements such as the Back-to the-Farm movement consisted of giving poor whites and African Americans land, homes, and seed for their agreement to leave the city. However enticing this plan was it proved to be a fraud. There existed no free land and African Americans were to work as tenant farmers on property owned by prominent white planters. The ulterior goal of this plan sought to reestablish the exact regressive economic system that African Americans had migrated away from during the beginning of the twentieth century.[7]

Searching for a political solution African Americans once again analyzed their limited options during the 1932 presidential election. If Franklin D. Roosevelt remained a mystery for many African Americans in 1932, President Herbert Hoover and the Republican Party seemed to be no better. Hoover's lily-white tactics after his victory in 1928 showed that he would abandon African Americans support if he could get white southern support.[8] Unfortunately for Hoover, his success in the southern states during the 1928 election had little to do with Republican appeal. The fact that his opponent was an anti-prohibition Catholic was reason enough for southern rejection. As the *St. Louis*

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[6] Harvard Sitkoff, *A New Deal for Blacks*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 36.

[7] Karen J. Ferguson, "The Politics of Inclusion: Black Activism in Atlanta During the Roosevelt Era, 1932-46" (Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 1996), 77.

[8] Hoover captured Florida, North Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia after which he "took all federal patronage away from the black-and-tan state delegations." Gone were men like Ben Davis and Perry Howard. For more information see Moon p. 108.

Argus pointed out, "Surely everybody knows it was against the Catholic Church and liquor and not necessarily for Hoover and the Republican Party."[9]

In moves that seemed similar to those of Rutherford B. Hays, Hoover courted lily-white Republican leaders to federal posts. One of the most infamous nominations was North Carolina Republican John J. Parker to the Supreme Court in 1930. Parker who had stated that "the participation of the Negro in politics is a source of evil and danger to both races and is not desired by the wise men of either race or by the Republican party of North Carolina,"[10] became a prime target of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the American Federation of Labor. Undaunted by protests and pressure from the NAACP, Hoover continued to support Parker. In a 41-39 vote Parker's nomination was defeated. According to Moon, "To the unyielding President it was a humiliating defeat; to the Negro it was an indication of his political maturity and a demonstration of the value of organization."[11]

In terms of the economy Hoover's attempts to deal with the Depression by addressing industry and banking before the needs of those in severe poverty alienated those is serious need. In essence Hoover believed that balancing the budget would be more beneficial than governmental intervention in the economy. During the 1932 campaign Roosevelt attacked Hoover's recovery program as an "elitist, trickledown

[9] Monroe N. Work, "The Negro Press on President's Plan for Building up Republican Party in South," *Negro Year Book 1931-1932,* ed.

[10] Henry Lee Moon, *Balance of Power: The Negro Vote* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1948) 110.

[11] Ibid., 111.

approach…[a plan] that built from the bottom up and not from the top down; [to] put

their faith once more in the forgotten man at the bottom of the economic pyramid."[12]

Franklin D. Roosevelt's history with the African Americans also seemed bleak.

Growing up in the Hudson River Valley Roosevelt lived the typical life of a Dutchess

County gentleman. For the most part he didn't even come into contact with African

Americans until his tenure as Secretary of the Navy in 1916. As Secretary of the Navy in

the Wilson Administration he had also supported segregation of facilities in Washington.

Even as Governor of New York, Roosevelt had declined to dole out political patronage to

African Americans. To make matters even more confusing for African Americans,

Roosevelt selected John Nance Garner of Texas as his running mate in 1932. With

Roosevelt's health problems becoming better known, the idea of having a southern

Democrat a heart beat away from the presidency made the democratic ticket less

appealing.

During the 1932 campaign neither Hoover nor Roosevelt chose to address a large

African American audience. The political platforms of each candidate also typified their

exclusion of racial issues such as lynching and disenfranchisement. Hoover relied on a

series of vague promises when he stated, "Vindication of the right of the Negro citizen to

enjoy the full benefits of life, liberty and the pursuits of happiness is traditional in the

Republican Party and our party stands to maintain equal opportunity and rights for our

Negro citizens."[13] Roosevelt, on the other hand, didn't even mention African Americans

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[12] Ibid., 125.

[13] Monroe N. Work, "Promises to Negroes in Republican Platforms 1884-1936," Negro *Year Book 1937-1938,* ed.

in the Democratic platform or his inaugural address.[14] Instead, Roosevelt stressed the

importance of addressing the needs of all especially those that were in the most desperate

need. "These unhappy times call for the building of plans that rest upon the forgotten

man—the forgotten man on the bottom of the economic pyramid." When asked about his

attitude toward African Americans he responded, "I believe in equal economic and legal

opportunity for all groups, regardless of race, color or creed."[15]

With no clear platform on racial issues, neither candidate appeared promising.

The last time African Americans supported a Democratic candidate for president was

Woodrow Wilson in 1912. His segregationist actions in Washington still created negative

memories for those who wished to leave the Republican Party. However, Hoover's

actions, along with past Republican administrations, left little hope for African

Americans as the Great Depression worsened. If there existed any questions as to

Roosevelt's attitude toward African Americans, Hoover didn't offer a better alternative.

Election results among African Americans showed no clear winner in the election

of 1932. In northern cities the election results were mixed. Table 4.2 shows elections

results from predominately African American voter districts. While Roosevelt may have

seemed to make inroads into the African American community, Republican appeal still

won out. In New York, Roosevelt captured 50.8% of the African American vote while

Hoover captured 46.0%. Another close race occurred in Pittsburgh where Roosevelt

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[14] Eli Ginzberg and Alfred Eichner, *The Troublesome Presence: American Democracy and the Negro* (London: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1964) 293.

[15] Nancy J. Weiss, *Farewell to the Party of Lincoln: Black Politics in the Age of FDR* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1983) 25.

captured 41.3% to Hoover's 56.2% of the vote.[16] While the rest of American population

shifted their support for Roosevelt, African Americans stayed with the Republican Party.

Table 4.2

1932 Presidential Vote Percentages in
Selected African American Districts

City	% Republican	%Democrat
Chicago	75.1	21.0
Cincinnati	71.2	28.8
Cleveland	82.0	17.3
Detroit	67.0	31.0
Knoxville	70.2	29.8
New York	46.0	50.8
Philadelphia	70.5	26.7
Pittsburgh	56.2	41.3

Source: Nancy J. Weiss, *Farewell to the Party of Lincoln: Black Politics in the Age of FDR* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1983) Table 1.1, 30.

The election of 1932 signaled the realignment of the existing political parties in

progress. The overriding political issue, which provided the catalyst for the realignment,

was the Great Depression. More specifically, the government's role in alleviating the

economic ramifications of the Great Depression was at issue. However, it must be noted

that African Americans did not switch party loyalty in 1932. African Americans, for the

most part, took a wait and see approach.

Although Roosevelt didn't win over the great majority of African Americans

initially his actions on the Great Depression proved effective. When he took office in

1933, Roosevelt quickly began to deal with the problems at hand. Unlike his predecessor,

Roosevelt's realized the severity of the Great Depression and offered plans to fix it.

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[16] Ibid., 30.

Instead of a wait and see approach Roosevelt called for "action." He also helped to jumpstart a much-needed level of hope in the American psyche. First off, Roosevelt identified with the commonality of the Great Depression through his many fireside chats and speeches. Roosevelt gave the impression that the Great Depression was fixable. In his inaugural address Roosevelt stated, "In such a spirit in my part and on yours we face our common difficulties..." "If I read the temper of our people correctly, we now realize as we have never realized before our interdependence on each other; that we can not merely take but we must be willing to give as well; that if we are to go forward, we must move as a trained and loyal army willing to sacrifice for the good of the common discipline..."[17] Thus, Roosevelt painted the Great Depression as a group struggle which would require the efforts of all including himself and the federal government.

In terms of addressing any major piece of legislation that dealt with the Civil Rights of African Americans Roosevelt was initially silent. The closest he came was his public condemnation of lynching in 1933. "Lynch law," he stated to the Federal Council of Churches on December 6, was a "vile form of collective murder" which could not be condoned.[18] What was missing was a federal initiative supported by Roosevelt. Even actions by the NAACP and Walter White to convince Roosevelt to support the Costigan-Wagner bill against lynching proved futile.[19] Roosevelt, in defense of his position, continually stated the negative political implications of supporting lynching legislation.

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[17] Washington, D.C. : U.S. Government Printing Office, 1961.

[18] Ibid., 101.

[19] For further discussion on the NAACP fight against lynching see, Robert L. Zangrando, *The NAACP Crusade Against Lynching, 1909-1950* (Philadelphia, 1980), chapter 5.

During a meeting with Walter White concerning the Costigan-Wagner bill Roosevelt responded:

> "I've got to get legislation passed by Congress to save America. The Southerners by seniority rule in Congress occupy strategic places on most of the House and Senate floors. If I come out for the anti-lynching bill now, they will block every bill I ask Congress to pass to keep America from collapsing. I just can't take that risk.[20]

In short, Roosevelt valued pushing through his New Deal legislation above Civil Rights legislation. While Roosevelt's initial actions of Civil Rights issues may have seemed to represent the status quo, he certainly was faced with little choice in the 1930's.

The inability of Roosevelt to support racial legislation during the beginning of his administration reflected the political situation he explained to Walter White. Throughout much of the 1930's southern Democrats did in fact control key positions in Congress. During the 73rd Congressional session (1933-34) southern Democrats controlled 73% of all committee chairs in the House followed by 50% in the Senate.[21] In the all-important House Rules Committee southern Democrats control six of the nine seats along with five out of the eight seats in the Senate Rules Committee.[22] Among those holding influential Senate chairman positions included "Cotton Ed" Smith of South Carolina (Agriculture), Carter Glass of Virginia (Appropriations) and Pat Harrison of Mississippi (Finance).

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[20] Walter White, *A Man Called White: The Autobiography of Walter White* (New York: Viking Penguin Inc, 1948), 169-70, also cited in Nancy J. Weiss, *Farewell to the Party of Lincoln: Black Politics in the Age of FDR* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1983) 106.

[21] Dewey W. Grantham, *The Life and Death of the Solid South: A Political History* (University Press of Kentucky, 1988) Table 2, 106.

[22] Marian D. Irish, "The Southern One-Party System in National Politics," *The Journal of Politics,* vol., 4, Issue 1 (February, 1942) 84.

While the majority of these southern democrats passed large portion of Roosevelt's initial programs they still held strong convictions on maintaining white supremacy in the South.

For Roosevelt the relationship between southern Democrats and his New Deal policies culminated into a dilemma. He knew he needed the support of southern Democrats although he may not have agreed with their general ideology of white supremacy. As Frank Freidel pointed out, "He [Roosevelt] was a Yankee, not a Southerner...his attitude toward inviolable southern institutions was intellectual rather than emotional, pragmatic rather than dogmatic. To him the greatest challenge facing the south was the alleviations of poverty, not the maintenance (or the elimination) of white supremacy."[23]

Southern Democrats also became aware of the new coalitions arising in the northern and western wing of the Democratic Party. A new coalition of African Americans, labor unions, and liberals appeared as a constant threat to the southern Democratic order. Sensing the change on the horizon Carter Glass wrote, "To any discerning person it is perfectly obvious that the so-called Democratic Party at the North is now the Negro party, advocating actual social equality for the races..."[24]

In appeasing the needs of both southern and northern democrats Roosevelt was able to get the majority of his New Deal programs through. In the process new coalitions and new expectations would be created. Southern Democrats, while blasting the liberal and socialistic appearance of the New Deal, could not argue with the large amounts of federal dollars rolling into their home districts. Popular sentiment was also on the side of

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[23] Frank Freidel, *F.D.R. and the South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1965) 36.

[24] Ibid., 92.

Roosevelt as millions of Americans anticipated and received relief. Within the millions

receiving relief were also large numbers of African Americans. Participating in New Deal

programs, African Americans would experience both acceptance and discrimination. It

was this acceptance and participation that influenced many to give their electoral support

in 1936.

During the first one hundred days of his administration Roosevelt launched an

unprecedented federal initiative to promote national recovery. Beginning with the

Emergency Banking Act of 1933 Roosevelt first set out to stabilize the banking industry

by providing loans and federal guidelines for new banks. Next, Roosevelt aimed his

efforts at agriculture and industry. The Agricultural Adjustment Act and the National

Industrial Recovery Act set out to establish new guidelines and for both agriculture and

industry. Along with new guidelines these two act also provided large amounts of federal

spending to foster recovery employment. Through NIRA the Public Works

Administration was created. With a budget of 3.3 billion dollars, the WPA undertook

large projects such as highways, bridges, dams and schools.[25] The NIRA, which was

overseen by the National Recovery Administration, required industry to institute price

and wage controls along with labor and employer codes. It was the Agricultural

Adjustment Act and National Recovery Act that influenced African Americans the most.

Created to raise prices by cutting the surplus on agriculture goods, the

Agricultural Adjustment Act had many adverse effects on African Americans. In theory,

the government would subsidize farmers for not growing or reducing the acreages in

which they planted. In practice, the voluntary nature of the AAA allowed many farmers

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[25] W.J. Rorabaugh and Donald T. Critchlow, *America: A Concise History*
(Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1994) 501.

to subvert requirements by doubling their production on the good land while not planting on the land that was already in poor condition. Since African Americans comprised as a small minority in agricultural land ownership, their position was particularly venerable. Farmers were also obligated to share government subsidies with their tenants and sharecroppers (40% of all laborers in the U.S. were farm labors or tenants[26]). Unfortunately, many African American tenants and sharecroppers were pushed off the land while the farmer they worked for received a government aide. Local AAA governing boards in the South also heavily discriminated against African American farmers. In many respects local county committees did not let African Americans serve on the committees. According to Harvard Sitkoff, "Not a single Negro served on an AAA county committee throughout the South; yet every Negro farmer had to abide by their decisions."[27]

The National Recovery Administration also had adverse effects. With its primary objective of requiring industry to implement fairer codes in wages, working conditions and prices of production, the NRA excluded African Americans. First, NRA regulations did not apply to agricultural workers, which comprised the majority of African American labor, especially in the South. Secondly, domestic service was not covered under the NRA regulations. Lastly, the NRA allowed for regional disparities in the implementation of the minimum wage. In the South this translated into lower minimum wages. In the worst cases employers would fire African Americans rather than pay the equal wage a

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[26] Ibid., 189.

[27] Harvard Sitkoff, A New Deal for Blacks: The Emergence of Civil Rights as a National Issue (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978) 53.

white was earning. Thus, the NRA's actions left African Americans at the mercy of southern racist traditions. Other New Deal programs tended to allow discriminatory practices to carry on. From the Tennessee Valley Authority to the Civilian Conservation Corps African Americans were segregated and discriminated against.[28]

Despite all of the negatives, New Deal programs were accessible. In many ways the New Deal programs were undermining the political power structure that had existed prior to the Great Depression. As Gunnar Myrdal pointed out in his assessment of the New Deal and the south, "Now Washington is the main 'buyer' of the South. And Washington usually seeks to extend its assistance regardless of race." With government dollars replacing state and local expenditures the federal government was able to dictate racial protocol in some instances. For example, the CCC contained an anti-discriminatory clause stated, "That in employing citizens for the purpose of this act no discrimination shall be made on account of race, color, or creed."[29] When Georgia Governor Eugene Talmadge refused to allow African Americans to participate the federal government threatened to withhold all CCC funds to his state under the anti-discriminatory clause.[30]

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[28] Charles Houston, "TVA: Lily-White," *The Crisis*, October 1934, vol. 41, number 10, 290, see also, Gustav Peck, "The Negro Worker and the NRA," *The Crisis*, September 1934, vol. 41, number 9, 262.

[29] Up until 1935 a common practice in CCC camps was to segregate African Americans from whites. In defending segregation, CCC director Robert Fechner held that segregation was not discrimination. For more information see, Fechner to Thomas L. Griffith, 21 September 1935, "CCC Negro Selection" file, Box 700, General Correspondence of the Director, Record Group 35, National Archives, College Park, Maryland.

[30] John A. Salmond, "The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Negro," ed. Bernard Sternsher, *The New Deal in Depression and War: Prelude to Revolution 1930-1945* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1969) 81.

In sum, the CCC employed two hundred and fifty thousand African Americans with total earnings of seven hundred thousand dollars.[31] Along with employment the CCC also provided educational and work related experience.

There was also an effort to give employment aide to the young. Created to aide young students while they attended school, the National Youth Administration had an impact on African American youth. Within the NYA a special Negro Affairs department was created. Under the direction of Aubrey Williams and Mary McLeod Bethune the NYA was able to aide more than three hundred thousand African American youth.[32] It also was able to appropriate six hundred thousand dollars for college students and another one million for grade level students.[33] Aubrey Williams also saw to it that African Americans were allowed participate in supervisory and clerical positions.

Under the Works Progress Administration African Americans more than three hundred and sixty thousand African Americans received employment. Due to a governmental quota system the WPA projects had to include the same percentage and wage of African Americans similar to their numbers in the 1930 census. Within the WPA there existed a variety of employment, educational activities and projects. For African Americans the WPA's employment, educational activities and projects provided much needed employment for the skilled and unskilled. Education operations also fostered much needed aide to battle illiteracy. WPA projects included the construction of building schools, hospitals, bridges and roads within the African American community. Under the

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[31] Washington, D.C. : Government Printing Office, 1941.

[32] Ibid., 98.

[33] Stanley High, *Roosevelt—And Then?* (Freeport: Books for Libraries, 1937) 202.

directions of Harold Ickes the WPA appropriated forty five million dollars for projects specifically targeting the African American community.

The Farm Security Administration also tried its best to aid African American farmers. Through the direction of Will Alexander the FSA provided loans and resettlement projects for displaced tenant farmers. Although the loans only reached a limited number of African American farmers, the FSA was credited for saving many homes and farms. Despite the low level of support, African Americans still received twenty three percent of all New Deal farm security assistance.[34]

Roosevelt's appointments of African Americans and other racial liberals to various federal posts signaled the federal government's inclusion of African Americans in the New Deal. The appointment of Harold Ickes (former head of the Chicago chapter of the NAACP) to Interior Secretary singled to many African Americans that their needs would be addressed. Other racial liberals began to make inroads into the administration, these included: Edwin Embree, Will Alexander, Clark Foreman (Negro Advisor) and later Robert Weaver. Together these men took a specific look at the dire economic position of African Americans.

Noticing that New Deal programs were being subverted by unfair practices toward African Americans, Harold Ickes (In charge of the Public Works Administration) instituted a quota system in 1934. One of the first of its kind, the quota system local contractors were required to hire skilled African American labor (based on occupational status of the 1930 census). "The importance of this action...was that it shifted the burden

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[34] Ibid., 99.

of proof from the PWA to the contractor."[35] Under further direction of Ickes and Weaver future governmental labor contracts would be scrutinized to include housing projects aimed at African Americans.

Unlike the token appointments of African Americans in the past, Roosevelt's appointments represented a significant change. In many respects, these appointments carried more purpose and substance. For one, the new appointments were more educated and highly trained.[36] One group that exemplified the recruitment of more highly educated individuals was the "Black Cabinet." Led by Mary McLeod Bethune, the "Black Cabinet's" aim, in the words of Robert Weaver, was "getting administrative changes, and securing equitable participation of blacks in programs to which we were a part of." As racial advisors to various federal initiatives such as the PWA, Federal Works Administration, U.S. Housing Authority, Selective Service, these cabinet members were able to oversee the implementation of New Deal initiatives to make sure they were not being subverted on the local level.

Racial advisors also listened to the complaints of individuals who were receiving unfair treatment. In terms of getting results, racial advisors continuously reminded local officials of the possibility of loosing federal dollars if they kept up their discriminatory practices. Racial advisors also served the function of educating local African American workers of possible employment in federal programs through meetings, radio

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[35] Ibid., 22.

[36] Educational back ground of the members of the Black Cabinet are the best example: Robert Weaver and Booker T. McGraw attained doctorates in economics from Harvard; William Hastie-Law degree from Harvard; Frank Horne-Doctor of Optometry; William J. Trent, MBA Wharton School of Finance; Alfred E. Smith, Masters from Harvard and Campbell C. Johnson, Law Degree from Harvard. For more information on Black Cabinet see Weiss, Chapter VII.

announcements and information on civil service examinations.[37] While one may doubt the tangible power that these racial advisors had, one can certainly not question their symbolic power as a beacon of hope for other African Americans.

Roosevelt's New Deal programs had many positives and negatives. While they were anti-discriminatory in nature New Deal programs did suffer from wide reports of segregation and discrimination. Critics of Roosevelt's programs also pointed to Roosevelt's continued silence on matters of Civil Rights. There were also those who criticized Roosevelt's programs for their effects on de facto segregation through the creation of inner city housing projects. Some even argue that public work programs caused the African American job structures to suffer as many were employed well below their skill level.[38]

However, the fact that African Americans were able to participate in relief programs largely outweighed the discrimination they received. For many, the actions of the Roosevelt mirrored those of Abraham Lincoln. Not since the Emancipation Proclamation had a president acted on behalf of African Americans in such a large degree. While the New Deal programs were not specifically tailored to African Americans, they nonetheless attempted to meet their economic needs through programs like the WPA, CCC and NYA. When relief was provided it nevertheless helped those who had never expected anything from the Democratic Party.

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[37] Ibid., 151.

[38] Christopher G. Wye, "The New Deal and the Negro Community: Toward a Broader Conceptualization," *Journal of American History*, vol. 59, Issue 3 (December, 1972), 621-639.

As Roosevelt won a majority of the vote, so too did the Democratic Party in state and local elections in 1932. Joining the movement towards the Democratic Party, African Americans also began their shift their loyalty to the Democratic Party. One of the most significant shifts occurred in Chicago. In 1934 Chicago's African Americans elected Democrat Arthur Mitchell to Congress in place of Republican Oscar Du Priest. Mitchell's use of Roosevelt's popularity was reflected in his famous campaign slogan, "Forward with Roosevelt." As more northern cities went Democrat so too did African Americans. What prevailed was a continued power relationship between federal relief programs, Democratic machines and African Americans.

While Democratic machines were not responsible for handing out relief programs they nonetheless benefited because of their party affiliation. In a correspondence letter written by Congressman Mitchell the perception of political machines being responsible for relief programs was highlighted when he wrote:

> It is an unbroken rule of the Democratic Organization in Chicago that each person seeking help from his Congressman must first get a letter from his ward committeeman requesting the Congressman to take care of the matter. I must, therefore, insist that you get a letter from your committeeman first, and I shall be very glad to do everything in my power to help you.[39]

Thus, the relationship between African Americans reflected past relationships. This time however the machine to which they was supporting were of the Democratic Party. This relationship would also play a big role in helping Roosevelt attain the African American vote by 1936. Noticing the strength of the African American vote, Roosevelt and the

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[39] Roger Biles, *Big City Boss in Depression and War: Mayor Edward G. Kelly of Chicago* (De Kalb: Northern University Press, 1984) 76, citing Lawerence Sullivan, "The Negro Vote," *Atlantic Monthly* 166 (October, 1940), 480.

Republican Party made substantial changes in the way they pursued the African

American electorate in 1936.

Unlike presidential elections of the past, concern for the African American vote

was at its pinnacle. One reason for such concern was that the African American

populations in the north represented a "balance of power." Specifically, African

Americans held the balance of power in Pennsylvania, New York, Ohio, Michigan and

Illinois, which accounted for 157 electoral votes, 31 votes more then the entire solid

South.[40] With no specific plan to win back African American voters the Republican Party

decided to attack the New Deals weaknesses. While the language of promises and

protections represented a first in Republican platforms their ambiguous promises do not

reveal a break from past platforms. The 1936 Republican platform stated:

> We favor equal opportunity for our colored citizen. We pledge our
> protection for their economic status and personal safety. We will do our best to
> further their employment in the gainful occupied life of America, particularly in
> private industry, agriculture, emergencies and the civil service. We condemn the
> present New Deal policies which would regiment and ultimately eliminate the
> colored citizen from this countries productive life, and make him a solely a ward
> of the federal government.[41]

In other moves that signaled a definite break with the past, the Republican Party even

secured the support of Olympian Jesse Owens. In all however, the Republican Party

suffered more from its history rather than its promises of the future. The Democratic

Party by contrast, provided hope as African Americans participated in the New Deal.

In contrast to the Republican convention, the Democratic convention broke new

ground in respects to race recognition. One of the most visible signs of change was the

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[40] Ibid., 211., see also Henry Lee Moon, *Balance of Power: The Negro Vote* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1948) 84-85.

[41] Ibid., 100.

increased size of African American delegations. In 1928 there were no African American

delegates or alternates. By 1936 the number of African American delegates rose to thirty.

Reverend Marshall L. Shepard who was the first African American to ever give the

opening prayer at a Democratic convention provided another visible change. Arthur

Mitchell also participated in the convention when he addressed the convention on

invitation.

Incensed over the participation of Rev. Shepard and Mitchell, a number of

southern delegates walked out. Most notable of those who walked out in protest was

South Carolina Senator Ellison D. Smith. In a public speech Smith complained, "I can

not and will not be a party to the recognition of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendment.

Nor will I support any political organization that looks upon the Negro and caters to him

as a political and social equal."[42] Despite Smith's protest, the convention continued. The

fact that the rest of the convention did not disband signaled in a new era of African

American participation in the Democratic Party.

In a more important development the convention did away with 2/3 rule in

nominating presidential and vice presidential candidates. From a political standpoint this

significantly weakened southern dominance in the nomination process. Whether southern

democrats liked it or not, they would have to work with Democrats outside the South in

the future. This would also mean that southern Democrats would have to work with

African Americans whether they liked it or not.

Through Roosevelt's New Deal programs, African Americans were receiving

tangible benefits. Whether it was through relief checks or work projects, Roosevelt's

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[42] Ibid., 103.

actions spoke louder than Republican rhetoric. For evidence of how much African

Americans supported Roosevelt one has to look no further than the 1936 presidential

results. In an overwhelming majority African Americans went to the polls to support

Roosevelt. By looking at vote totals from selected urban areas with substantial African

American population it becomes evident that Roosevelt not only captured the majority of

African American votes but also stimulated a substantial change in voting change from

1932-1936.[43]

Table 4.3

Presidential Vote in African American Districts, 1932-1936

City	1932 % Republican	% Democratic	1936 % Republican	% Democratic	1932-36 Dem. % Increase
Chicago	75.1	21.0	50.5	45.8	132
Cincinnati	71.2	28.8	34.9	65.1	126
Cleveland	82.0	17.3	38.4	60.5	250
Detroit	67.0	31.0	31.8	66.2	114
Knoxville	70.2	29.8	43.8	56.2	89
New York	46.0	50.8	17.1	81.3	60
Philadelphia	70.5	26.7	29.7	68.7	157
Pittsburgh	56.2	41.3	23.5	74.7	81

Source: Nancy J. Weiss, *Farewell to the Party of Lincoln: Black Politics in the Age of FDR* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1983) Table IX, 206.

In conclusion the actions of Roosevelt's New Deal caused African Americans to

switch political loyalty. Roosevelt gave African Americans a sense of belonging that they

had not felt since the administration of Lincoln. Unlike promises of Civil Rights

protections, the New Deal gave out tangible benefits. With the New Deal they were

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[43] See Table 4.3.

provided relief in the form of jobs, food, hospitals, education and other benefits. In the

process of giving African Americans recognition and support, Roosevelt also changed the

political structure of the Democratic Party. Through his administration new coalitions

were created. New coalitions of labor unions, immigrants and African Americans who

had once been apolitical were now solidly aligned with the Democratic Party.[44] As they

clung to their last vestiges of white supremacy and caste order, southern Democrats

realized that changes were on the horizon.

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[44] Kristi Anderson, *The Creation of the Democratic Majority 1928-1936*
(Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979) 110-116.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Republican history, migration and finally Roosevelt's inclusion of African

Americans into the New Deal caused African Americans to leave the Republican Party.

When Abraham Lincoln read the Emancipation Proclamation in 1864 African Americans

felt they were officially freed from bondage. With the guarantees of the Thirteenth,

Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments African Americans seemed to be headed toward

full citizenship and political participation. With the Republicans responsible for such

progress few African Americans could imagine voting against the memory of such

actions. However, as this thesis has shown, African Americans and their status were

never central within the Republican framework.

Existing as a logical threat to southern Democratic dominance, Republicans

pushed for African American suffrage to create a viable Republican Party in the south.

However, African Americans participating in political affairs went against the very

dominant social structure that had existed since the days of slavery. Maintaining African

American political participation during Reconstruction proved costly as armed

confrontations quickly changed northern sentiment against military Reconstruction.

When Rutherford B. Hayes initiated his home rule policies he officially ended Reconstruction. With the South left to its own devices, African Americans suffrage and freedoms also ended. From Hayes to Herbert Hoover African American were left in a perpetual state of political insignificance. By the twentieth century neither political party sough the African American vote nationally.

When the Great Migration took place it forever changed the political landscape of the north. Along with the intensified migration and urbanization, the African American vote was sought out. Local political machines, whether they were Democrat or Republican, used different tactics to lure the African American vote. Some relied on historical relationships to the Republican Party while others gave tangible benefits in the forms of jobs, housing and services. Even though historical ties to the Republican Party were strong the Great Depression forced many to rethink their party loyalty, thus providing the catalyst for political realignment.

Not helping the Republican cause Herbert Hoover tried to deal with the Great Depression from the top down alienating and angering the poor. His attempts rebuild the southern wing of the Republican Party by appealing to southern whites further proved his true intentions. His attempt to nominate Judge Parker only solidified these intentions. However, when Roosevelt was elected in 1932 African Americans did not jump the Republican ship.

Republican history, migration and finally Roosevelt's inclusion of African Americans into the New Deal, caused African Americans to leave the Republican Party. Roosevelt's economic attack on the Great Depression gave something African American desperately needed--relief. Relief came in many shapes and sizes. Replacing the function

of machine politicians Roosevelt's programs provided everything from jobs and relief checks to agricultural and housing. Although a number of programs were riddled with discrimination they usually spun from local administration and not from Washington. Roosevelt's inclusion of African Americans gave them hope and a sense of belonging. In time of need the Republican Party could only offer promises while Roosevelt provided action. Thus, the Republican negative record on race, migration, and Roosevelt's inclusion of African Americans in their most desperate hour caused African American to leave the Democratic Party.

Since the realignment of the 1930s, African Americans have become the backbone of the Democratic Party. Despite the deviating election of Republican Dwight Eisenhower in 1952 and 1956, African Americans have supported every single Democratic candidate sense Roosevelt. In the future, Democratic presidents would take a more active approach on racial issues. The best examples were Harry S. Truman's desegregation of the U.S. military and Lyndon B. Johnson's Civil Rights and Voters Acts of the 1960s.

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