

Blacks Moved to the Back of the Line – Again

Written by James Clingman
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Many of us have heard the saying, “If you’re White you’re all right; if you’re Yellow you’re fine and mellow; if you’re Brown, stick around; but if you’re Black get the h— on back.” Well, as Claud Anderson has said for years, “If Black folks didn’t get anything when we were in second place, what makes anyone think we will get anything when we move into third place?” All of his predictions and warnings have come to fruition as they pertain to immigration and its impact on Black people in this country.

Once again, we have been moved to the back of the line, even behind those illegal immigrants who are told they must go to the end of the line in order to become legal. When the Obama administration touted its No. 1 agenda item shortly after the inauguration, it became immediately clear that Black people, along with whatever “agenda” we might have, would be pushed further down on the presidential “to do” list. Hispanics are the minority group du jour pushed ahead of Black folks that have been waiting in line for 400 years.

The No. 1 political priority is now immigration reform, not Black unemployment, Black incarceration, Black economic inclusion, or Black anything. The gay people have had their turn at the front; the Jewish people have had their turn; the “mainstream” Hispanic folks are now getting their second turn; and now illegal immigrants have their turn at the head of the line. In street vernacular, “Where da Black folks at?” Oh, I see them; they’re waaaay back there at the end of the line – again. Here, use my binoculars; you’ll be able to see them back there.

Individuals and organizations are lining up and complaining about the lack of attention being given to Black people by the Obama administration, especially since Black voters overwhelmingly supported the President’s reelection. Hispanics gave 71 percent of their support, while Blacks gave around 95 percent of theirs. So why is illegal immigration, which is an issue of great concern to Hispanic people, the No. 1 priority?

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Ben Jealous, president of the NAACP, said on Meet the Press, said, Black Americans “...are doing far worse” than when President Obama first took office. “The country’s back to pretty much where it was when this president started. White people in this country are doing a bit better. Black people are doing far worse.”

U.S. Rep. Alcee Hastings [D-Fla.], reflecting on the president’s nearly all-White inner circle and his second term appointees thus far, says President Obama has disrespected Black folks by failing to choose not even 1 of the 61 names recommended for administration positions by the Congressional Black Caucus. Maybe the president just doesn’t know a lot of Black folks. Thus, “If you’re White, you’re all right.” Hastings also cited the meager and insulting amount of Obama campaign funds spent with Black newspapers. So what else is new? Why market to a constituency that automatically gives nearly 100 percent of its vote and asks for nothing in return?

We pointed out a similar situation during the last two Supreme Court appointments in a 2010 article titled, “How about getting a Black person on the Supreme Court?” Maybe the next time folks like Deval Patrick and Charles Ogletree will be considered – no, nominated.

Anyway, here’s the deal. We are at the back of the line when it comes to issues that directly impact Black people in this country. Somehow we cannot get it through our heads that we are still relegated to a subordinate position, politically and economically, and will remain that way until we change our behavior, as Amos Wilson advised in his book, *Blueprint for Black Power*. There is no reason or need for anyone to change the way they treat us if we continue to accept mistreatment from them. And this goes well beyond mere skin color, folks. After all, who is more “colored” than Clarence Thomas?

This is about consciousness, commitment, and a willingness to stand up and accept no less than what is right, equitable, and just. It is also about refusing to fall for the political games that are being played on us every day. Our votes are only good for one thing: counting – if they are even counted at all. But after the counting is done, it’s back to the end of the line for Black people, despite the so-called agenda that Ben Jealous, Marc Morial, and Al Sharpton carry to the POTUS. Question: If they are so important (or should it be impotent?), have so much influence, and are so close to the president, why are Black people still at the end of the line?

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Malcolm said it best: “Any time you throw your weight behind a political party that controls two-thirds of the government, and that party can’t keep the promise that it made to you during election time, and you are dumb enough to walk around continuing to identify yourself with that party, you’re not only a chump, you’re a traitor to your race.”

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