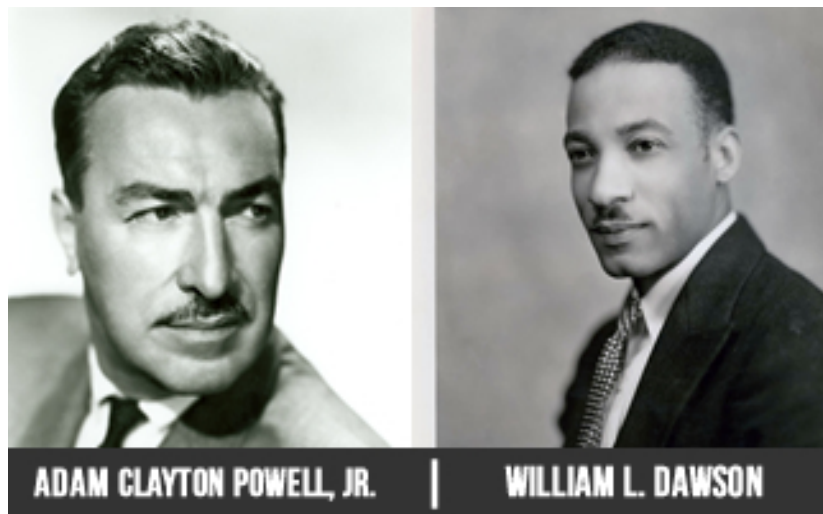


## Reality Check - Wisdom from Two Lendendary Political Professionals

Written by A. Peter Bailey  
Thursday, 24 May 2012 10:48

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Just before the politics of a presidential election year turns scorching hot, it may help to study observations from two influential African American politicians of a past era – former representatives William L. Dawson of Illinois and Adam Clayton Powell Jr. of New York.

Dawson, in a June 14, 1945 commencement address at Wilberforce University, told the graduates that “..... The world is fast beginning to look to deeds and achievements as the badge of excellence, and we must prepare ourselves to meet the requirements. But preparing our individual selves alone will not suffice; we must help and train our less fortunate brothers and sisters to measure up. The people of other groups are too busy trying to train their own young and to shape the thinking of their own people to meet the world’s requirements to worry about us. They are not going to come into our homes or into our communities to do missionary work among us. The job of shaping and controlling the thinking and action of our people is our responsibility. We are our brothers’ keepers. We are bound together by ties of race and color and blood. What one Negro does, either good or ill, affects the well-being of every other Negro. We of today must accept the challenge and face the responsibilities. You go forth into a world where there are millions who never had the opportunity you have here enjoyed....

“Many of us have acquired education, money, and influence. Do we regard these as a trust and resolve to use some part thereof to help our less fortunate brothers to measure up to required standards, or do we seek to get away from them and get for ourselves personally the benefits which should be extended to all? Life for the Negro in America is not self-seeking. When the showdown comes, we rise or fall together.”

Powell, in 1965 speech at Ebenezer Missionary Baptist Church in Chicago, declared, among other things, that “Black communities of this country- whether it is New York’s Harlem,

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Chicago's South and West sides, or Philadelphia's North side-must neither tolerate nor accept outside leadership-black or white. Each community must provide its own local leadership, strengthening the resources within its own local community.

"The black masses should only follow those leaders who can sit at the bargaining table with the white power structure as equals and negotiate for a share of its crumbs. We must stop sending little boys whose organizations are controlled and financed by white businessmen to do a man's job. Because only those who are financially independent can be men. This is why I earlier called for black people to finance their own organizations and institutions. In so doing, the black masses guarantee the independence of their leadership.

"The black leadership- the ministers, politicians, businessmen, doctors, and lawyers-must come back to the Negroes who made them in the first place or be purged by the black masses...."

By A. Peter Bailey  
Trice Edney Wire{jcomments on}