

UNHOLY TROIKA: GENDER, RACE AND RELIGIOSITY IN THE 2008 PRESIDENTIAL CONTEST

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B.C. "Thy Husband Shall Rule Over Thee [Genesis, Old Testament]

A.D. "Let wives be subject to their husbands as to the Lord; because a husband is head of the wife just as Christ is head of the Church. . . just as the Church is subject to Christ, so also let wives be subject to their husbands in all things."

[St. Paul, Epistle to the Ephesians 5, New Testament Darby Translation]

The 2008 presidential election is a convergence of America's four pervasive, oftentimes, conflicting social issues: religion in the form of Mike Huckabee; race in the form of Barack Obama; gender in the form of Hillary Clinton and the conservative perspective in the form of John McCain. While Americans can never be judged as a monolithic voting group, choosing the right candidate poses an especially interesting dilemma for black people and in particular, black women. This confluence of race and gender creates additional stress for millions of black women who historically have been the stalwarts of the Democratic Party. The loyalty of the black female vote for Bill Clinton in 1992 and 1996 underscored a sense of security then and garnered the foregone conclusion of a significant voting bloc to catapult Hillary Clinton's campaign to become the first viable female president.¹ But enter a young, black male, first term senator from Illinois named Barack Obama who has taken the country by storm—the ultimate political "phenom" who has seriously affected front runner Clinton's meteoric rise to the top.

Clinton established her own credibility as the junior senator from New York and was reelected overwhelmingly for a second term.² Her strategy to establish her political position via her Senate credentials— coupled with Democratic voters' and especially the black community's affection for her

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1. Luchina Fisher, *Black Women Play Decisive Role*, WOMEN'S ENEWS, APR. 6, 2004, available at <http://www.alternet.org/election04/18317> (stating that "in the 1992 and 1996 elections, exit polls showed. . . Black women . . . voted overwhelmingly for Clinton. In 1992 he received 86% of their vote and in 1996 89% of them voted for him, according to the Joint Center" [for Political and Economic Studies]).

2. STAFF OF FED. ELECTION COMMI, OFFICE OF COMMC'NS, FEDERAL ELECTIONS 2006 ELECTION RESULTS FOR U.S. SENATE AND THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES (2007), also available at <http://www.fec.gov/pubrec/fe2006/preface.pdf> (last visited Apr. 20, 2008).

husband—created this seemingly unstoppable political machine that solidified her position as the heir apparent to Bill Clinton's legacy. The other critical element in Senator Clinton's election calculation is the women voters, who comprise fifty-two percent of the electorate; surely they would welcome the opportunity to help her make history. These two constituencies, women and the black community's vote, would provide a solid footing to get Hillary Clinton into the White House. However, the emergence and political ascendancy of Barack Obama as a serious contender has challenged conventional political wisdom. The impact of his candidacy is sending once skeptical blacks, including black women, in record numbers to vote in primary after primary for this historic first.

On the other hand, one wonders how the Clinton political machine miscalculated the electorate's willingness to accept an untested, non-vetted newcomer? Would women make a decisive difference in this race based solely on "x" chromosome commonality? In the New Hampshire primary, women overwhelmingly voted for Senator Clinton; however, such support in subsequent primaries did not help maintain her shrinking lead.³ In fact, white women over fifty remain her strongest supporters through the presidential primary season.⁴ During the same period, Obama's momentum was fueled by his ability to cut into Clinton's base by crossing demographic lines of race, gender, religion and party affiliation. This has proved pivotal in his quest for the White House.

The presumption of blacks' allegiance to Hillary Clinton, who once stated that she had not "considered the possibility that she would not be the nominee," seemed hollow as her campaign plunged into disarray with numerous straight primary losses.⁵ During the same period, Former President Clinton's attacks on Obama's inexperience and "electability" lacked resonance as Obama's momentum continued to accelerate. Some ardent Clinton supporters such as Congressman John Lewis (D-Georgia) were forced to jump the Clinton ship and support the young black contender.⁶ Congressman Lewis' support for Obama,

3. CNN New Hampshire 2008 Primaries Exit Polls, available at <http://www.cnn.com/ELECTIONS/2008/primaries/results/epolls/index.html#NHDEM> (last visited Feb. 29, 2008) (CNN exit polls state that Clinton received 46% of the total female votes, while Obama received only 40%; Tally of women's vote in New Hampshire for Clinton over Obama).

4. PEW RESEARCH CENTER FOR THE PEOPLE AND THE PRESS, Feb. 28, 2008, available at <http://people-press.org/reports/print.php3?PageID=1254> (stating that 56 % of registered women support Hillary Clinton).

However there may be a shift in this demographic. In a recent Quinnipiac University poll Hillary Clinton's base of white women shifted from 63 to 62% while Barack Obama has moved up from 29 to 34 %.

David Lightman, *White Women Begin to Turn Away from Hillary Clinton*, McClatchy Newspapers (Apr. 13, 2008) available at <http://www.mcclatchydc.com/100/story/33411.html> (last visited April 19, 2008).

5. Katie Couric, *Confident Clinton Takes Aim At Attackers*, CBS NEWS, Nov. 26, 2007, available at <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2007/11/26/eveningnews/main3540666.shtml> (Couric asks Clinton "If it's not you, how disappointed will you be?" Clinton responds "It will be me." Clinton also states that she hadn't considered the possibility of not being nominated.).

6. Jeff Zeleny, *Black Leader Changes Endorsement To Obama*, N.Y. TIMES, Feb. 28, 2008, at A22. The article states that Obama on Wednesday accepted the endorsement of Representative John

along with other segments of the black community such as black women, raises an interesting issue of party and gender loyalty.⁷

Though rigid historic definitions of gender and race continue to endure, attempts to redefine traditional gender and race expectations can be difficult. Questions, such as whether Hillary Clinton could be strong enough to be Commander in Chief or whether Barack Obama can lead the nation because of his race, harken back to the racist and sexist roots of American history.⁸ These racist and misogynistic clues of the patriarchal foundation of this country have recently come to the fore as Republican surrogates attack Democratic candidates due to personal differences rather than their actual policy positions.⁹

The sophisticated polling mechanisms and political pundits assert the presumption that gender coupled with past loyalty will trump race. However, I argue that there is a historical current that defines black women demographically, culturally and politically as either black or women, but not both. Thus, this discounts the unique situation of being both black and woman in American society, and presents a direct impact on possible voting trends of black women. The idea that black women vote as a monolithic group connected to all things racial and rarely to issues of gender presents the complexities of race and gender. This concept is legally established by federal court decisions

Lewis, A Georgia Democrat and longtime African American political leader who switched his support for the presidential candidacy from Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton. "I think the candidacy of Senator Obama represents the beginning of a new movement in American political history that began with the hearts and minds of the American people of this nation," he said. "And I want to be on the side of the people." See also Andrew Jacobs, *Black Ohioans Backing Clinton Feel the Pressure to Switch*, Feb. 28, 2008 at A22. (discussing the conflict in the black community regarding loyalty to the Clintons, Senator Clinton's competence and the black communities historic impact on this election to support an elect the first African American president).

7. Linda Hirschman, *For Hillary's Campaign, It's Been a Class Struggle*, WASH. POST., Mar. 2, 2008, at B1 (stating that [i]n the 2008 primaries "Black voters of all socio-economic classes are voting for Obama; men are voting for a male candidate regardless of race or class; women are split" 78% of black women are backing Obama).

8. Mark Leibovich, *Rights vs. Rights: an Improbable Collision Course*, N.Y. TIMES, Jan. 13, 2008, at 1 (Author states " Breakthrough politics can be a zero-sum game, with distinct groups striving for a finite piece of the change pie. It brings to mind that the civil rights movement and the women's movement have a long, complicated history dating back to abolitionism and the origins of modern feminism. While they have been philosophical allies, sharing goals and ideals, they have also been periodic collisions that could bespeak an inevitable friction as Barack v. Hillary moves forward and - potentially—in directions far less seemly than they have to date").

9. See Bill O'Reilly: "I Don't Want to Go on a Lynching Party against Michelle Obama Unless There's Evidence, Hard Facts, That Is How the Woman Really Feels," MEDIA MATTERS FOR AMERICA, Feb. 20, 2008, available at <http://www.Mediamatters.org/items/200802200001> (last visited Apr. 20, 2008) (discussing comment of Bill O'Reilly which continues, "if that's how she feels—that America is a bad country or a flawed nation, whatever, then that's legit. We'll track it down."). See also "Following McCain Rally Appearance, Bill Cunningham Used Obama's Middle Name Seven Times on Hannity and Colmes," MEDIA MATTERS FOR AMERICA, Feb. 27, 2008, available at http://mediamatters.org/items/200802270005?f=s_search (last visited Apr. 20, 2008) (Talk show host Bill Cunningham' comments at a rally for John McCain. ". . . John McCain should be repudiating Democrats and leaving conservatives alone. His people told me to give them faithful red meat. Give them raw, red, meat." Cunningham referred to Obama as "this Manchurian candidate . . . going to peel the bark off Barack Hussien Obama.").

that have decreed that black women can represent blacks, but may not represent women as a group or be considered a “superminority” in a class action.¹⁰

This paper addresses the following issues: the struggle between black and white women to form coalitions; the historic notions of “place” between white and black women; the influence of conservative religion and patriarchy in the under development of women’s voting groups; and finally, the impact of conservative notions of sexism and racism in the 2008 Presidential election.

Throughout the 2008 Democratic Primary season, like many before it, the “women” vote and the “black” vote were assessed as separate entities. Black women fell somewhere outside these definitions, a political nether land of intersectionality where multiple identities are subordinated to established group identity. They are considered within the larger black male group, similarly “covered” by the legal definition as married white women were in the 1800’s by the legal concept of coverture.¹¹ It is conceivable they would gravitate to a woman candidate who would be empathetic to women’s—especially black women’s—disproportionate social, economic and political ennui. It would seem natural to be concerned with creating solid voting bloc coalitions to politically empower women in order to address important issues such as health care, education and economic parity.

Why hasn’t the women’s vote coalesced to create a formidable voting bloc forcing political candidates to take heed? Is there any reason to form coalitions because of past injustices and ensuing difficulties between black and white women? Or maybe it is because black women are racially ensconced in blackness and are awaiting the “knight in shining armor” to place them on the female “pedestal,” a place white women characterize as the “gilded cage.”¹²

10. *DeGraffenreid v. General Motors*, 413 F. Supp 142, 143 (E.D. Mo. 1976) (“Plaintiffs have failed to cite any decisions which have stated that Black women are a special class to be protected from discrimination. . . The plaintiffs are clearly entitled to a remedy if they have been discriminated against. However, they should not be allowed to combine statutory remedies to create a new ‘super-remedy’ which would give them relief beyond what the drafters of the relevant statutes intended. Thus, this lawsuit must be examined to see if it states a cause of action for race discrimination, sex discrimination, or alternatively, but not a combination of both.”). See also *Payne v. Travenel Lab*, 673 F.2d 798 (5th Cir. 1982) (holding that African-American women cannot represent a class including white women). See also, KATHARINE BARTLETT & ROSANNE KENNEDY, *FEMINIST LEGAL THEORY: READINGS IN LAW AND GENDER* 59 (Westview Press 1991) (stating “[t]he court’s refusal in *DeGraffenreid* to acknowledge that Black women encounter combined race and sex discrimination implies the boundaries of sex and race discrimination doctrine are defined respectively by white women’s and Black men’s experiences. Under this view, Black women are protected only to the extent that their experiences coincide with those of either of the two groups”).

11. HENDRICK HARTOG, *MAN AND WIFE IN AMERICA* 115-16 (Harvard Univ. Press 2000) (Examining the status of marriage during the nineteenth century, the author states “Coverture meant that a man could not grant anything to his wife or enter into any contract with her. . .coverture meant that a wife could not bring legal action . . .without her husband’s concurrence.”). See also CAROLE PATEMAN, *THE SEXUAL CONTRACT* 119 (Stanford Univ. Press 1988) (discussing white women’s legal rights. “Until late into the nineteenth century the legal and civil position of a wife resembled that of a slave. Under the common law doctrine of coverture, a wife, like a slave, was civilly dead. . .husband and wife became ‘one person’.”).

12. CATHERINE CLINTON, *THE PLANTATION MISTRESS* 88 (Pantheon Books 1982) (discussing the patriarchal role of white women and the establishment of beauty and control. See also, E.D. HIRSCH, JR. JOSEPH F. KETT & JAMES TREFIL, *THE NEW DICTIONARY OF CULTURAL LITERACY*, 68 (Houghton Mifflin 2002) (stating that “to be like a ‘bird in a gilded cage’ is to live in luxury without freedom”).

This notion of woman as the front of family life, secured within the domain of the privacy of hearth and home, has never been fully embraced in relationships between black women and black men. This is well documented by various collections of data and lengthy statistical analysis confirming the obvious higher rates of: divorce, single motherhood, and living with fewer resources. This long recognized, tested and documented underdevelopment in the black community owes itself to the failure to be fully enfranchised throughout American society. Perhaps it is time to look beyond the conventional means of societal interactions of the past and make different choices to gain economic and political parity for black women and their children. I maintain that the issue of religious, legal and social conservatism has stymied efforts on the part of black women to form essential relationships that would benefit and elevate their plight.

Young black women are on a collision course only to become part of another generation of dejected, low self-esteem, impoverished women. But fate can be averted if black women understand that their futures lie in building strong reformulated family structures; they must be in control of their incomes, build wealth, and forego the traditional idea that a man will cure all their ailments. The resulting benefit will be a more secure generation who exercise fiscal and social control over their destiny. Traditional black conservative rationale needs to be redefined to incorporate *individual* successes rather than failed liberal methods of *group* social attainment. Reliance on these failed methods and rationale will continue to render women dependent and send their children into desperate lives of poverty and helplessness. Black women must take control by assuming the mantle of responsibility *before* entering into bad marriages just for the sake of getting married. They have to deal with reality and recognize that there is no “golden pedestal,” or “knights in shining armor” to which many white women can attest.

Furthermore, the issue of conservatism in the black community— both in the religious and social contexts—continues to place black women in subordinate and often political positions of disempowerment, thereby defining their experience solely in terms of race and rarely gender. But it is the trials and tribulations of gender that plague the lives of black women and their children. The virtue of black womanhood has historically been portrayed in the concept of the Mammy, the docile mulatto or the prostitute; and today as the MTV dancer or the *welfare queen*.¹³ On the other hand, the ideal American woman has always been and more often than not continues to be defined as a white, fragile, docile being deserving of male adoration and protection.

Black women who adopt deference to the patriarchy and embrace religious dogma by way of tradition, culture or habit are ensuring the continuity of women’s self limiting behavior. Alternatively stated, non-critical acceptance of black social conservatism casts and recasts the tired stereotypes of black women

13. See DEBORAH GRAY WHITE, *AR’N’T I WOMAN?: FEMALE SLAVES IN THE PLANTATION SOUTH* 27-29, 46 (W.W. Norton & Co. 1985), (stating historical description of black women as Jezebels and Mammies). See also DONALD BOGLE, *TOMS, COONS, MULATTOES, MAMMIES AND BUCKS: AN INTERPRETIVE HISTORY OF BLACKS IN AMERICAN FILMS* (Continuum Int’l Publ’g Group 1994); PATRICIA A. TURNER, *CERAMIC UNCLES & CELLULOID MAMMIES: BLACK IMAGES & THEIR INFLUENCE ON CULTURE* 44 (Univ. of Va. Press 1994).

in perpetuity. More broadly applied, the historical influence of religion and patriarchy has served to undermine the development of a cohesive woman's movement either black or white and especially both.

Black women are at a point where conservative social norms must be replaced by economic conservative standards that should be reflected in their personal relationships. This will raise self-esteem, build wealth, and enable them to become a significant voting bloc worthy of serious consideration by politicians. But the idea of attaining "pedestal" status must be revisited in order to fully comprehend the necessity of rising from the bottom of the economic barrel. Most women now understand the "gilded cage" or "pedestal" as passé; so too should visions of traditional conservative religious dogma that control the destiny of black women's lives if they are to prosper in this century. The deficits of sexism and racism in American culture are exacerbated as black women age and thereby cause astounding rates of poverty. However, a personal economic conservatism would reverse the trend, raising self-esteem while providing a solid financial base for their families.¹⁴ Women, especially black women, can no longer rely on marriage to provide financial security. Young black women will suffer the fates of their mothers and grandmothers if they continue to rely on marriage to provide financial security. Moving the conservative mantra from the marital to the economic construct is the most logical route by which to break cycles of poverty and disempowerment that has plagued this group for generations.

I. THE BACK STORY

My observation as a law professor at a historically black law school in Florida informs much of the discussion in this article. I came to this place with great expectations of teaching a truly diverse population and transcending the difficulties usually associated with race, gender, and ethnicity found at majority legal educational institutions. However, my hopes are often dashed when I encounter classroom discussions about race and more so about gender issues. My feminist views of how blacks, especially young black women, see themselves in a post racial and feminist world are called into question.

How can blacks who have a long history in progressive politics, equality, and human rights, end up so conservative on issues that women face daily? I

14. See *Alarming Rates of Poverty Persist Among Older Women*, AARP.COM, Feb. 28, 2008, available at http://www.aarp.org/research/presscenter/presscurrentnews/alarming_rates_of_poverty_persist_among_older_wome.html (Article cites "According to the PPI report, the poverty rate in retirement for African-American women is nearly three times the rate for white women. African-American women, even those who are not poor, are only one-third to one-half as likely as white women to have income from assets."). A complete copy of the report can be found at http://www.aarp.org/research/assistance/lowincome/2008_03_poverty.html.

See also Madonna Harrington Meyer and Pamela Herd, *Is Poverty a Disappearing Problem for Older Women?*, THE HUFFINGTON POST, Feb. 20, 2008, available at http://www.huffingtonpost.com/madonna-harrington-meyer-and-pamela-herd/is-poverty-a-disappearing_b_87684.html (last visited Apr. 20 2008) (reporting that "Rates of poverty among women vary dramatically by race and marital status, hitting black and Hispanic older women hardest, as well as those who raised children on their own. The combined effects are serious: while less than five percent of older white married couples are poor, 40 percent of single older black and Hispanic women are poor.").

thought that perhaps this idea was an aberration; however, I found that in my Women and the Law class, students struggle with feminist notions of race, gender, sexuality and ethnicity while they tackle historical and legal reasons for the subjugation of women. But it wasn't until I taught Religion and the Law that I came to a fuller understanding of strident young, black female students and their long held religious beliefs about women and their place in American culture versus their unique opportunity "to be all they can be."

Marriage is the prize for these twenty-somethings, although statistics show dire prospects. In fact, only 28.4% of all black women over the age of fifteen are married and living with their spouse.¹⁵ Given this information, it makes perfectly good sense to prepare for the future with the improbability of a traditional marriage. There is a need to understand that marriage is highly improbable, and in the event of marriage, the failure rate is more than fifty percent.¹⁶ As the move from traditional notions of marriage to a new paradigm is accepted, it is important to create new social constructs. I maintain that a shift is needed away from the old moniker of racism and sexism in the blame game of black relationships in this country. As Glenn Loury has so eloquently stated:

Full equality of social standing in American society, the goal that blacks now seek, can never be attained until the fact of black underdevelopment is squarely faced and reversed. As Washington grasped intuitively, equality of this sort rests more on the performance of blacks in the economic and social spheres than it does on the continued expansion of civil rights.¹⁷

Black women who serve as the principal guardians of black families should use their talents to render a better life for children who suffer from the loss of the traditional family unit. The confusion engendered by notions of the "pedestal" phenomena in light of the reality of the statistics regarding the probability of marriage for this group is well documented. Maintaining this construct merely serves to undermine the role of strong young women to marry

15. http://www.jbhe.com/vital/51_index.html (Site last visited 06/09/08). See also JACK NIEMONEN, RACE, CLASS AND THE STATE IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIOLOGY-THE WILLIAM JULIUS WILSON DEBATES 160-61 (Lynne Rienner 2002). (Author states "...marriage market conditions, especially deficits in the supply of economically attractive men, affect the marital prospects of Black women (an observation that is also true of white women). The apparent retreat from traditional family structures may be located in Black men's deteriorating employment circumstances. However, it is important to note that black-white differences exist between the first marriage patterns of black women compared to white women; proportionately fewer black women than white women marry. . .increased education. . .among black women is positively associated with the probability of ever marrying.").

16. Divorce Rate: Divorce Rate in America, <http://www.Divorcerate.org> (last visited Apr. 19, 2008) (site reports, "Divorce rate-20-24 year olds 36.6% female-38.8% male; 25-29 year olds 16.4% female-22.3% male.").. See also Julianne Malveaux, Ph.D., 2008 *The State of Black America: In the Black Woman's Voice, Executive Summary*, NATIONAL URBAN LEAGUE 5 (2008), available at <http://www.nul.org/thestateofblackamerica.html> (last visited Mar. 7, 2008.).

(Dr. Malveaux explores "...the disproportionate economic, family and societal responsibilities that African American women bear as a result of...the limited employment and educational opportunities afforded to many African American men, who are either spouses or fathers to the children of black women.").

17. CHRISTOPHER ALAN BRACEY, SAVIORS OR SELLOUTS: THE PROMISE AND PERIL OF BLACK CONSERVATISM: FROM BOOKER T. WASHINGTON TO CONDOLEZZA RICE 138 (Beacon Press 2008).

male peers; sometimes they marry men less educationally prepared and financially capable, who nonetheless expect traditional female behavior. This results in the continuity of subjugation on another level, causing higher rates of divorce and disappointment. It also places children in financial and emotional trauma.¹⁸ Do black women fail their children when they attempt to subdue their own development for the sake of the family, only to find themselves later divorced and falling into poverty?¹⁹ Framed most positively, is religious conservatism portraying unrealistic expectations? Or more realistically, is it perpetuating a myth?

I continue to be astonished and concerned about the mindset of these young, educated women who seem mired in the construct of female subjugation reinforced by political and cultural traditions and religious beliefs. The difficulty of discussing gender issues in light of past racial discrimination is based on the religious proposition that women are self-sacrificing beings whose primary function is reproduction and servitude to the family structure.²⁰ It was not until the 1960s second wave of feminism that American society accepted women as functional, valuable persons; however, women's rights remain an unfinished chapter in American history. The question of black women's proper role is often dismissed because female submission to black men is viewed as necessary for the benefit of the race.²¹

Issues such as whether professional women should work after marriage becomes a rallying call not for the notion of raising children, but more for the need to sacrifice for the benefit of men. The Civil Rights Era presented an ideal time for black men and women to work towards the greater goal of equality for all. However, this era was marked with blatant sexism by black men who

18. MARTHA A. FINEMAN, *THE AUTONOMY MYTH* 89 (The New Press 2004) ("One interesting study by two leading researchers suggests that it is the government's failings regarding poverty that are responsible for the problems seen in today's families. The study notes that the United States has a 21.5% child poverty rate, which is almost double the rate found in Western Europe. . . in Europe there is a guaranteed minimum level of child support to single parents when the absent parent cannot or will not pay child support. They further note that "attempts to relieve child poverty in the United States have failed. For example, the \$400 per child tax credit does nothing to aid families who already have no federal income tax liability because of their low annual incomes. The authors suggest that these two solutions-guaranteed child support and child allowances for every family—would produce better results in fighting child poverty in the United States."). See also David Stout, *Bush Vetoes Children's Health Care Bill*, N.Y. TIMES, Oct. 3, 2007, available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/03/washington/03cnd-veto.html> (article discusses President Bush's veto of children's health care bill).

19. FINEMAN, *supra* note 18, at 85.

20. See Barbara L. Bernier, *Assimilation or Liberation: Post- Modern American Women—Speech and Property Law*, 9 Roger Williams U. L. Rev. 521, 533–34 (Spring 2004) (discussing the inability of women to speak in public, especially in church. "The concept of speech was controlled not only in the home but also within the confines of the Church. A woman was deprived of autonomy in early American society because privacy in the marital relationship was reinforced by the Church . . .").

21. BELL HOOKS, *AIN'T I A WOMAN?* 90 (South End Press 1981) (hereinafter HOOKS) (stating Frederick Douglass' position regarding women's suffrage. ". . .the 'negro' was synonymous with the black male. And though he claims in his essay to support woman suffrage, he clearly believed it was more appropriate and fitting that men be given the right to vote. By emphasizing that the right to vote was more important to men than women. Douglass and other black male activists allied themselves with white male patriarchs on the basis of shared sexism.").

expected black women to merely serve in support roles. bell hooks discusses this era in her book “Ain’t I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism,” where she writes:

The 60’s movement toward black liberation marked the first time black people engaged in a struggle to resist racism in which clear boundaries were erected which separated the roles of women and men. Black male activists publicly acknowledged that they expected women involved in the movement to conform to a sexist role pattern. They demanded that black women assume a subservient position. Black women were told that they could take care of household needs and breed warriors for the revolution.²²

In addition to the sexism visited upon black women by black men, their deep entrenchment in religious beliefs—men run church organizations while women remain subservient—commits them to the pattern of behavior for the long term. Some religious based organizations such as the Promise Keepers, the Southern Baptist Convention, and the Church of Latter Day Saints among others take the stance that women should be subservient to their husbands and that men should take back their families. Again, women become the subject of the discussion without input, hampering their full participation in society.²³ In my classes I hear educated female students quote scripture as to the proper role of women and the biblical underpinnings associated with women’s place, reinforcing their own subjugation. These factors are important in understanding the convergence of their role and influence on women’s well being. Thus young generation X and Y women are embroiled in the same battle of the ‘60s as to the proper role of women. Often, societal pressure and the illusion of marriage force these women to marry and forsake their own best interests for the benefit of the race. In the words of Audre Lorde, who long ago aptly stated black women’s need to redefine the female role:

Black women get their sense of fulfillment from having children is only a fact when stated out of the mouths of black men, any black person in this country, even a ‘happily married’ woman who has ‘no pent-up frustrations that need release’(!) is either a fool or insane. This smacks of the oldest canard of all time, that all a woman needs to ‘keep her quiet’ is a good man.’ File that one alongside “Some of my best friends are. . .”²⁴

22. *Id.* at 5. “Invariably, I hear from some dude that Black women must be supportive and patient so that black men can regain their manhood. The notion of womanhood, they argue—and only if pressed to address themselves to the notion do they think of it or argue—is dependent on his defining his manhood.” (quoting Toni Cade, “On the Issue of Roles,” *THE BLACK WOMAN* 123 (Toni Cade ed. Signet Press 1970).

23. Promise Keepers: Frequently Asked Questions, <http://www.promisekeepers.org/about/faqs> (last visited Feb. 20, 2008) (this Christian men’s group believes that there should be a return to traditional family structure where the husband is the head of the household and the wife is subservient and obedient to him.). Author’s note: Promise Keepers has revised their position on the role of women to a gentler, kinder consideration of women, However, for additional information on this issue form a mainstream religious organization see 2000 Baptist Faith and Message Family Article XVIII, <http://www.sbc.net/bfm/bfm2000.asp>, (last visited Apr. 19, 2008) “. . .A wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband.”.

24. AUDRE LORDE, *SISTER OUTSIDER* 61–62 (The Crossing Press 1984). See also, GLORIA T. HULL, PATRICIA BELL SCOTT & BARBARA SMITH EDS. *ALL THE WOMEN ARE WHITE, ALL THE BLACKS ARE MEN*,

Thus the attitude towards black women remains entrenched in societal expectations of black men, and is further supported by the religious organizations black women attend to seek solace and comfort. This message is constantly transferred and reinforced with young black women.

The 2008 Democratic Presidential Primary presented the opportunity to engage in interesting discussions with students centering on whether black religious women should vote for women candidates. Many students respond that the Bible suggests that women are not permitted to lead men.²⁵ This is all very curious to me that young, educated women who aspire to become lawyers, and are the beneficiaries of the women's movement, would espouse conservative social positions that inevitably restrict financial possibilities and place added stress on families.

Upon closer observation, I have found that southern religious traditions reinforce conservative values as well as patriarchal definitions of women's place in the black community.²⁶ Cynthia Lynn Lyerly states that "southern churches have long been resistant to women's leadership, but strongly in favor of their participation in auxiliary roles."²⁷ The existence of religious conservatism in the black community among young, college educated women is inconsistent with the process of liberation and educational attainment, and will correspondingly affect future generations. Can black women continue to rely on religious dogma to control their everyday existence when a growing number of children are born out of wedlock, black households continue to be headed by single women, black

BUT SOME OF US ARE BRAVE 146, 147 (The Feminist Press 1982) (hereinafter HULL) ("The form of assistance that women give in political movements to men is just as crucial as the leadership that men give to those movements. And this is never recognized and never dealt with. *Because women are always relegated to assistance*, and this is where I became interested in the liberation of women. . . suggestions were never viewed objectively. *The fact that a suggestion came from a woman gave it some lesser value.*") (emphasis added).

25. See JOHN NELSON DARBY, THE GOSPEL ACTS, EPISTLES, AND BOOK OF REVELATION: COMMONLY CALLED THE NEW TESTAMENT. A NEW TRANSLATION FROM A REVISED TEXT OF THE GREEK ORIGINAL, LONDON: G. MOORISH, 1867, SECOND EDITION, THIRD EDITION (1884), available at <http://www.darbybible.com> (last visited Apr. 19, 2008), *1 Corinthians* 14:34-35, "Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted for them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience as also saith the law; and if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is shame for women to speak in the church." suggesting women are not biblically allowed to lead men); *1 Timothy* 2:11-14 "Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner.").

26. HULL, *supra* note 24, at 145 (The Feminist Press 1982) ("But the fact that Black theology does not include sexism specifically as one of those injustices is all too evident. It suggests that the theologians do not understand sexism to be one of the oppressive realities of the black community. Silence on this specific issue can only mean conformity to the status quo. . . The Black church, like all other churches, is a male-dominated church. The difficulty that black male ministers have in supporting the equality of women in the church and society stems partly from the lack of clear liberation-criterion rooted in the gospel and in the present struggles of oppressed peoples. . . male ministers, young and old can hear the message of liberation in the gospel when related to racism but remain deaf to a similar message in the context of sexism.").

27. CHARLES R. WILSON & MARK SILK EDs. RELIGION AND PUBLIC LIFE IN THE SOUTH: IN THE EVANGELICAL MODE 101-06 (ALTAMIRA PRESS 2005) (highlighting the role of religion in cultural, political and social life in the South).

children are raised without fathers, and domestic abuse continues to plague black families? The familiarity of church as a deep connection to inspirational goals serves as a place of comfort away from the harsh realities of everyday life. Black women are by far the demographical group most connected to church and they participate in greater numbers than black men or whites.²⁸

II. FREDERICK DOUGLAS & SUSAN B. ANTHONY REVISITED

The issues raised by Susan B. Anthony and Frederick Douglas regarding the battle of whose oppression is worse continue to the present day. In fact, nothing changed along the road from one “Super Tuesday” to the next—Clinton and Obama were pitted against one another in a virtual dead heat, producing yet another day for them to continue the combat for the nomination. New York Times columnist Maureen Dowd observed:

With Obama saying the hour is upon us to elect a black man and Hillary saying the hour is upon us to elect a woman, the Democratic primary has become the ultimate nightmare of liberal identity politics. All the historical victimizations go tripping over each other and colliding, a competition of historical guilt . . . And meanwhile, the conventional white man sits on the Republican side and enjoys the spectacle of the Democrats’ identity pileup and victim lock.²⁹

In the hour of the greatest political advancement by either demographic, the Republicans have the luxury of time to marshal their base, raise funds and begin their campaign in earnest to continue their party’s domination in the White House. This battle is reminiscent of the same issues raised in the nineteenth century quests for power between oppressed white females and black males. Historical vestiges of oppression by marginalized groups grow from patriarchal, legal, social and economic definitions of place in early American society. The establishment of white women as fragile beings and vessels whose primary position was to reproduce heirs for the patriarchal structure effectively eliminated their participation as full citizens. Similarly, the definition of blacks as chattel property also disabled them from the political, social and economic spheres.

The “pedestal” complex that enshrined white women during slavery was created to remove them from political and social advancement. The biracial slave system was concerned with the maintenance of white female virtue while plantation men enjoyed the availability of any woman slave for his sexual pleasure. Though the lady of the manor represented all that was pure and chaste, she resented the patriarchal power that limited her.³⁰ However, race men such as Frederick Douglas supported political rights but not social equality for black women. “Like white male liberals in the 19th century black male leaders were not against granting women access to political rights as long as men

28. *Religion and Life in America*, THE PEW RESEARCH CENTER FOR THE PEOPLE AND THE PRESS, SECTION IV RELIGION AND AMERICAN LIFE, available at <http://people-press.org/reports/display.php3?PageID=115> (last visited Mar. 3, 2008) (article cites religious importance among blacks is 85% and women 71%).

29. Maureen Dowd, *Duel of Historical Guilt*s, N.Y. TIMES, Mar. 5, 2008, at A23.

30. CLINTON, *supra* note 12, at 88–9.

remained the acknowledged superior authorities.³¹ This historical cultural note, coupled with the position of the church, undermines modern day women's independent role of submission and informs their attitudes towards male dominion in political matters.³² When black feminists raise the issue of sexism in the black community, they are viewed as race *sabotagers*.³³ The black woman's role in the family versus the involvement in feminist issues has been a source of contention since Susan B. Anthony fought for women's rights.³⁴ This thread has made its way throughout the movement for gender and racial evolution. During the Civil Rights era, Frances Beal—a civil rights leader—expounded in her famous essay, “Black Women's Manifesto; Double Jeopardy: To Be Black and Female”³⁵:

“The ideal model that is projected for a woman is to be surrounded hypocritical homage and estrangement from all real work, spending idle hours primping and preening, obsessed with conspicuous consumption, and limiting life's functions to simply a sex role . . . She must lead her entire life as a satellite to her mate . . .”

Further, historical considerations pertaining to slavery and the intimate relationships between black and white women have sometimes made it difficult for these two groups to join forces against issues uniquely female.³⁶ During

31. HOOKS *supra* note 21, at 91 (“Southern racists and black activists looked at women in similar terms. Both viewed the female as a second sex with distinctly limited privileges.’ Among the 19th century black masses, folks were wholeheartedly committed to establishing and maintaining a patriarchal social order in their segregated culture. Black women wanted to assume the “feminine” role of homemaker supported, protected and honored by a loving husband. There was one problem—few jobs were available to black men.”).

32. See *supra* note 25.

33. TOMMY LEE LOTT, JOHN P. PITTMAN, A COMPANION TO AFRICAN AMERICAN PHILOSOPHY 200–01 (Blackwell Publ'g 2003) (authors state “Feminist ideology and practice can only be understood as revolutionary within context. . .the marginalization of all Black feminism is often the basis for attributing a radical view to liberal and conservative feminists. . . Many philosophers maintain that, along with gender, the category of race is socially constructed for political purposes.”).

34. Mark Leibovich, *Rights vs. Rights: An Improbable Collision Course*, N.Y. TIMES, Jan. 13, 2008, at 4.1 (article discusses regarding the role of women and the role of blacks in the suffrage movement and the presidential aspirations of Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama).

35. Frances M. Beal, *Black Women's Manifesto; Double Jeopardy: To Be Black and Female*, THIRD WORLD WOMEN'S ALLIANCE, 1969, available at <http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/45a/196.html> (last visited Apr. 20, 2008.).

36. BARBARA SMITH, THE TRUTH THAT NEVER HURTS: WRITINGS ON RACE, GENDER, AND FREEDOM 98 (Rutgers Univ. Press 1998) (The author states a long held belief , “I also feel that the women's movement will deal with racism in a way that it has not been dealt with before in any other movement: fundamentally, organically, and nonrhetorically. White women have a materially different relationship to the system of racism than white men. They get less out of it and often function as pawns, whether they recognize this or not. It is something that living under white-male rule has imposed on us; and overthrowing racism is the inherent work of feminism . . .” See also PAULA GIDDINGS, WHEN AND WHERE I ENTER: THE IMPACT OF BLACK WOMEN ON RACE AND SEX IN AMERICA 123-24 (HarperCollins (1984) (The author states “As Black leaders discovered, it wasn't just racist politicians who put up obstacles to their enfranchisement. White women, including suffragists who should have been their natural allies, often became their most formidable adversaries. For White suffrage leaders either acquiesced to, or took advantage of, the anti-Black sentiment in the period. . .Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton (National American Women's Suffrage Association adopted a strategy of ‘expediency’. The aim of the strategy was to prove that the

Reconstruction, black women were adamant about the necessity of gaining the vote in order to give voice to their concerns.³⁷ Throughout the late 1800s black women were quite vocal about the necessity of the enfranchisement in order to better their lives.³⁸ The struggle for the vote would go on and on until the passage of the suffrage in 1920.

At no time has the woman's vote, specifically the black woman's vote, become a central theme in American politics as much as during the 2008 Democratic Primary process. However important her voting pattern may be to pollsters, her voice is silenced by her fear of retaliation in the black community should she speak of spousal abuse or black male chauvinism.³⁹

Black women are a group with few allies; long denigrated by both black and white men, they couldn't turn to white women during the ante bellum period and were forced to choose between the civil rights or the women's movement of the 1960s. They have never established themselves as a political or social group or forged political coalitions with other marginalized women. Moreover, the inability or reluctance of black women to address the severe patriarchal hold of black men relegates them to an inferior position within the race, and further subjects them to abuse by the systems that affect their daily existence.

enfranchisement of White women would further, rather than impede, the power of a white ruling class that was fearful of Black and immigrant domination.”).

37. *Id.* at 123 (“The situation in the South provided an additional and compelling rationale for Black women to gain the vote . . . W.E.B. DuBois applauded the greater tenacity of Black women as a group: ‘You can bribe some pauperized Negro laborers with a few dollars at election time, ‘ he said, ‘but you cannot bribe a Negro woman.’”).

38. Nannie H. Burroughs, *Black Women and Reform*, THE CRISIS 10 at 187 (August 1915) *cited in* GIDDINGS, WHEN AND WHERE I ENTER 121 (William Morrow and Co. 1984) (“If White women needed the vote to acquire advantages and protection of their rights,’ noted Adella Hunt Logan, the leading suffragist of the Tuskegee Woman’s Club, ‘then Black women needed the vote even more so.’ As was true of White suffragists, Black women saw the franchise as a cure for many of their ills. But for Black women, sexual exploitation headed the list. As Nannie Helen Burroughs noted, when a woman went to the courts ‘in defense of her virtue, she was looked upon with contempt. She need the ballot, to reckon with men who place no value upon her virtue, and to mould healthy sentiment in favor of her own protection.”).

39. Jennifer Riley, “*Black Evangelicals Emerging as New Conservatives: Moral Issues Ahead f Party Lines*,” Dec. 6, 2007, http://www.christianpost.com/article/20071206/30361_Black_Evangelicals_Emerging_as_New_Conservatives.htm (last visited May 12, 2008) (article states: “David Bositis of the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies stated recently, “When African Americans say they are conservative it doesn’t mean they are politically conservative. It means that they are conservative in terms of their personal behavior.”). *See also* HOOKS, *supra* note 21, at 79 (“Just as white men perceived the entry of white women into the labor force as a threat to male positions and masculinity, black men were socialized to regard the presence of black women in the labor force with similar suspicions. . . .These men claimed that the female-headed household was a direct result of the matriarchal tendencies of black women and argued that no ‘real’ man could remain in a household where he was not he sole boss.”). *See also*, A recent study by “Rennison and Welchus (2000) found that African American women were victimized by partner abuse at a rate 35% higher than that of white women and two times the rate of other races.” Spouse and Partner Abuse: Chapter 3: Cultural Factors, http://www.ceus-nursing.com/ceus-courses/material_detail.php?id=38) (last visited Feb. 26, 2008).

III. PATRIARCHY AND RELIGION IN THE ANTE BELLUM SOUTH

The standard bearer of all things beautiful and feminine was constructed by men to define the appropriate vision of womanhood. White women in the ante-bellum South were considered pillars of virtue and the standard bearers of American beauty, enshrined as temptresses capable of seducing men.⁴⁰ Beauty and sensuality are synonymous with womanhood, which translates as purveyors of sinful behavior. The religious symbol of Eve as the cause of humanity's downfall was reinforced during this period, with the patriarchal system overshadowing the lives of slaves, slave women and white women. This model of female virtue was directly opposite to the perception of black women, who were servants or laborers on the plantation by day and sexual slaves of the master by night.⁴¹ The concept of woman was controlled by the legal, religious and cultural mores of the times. Black women were used as chattel whose value was determined by the number of offspring they produced, while the white woman was controlled by her legal marital status that allowed her "cover" from the difficulties of everyday life.⁴² The man of the manor sired his legal children with his wife and increased his property holdings through his slave women.⁴³ Though the plantation mistress was really in a gilded cage rather than a pedestal, she maintained her place above the slave women in a very complicated legal and social arrangement.

Though white women continue to be revered as shining examples of beauty, black women are considered anything but beautiful.⁴⁴ This image was—and is—reinforced in movies and books through mammies, maids, prostitutes and more recently as video vixens on cable television.⁴⁵ Are young, black

40. HOOKS, *supra* note 21, at 29 (the author states: "The essence of white femaleness led to the dual edge sword of American political and religious thought at the time. "White male religious teachers taught that woman was an inherently sinful creature of the flesh whose wickedness could only be purged by the intercession of a more powerful being. Appointing themselves as the personal agents of God, they became the judges and overseers of woman's virtue. They instigated laws to govern the sexual behavior of white women, to ensure that they would not be tempted to stray from the straight and narrow path.").

41. See generally, Barbara Omolade, *Hearts of Darkness*, POWERS OF DESIRE: THE POLITICS: THE POLITICS OF SEXUALITY 350, 353-54 (Ann Barr Snitow et al ed., 1983) (discussing the commodification of slave women in property law); see also CAROLE PATEMAN, *THE SEXUAL CONTRACT* 119 (Stanford Univ. Press 1988) ("Until late into the nineteenth century the legal and civil position of the wife resembled that of a slave. Under the common law doctrine of coverture, a wife, like a slave was civilly dead. A slave had no independent legal existence apart from the master, and husband and wife became 'one person', the person of the husband. Middle-and upper- class women of property were able to avoid the full stringency of the legal fiction of marital unity through the law of equity, using devices such as trusts and pre-nuptial contracts.").

42. *Id.*

43. CLINTON, *supra* note 30, at 90.

44. See generally Kerry Reddick-Morgan, *Emulated through Images: The Globalization of Misconstrued African-American Beauty and Hip-Hop Culture*, GLOBALIZATION, 2004, <http://globalization.icaap.org/content/v4.1/reddick-morgan.html> (discussing concept of beauty in the media); see also Melissa Harris-Lacewell, "Hillary's Scarlett O'Hara Act," <http://www.theroot.com/id/44696> (discussing historical tensions between white and black women and the presidential election).

45. See generally MICKI MCELYA, *CLINGING TO MAMMY-THE FAITHFUL SLAVE IN TWENTIETH - CENTURY AMERICA* (Harvard Univ. Press 2004) (The author discusses why Americas cling to

women schizophrenic as they subscribe to beauty treatments that negate their natural beauty? Given that women remain on the lower rungs of society, why can't they come together to oppose the patriarchal structure that continues to subjugate them? In the aftermath of slavery, is it the desire of black women to be accepted as the feminine "model" patterned on southern female innocence?⁴⁶ Do black women cling to the ghosts of the illusion of feminine virtue ascribed to their white sisters because they have never been perceived by males either black or white to fit the definition of American beauty. Moreover, do they want to embrace conservative values in order to gain patriarchal acceptance while they eschew modern concepts thus overtly participating in the continuation of their own subjugation, that is supported and reinforced by religion and legal mandates.⁴⁷

IV. 2008 PRESIDENTIAL POLITICS

Black people remain a collective group without gender specifics. Black women are portrayed by the media as deviants who contribute to the malaise of the black community because of their nonconforming social behavior. Visions of welfare queens, pregnant teenagers and sons in jail cross the television screens of America on a daily basis, reinforcing stereotypes. Little or no media attention is given to the positives of higher college graduation rates and gains made by many black children because they have strong mothers—it is an afterthought, an exception, an aberration of sorts.⁴⁸ While black women remain at the lower rungs of the economic, political and social ladder of American society, is their vote determinative of underlying issues of class, race and gender? Or should the conservative and religious underpinnings of this demographic group raise deeper considerations?

mammy. "...pinning for mammy became a way for Americans to make sense of the shifting, economic, social and racial realities. . . .The color line and the vision of interracial motherly affection have helped maintain it have persisted in the twenty-first century."); DIANE ROBERTS, *THE MYTH OF AUNT JEMIMA: REPRESENTATIONS OF RACE AND REGION* (Routledge 1994) (discussing the use of mammy as a social and cultural construct in race relations).

46. CLINTON, *supra* note 30, at 87–88 ("Southern men portrayed white women as usually unsullied and frail. . . .The female preoccupation with the 'niceties,' a rigid pattern of manners and politeness.").

47. JOHN STUART MILL, *THE SUBJECTION OF WOMEN* 17 (M.I.T. PRESS 1970) (xvii) (" . . . [w]hile existing institutions evoked cruelty in husbands, they provided no redress for wives. Under the present laws of marriage, Mill declared, wives could potentially be forced to endure not merely the traditional forms of slavery, but the 'worst description' of bondage known to history . . ."). *See also*, Anna Greenberg, *Race Religiosity and the Woman's Vote* 22(3) *WOMEN AND POLITICS* 59, 75 (2001) ("[W]ith the exception of 1992, a majority of white women voted Republican in House races in the 1990s and a majority never supported Bill Clinton. Why? . . .White women voted Republican, in part, because they believed the Republican Party shared their values. In the case of religious white women, the GOP consistently articulates a set of positions on 'family values' or 'social issues' that matches their opposition to abortion, feminism and other indicators of social liberalism.").

48. *Black Student College Graduation Rates Inch Higher But A Large Racial Gap Persists*, *JOURNAL OF BLACKS IN HIGHER EDUCATION* (Winter 2007) <http://www.jbhe.com/preview/winter07/preview.html> (last visited Apr. 19, 2008) ("Turning in a powerful performance over the past 16 years, black women have improved their college completion rate from 34 percent in 1990 to 47 percent in 2006.") Black women are far more likely than black men to complete college which leads to higher incomes more stress to black relationships).

Pollsters continue to assess the *woman* vote based on the concept of how white women vote, and the *black* vote as representative of both black males and females as a group. Moreover, the significance of religion in this election raises the issue of whether the conservative nature of many black women will prevent them from ever voting for a woman.

In an interview before the South Carolina Democratic primary, black women stated they could not vote for a woman because of their beliefs in biblical references that women should not lead and should be subservient.⁴⁹ I argue that conservative religious values among black women pose another problem for Hillary Clinton or any other woman to be elected president. This also raises some interesting questions about the current state of religious black women, especially conservative black women who subscribe to the literal meaning of the bible that relegates women to private matters within the home.⁵⁰

It would seem that since women continue to exist at the bottom of the economic ladder (white women earning 73% and black women earning approximately 64% of what white men earn), it would be natural for all women to join together to address common problems afflicted by men—both white and black.⁵¹ Additionally, the overwhelming plight of poor white and black women who share the problems of high rates of domestic violence, raise their children in fatherless homes, and are often without resources to go after “deadbeat dads” for child support should serve as the basis for powerful coalitions. It seems logical for women-based coalitions to support the first woman to vie for the highest political office in the country. However, the issue of sisterhood versus race relations in this country is far more complex, with deep roots embedded in

49. Katharine Q. Seelye, *Clinton-Obama Quandary for Many Black Women*, N. Y. TIMES, Oct. 14, 2007, at 1 (“We always loved Hillary because we love her husband,” Ms. Vereen said. Then she paused. Much of the chitchat in her shop was whether a woman could or should be president. “A man is supposed to be the head,” she said. “I feel like the Lord put the man first, and I believe in the Bible.”).

50. JULIE PETERS & ANDREA WOLPER, EDS., *WOMEN’S RIGHTS HUMAN RIGHTS 14-15* (Routledge 1995) (“The distinction between private and public is a dichotomy largely used to justify female subordination and to exclude human rights abuses in the home from public scrutiny. . . . Excluding sex discrimination and violence against women from the human rights agenda also results from a failure to see the oppression of women as political. . . . Female subordination runs so deep that it is still viewed as inevitable or natural rather than a politically constructed reality maintained by patriarchal interests, ideology, and insinuation.”).

51. *Examining the ‘Women’s Choices’ Theory*, NATIONAL COMMITTEE ON PAY EQUITY, available at <http://www.pay-equity.org/info-choices.html> (last visited Feb. 3, 2008) (“For every woman, the wage gap is different. The wage gap is affected by many factors, including a woman’s race, age, education, occupation and geographic region. African-American women earn 63 cents on the dollar and Hispanic women 54 cents compared to white males who face no discrimination.”). See also Michael A. Fletcher, *Middle-Class Dream Eludes African American Families*, WASH. POST, Nov. 13, 2007, at A01 (“. . . And income for white women, who were less likely than black women to work outside the home a generation ago, has grown faster than it has for black women. Black women earned a median income of \$21,000 in 2004, almost equal to that of white women. Black men had a median income of \$25,600, less than two-thirds that of white men. Overall, family income of blacks in their 30s was \$35,000, 58 percent of comparable whites, a gap that did not surprise researchers. Startling them, however, was that so many blacks fell out of the middle class to the bottom of the income distribution in one generation.”).

the collective black female psyche that promotes fear, suspicion and skepticism of their white sisters.⁵²

White men were the purveyors of all property—be it his wife, his slaves and particularly his slave women. White women have long understood this “pedestal” status to be more of a gilded cage than a place of reverence and autonomy, and from time to time have rejected its meaning.⁵³ The first and second waves of feminism have rejected the patriarchal definition of woman’s place to be attendant to her husband and absent from the public sphere.⁵⁴ Many twenty-first century educated young white women announced the goals of the feminist movement as giving women the option of choosing a career over the traditional notions of stay-at-home mother and wife. Thus, many women armed with college degrees and work experience have opted out of the domestic sphere.⁵⁵ Though this arrangement has been gaining momentum in America for white women, the statistics are very different for educated young black women.⁵⁶ The difficulty of the black women’s situation is amplified by the growing number of college educated black women who far outnumber the number of eligible black men with comparable education and economic power.⁵⁷ Until black women achieve closure on setting their own standards for beauty and abandon the “pedestal” syndrome, they cannot expect to achieve true personhood and counted citizenship in this country. By maintaining religious conservative views with disregard for the impact, they will continue to disable

52. HOOKS, *supra* note 21, at 2 (“For many other white abolitionists the sole motivating force behind their anti-slavery efforts was the desire to bring an end to sexual contact between white men and black female slaves. They were not concerned about the plight of the enslaved black women, but about saving the souls of white men whom they believed had sinned against God by their acts of moral depravity.”).

53. CLINTON, *supra* note 30, at 16.

54. SHULAMITH FIRESTON, *THE DIALECTIC OF SEX: THE CASE FOR FEMINIST REVOLUTION* 23 (William Morrow and Co. 1970) (“In the radical feminist view, the new feminism is not just the revival of a serious political movement for social equality. It is the second wave of the most important revolution in history. Its aim: overthrow of the oldest, most rigid class-caste system consolidated over thousands of years, lending the archetypal male and female roles an underserved legitimacy and seeming permanence.”).

55. LINDA R. HIRSHMAN, *GET TO WORK: A MANIFESTO FOR WOMEN OF THE WORLD* 7 (Viking Press 2006) (“... the 2003 U.S. Census reports that only 46 percent of the women with graduate degrees and children under one work full time, 17 percent part time. Educated women with children up to eighteen are working 59 percent full time and 18 percent part time, increasing in numbers.”).

56. *Marriage and African Americans*, JOINT CENTER: DATA BANK, available at <http://www.jointcenter.org/DB/factsheet/marital.htm> (last visited Mar. 5, 2008) (“The percentage of African American women who were married declined from 62 % to 36.1% between 1950 and 2000. Among white women, the corresponding decline was from 66% to 57.4%. Trends in divorce have shown less difference between races, rising from 3% to 11.7% among blacks and from 2% to 10.2% among whites. Between 1950 and 2000, the percentage of never-married black women doubled, from 20.7% to 42.4%. Some of these women may never marry. However, American women on the whole are also likely to delay marriage and childbirth to attend college and establish careers. In 2000, 73% of all women in their 20s had never married, compared with only 36% in 1970, while about 53.7% of black men and women between the ages of 25 and 34 had never been married in 2000. The median age which people first married grew considerably for the total population between 1980 and 2000, from age 25 to 26.8 for men and 22 to 25.1 for women.”).

57. See *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, *supra* note 48.

themselves from forming coalitions necessary for growth and deserved status—personally, intellectually, economically, and politically.

V. ECONOMIC CONSERVATISM—A DIFFERENT VOICE FOR BLACK WOMEN

The 2008 election season presents similar issues to those faced by America in the late 1800s to the early 1900s. Issues such as immigration, education, fair wages, education, and America's future on the global stage are debated by the political pundits and ordinary citizens across the country. The reemergence of the "gilded age" that enabled the development of the upper class to amass great fortunes while working people eked out meager existence again brings America to grips with declining standards of living. Economic debate centers on whether the United States is in a technical recession as the income gaps widen, crude oil sets new high price levels, educational prowess diminishes, foreclosures reach an all time high and globally the dollar sets new lows. Now would be the time to reexamine individual responsibility in this social debacle.

Instead, the social debate is driven by political punditry seeking to divide and define voters with focus on difficult "hot button issues." Again, similar to early twentieth century political debate, immigration is the focus of the far wings of our political parties. However, one distinguishing factor is that the rapidly growing Hispanic community—the alleged cause of all of our immigration woes—has amassed significant political power and representation in a relatively short time. Not surprisingly, the Hispanic demographic has virtually displaced black Americans as the non-white minority. The tension between the two groups vying for the same limited social benefits is clear and often openly articulated as a threat.⁵⁸ As Justice Sandra Day O'Connor stated, "another twenty five years of affirmative action will be enough."⁵⁹ Many would say that the time has already come when there will be no more laws to be passed to remedy past discrimination. The page has been turned.

Generation X is finally taking its rightful place in participatory democracy, placing baby boomers in the uncomfortable position of defending failed policies that have been in place for the past two decades, as well as government-backed social programs that did benefit many. However, the economic wealth of the black community has not progressed as it should.⁶⁰ Though the youth vote is having a substantial impact on this election, the status quo has always been—and continues to be—resistant to change. The status quo includes those who would continue the ideology of the past while the rest of the world is

58. Kelley Shannon, *Hispanic Vote Crucial in Texas' Democratic Primary*, DALLAS MORNING NEWS, Feb. 11, 2008, available at <http://www.dallasnews.com/sharedcontent/AP/stories/stories/D8UOD1200.html> (last visited Apr. 19, 2008) (explaining the long standing relationship of the Clintons to the Hispanic community in Texas and the difficulty Obama has had in securing the Hispanic vote).

59. See *Grutter v. Bollinger*, 539 U.S. 308 (2003). See also, *Affirmative Action in Higher Education after Grutter v. Bollinger and Gratz v. Bollinger*, AMERICAN COUNCIL ON EDUCATION, Sep. 2003.

60. Michael Bergman, *Revenues for Black Owned Firms Near \$89 Billion, Number of Businesses Up 45 Percent*, U.S. CENSUS BUREAU NEWS, Apr. 18, 2006, available at http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/business_ownership/006711.html ("Nation's 1.2 million black-owned businesses rose 25 percent between 1997 and 2002 to \$88.8 billion in 2002, while the number of firms grew by 45 percent in the same five-year period. This is according to a new report, *Survey of Business Owners: Black Owned Firms: 2002*").

competitive, and blacks withering under outdated social programs that permanently render them the underclass in this country.

It is time for black women to demand more of themselves by changing their social outlook. Within this context, black women can unburden themselves by rejecting the 'pedestal' concept and proclaiming themselves complete without the imprimatur of men. Correspondingly, the demands placed on black women by their churches will necessitate a sea change in attitude and expectation. No longer will the black male pastors be able to rely on the 'sisters' of the congregation to fill their coffers, provide them with the good life and accept subjugation through custom and gospel. It is time for black women to embrace the tenets of true conservative values espoused by great conservatives such as Booker T. Washington, Richard Allen, Reverend Jupiter Harmon and James Forten.⁶¹ I submit that if black women in particular assume the reins of their own destinies, they will be able to turn around the economic well-being of their families. This can only be done by economic conservatism.

Fundamental to the success of personal economic conservatism is to prioritize the importance of self. By strengthening individual self-esteem, black women will be ready for stable relationships in life, politics and money. However, there must be a realistic perspective relative to how religion has—and continues to—shape the psyche of black women. They must become self-sufficient if they expect to ascend the economic ladder. Also necessary to this ascension is the building and development of lasting political coalitions that are recognized and counted as a voting block.

Though there is hope for a new beginning, seemingly the past will not release its grip on the evolutionary psyche of American politics. Conservatism has been the foundation of the republic, infused with a great deal of reliance on the Bible; it was used to slow emancipation and full participation of blacks, denigrate women's rights, and pose difficulties for immigrants who came here to help build this country. The cautionary symbols that reinforced exclusion of the "other" remain the mantra of today: a woman isn't ready, a black isn't capable, and the country will not elect someone who is different than the status quo. Throwing the presence of a minister candidate into the election underscores the position of conservative constituencies that America can only maintain its dominance in world affairs if it supports business based on dominance through a religious foundation. Thus, politicians and conservatives such as Mr. Huckabee seek to shift the focus from the laudatory aspirations

61. CHRISTOPHER ALAN BRACEY, *SAVIORS OR SELLOUTS: THE PROMISE AND PERIL OF BLACK CONSERVATISM* 9-12 (Beacon Press 2008) (This chapter deals with the development of black conservative thought beginning with Booker T. Washington whose "famous exhortation that economic concerns should take precedence over civil rights and social and political concerns. . . Reverend Jupiter Harmon developed and advanced the precepts of black conservatism a full century before Washington. . . However, the black conservative tradition. . . would embrace ideas of economic determinism as early black conservatives came to realize that racial empowerment necessitated *material* as well as *spiritual* uplift (was the position of Richard Allen). . . James Forten became a preeminent sail maker and, . . . became a leading moneylender in the region.").

enunciated in the Constitution to religious-based, less progressive tenets that are grounded in the Bible.⁶²

Black women are denigrated as sellouts when they raise gender specific issues, even though an economic downturn takes the heaviest toll on black women.⁶³ This conspiracy of silence to maintain peace at the peril of black women continues to plague the black community today. Coalition voting would provide the necessary "citizen based" power to effectively change laws that have placed both white and black women in political jeopardy. Still, black women are burdened with the additional responsibility to always maintain the peace by voting along racial lines rather than for gender.

The history of strife and discontent between black and white women during suffrage and the civil rights movement has been raised again in this 2008 presidential election. For the first time in American history, members of two disadvantaged groups have credible candidates in the race. It is most difficult for black women to commit to one or another candidate, since they have similar positions on the issues of the day. It comes down to making a very tough choice as to whether a black woman votes for her gender or for her race.

The racial composition of southern black states seems to sway the vote towards Senator Obama. The media view appears to focus on the simplistic demographic and dismiss his ability to really connect to all Americans not simply based on race, but based on qualifications.⁶⁴ The role of religion in the South navigates electoral issues and reinforces economics, gender and racial constructs.⁶⁵ This makes it especially difficult for women, especially southern religious women, to transcend appointed gender roles and go against the status quo.⁶⁶ The result of this culture leads young women to turn right toward

62. Joe Conason, *Holy Constitution!*, SALON.COM, Jan. 18, 2008, available at: <http://www.salon.com/opinion/conason/2008/01/18/huckabee/> ("I believe it's a lot easier to change the Constitution than it would be to change the word of the living God and that's what we need to do is to amend the Constitution so it's in God's standards rather than try to change God's standard."). See also, AMERICA AS A RELIGIOUS REFUGE: 17TH CENTURY RELIGION AND THE FOUNDING OF THE AMERICAN REPUBLIC, available at: <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/religion/re101.html> (last visited Feb. 15, 2008).

63. Peter Goodman, *Is a Lean Economy Turning Mean?*, N.Y. TIMES, Mar. 2, 2008, at 8 ("In a recent paper, the Center for Economic and Policy Research asserted that a recession in 2008 would be likely to swell the ranks of the unemployed by 3.2 million to 5.8 million, while raising the unemployment rate among black Americans to 11.3 percent to 15.5 percent, compared with 8.3 percent in 2007. The slide in employment is occurring at a time when jobs are more important than ever for millions of households headed by African-American women, because welfare changes in the 1990s forced many into the job market to compensate for the loss of public assistance. 'The labor market for low-income women is so poor that it's almost a hoax,' says Randy Albelda, an economist at the University for Massachusetts in Boston.'").

64. Jeff Zeleny and Michael Grynbaum, *Obama Wins South Carolina Primary*, N.Y. TIMES, Jan. 26, 2008, available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/26/us/politics/26cnd-carolina.html> (last visited Apr. 19, 2008) (indicating that black women cast one third of total votes for Obama.).

65. See generally CHARLES REAGAN WILSON AND MARK SILK, EDS, RELIGION AND PUBLIC LIFE IN THE SOUTH: IN THE EVANGELICAL MODE (Alta Mira 2005) (discussing the impact of evangelical faith on the region's public and political landscape).

66. *Id.* at 104 ("Feminists promote 'secular humanism'-a philosophy that emphasizes, as Falwell put it, "that within each individual there is a glorious talented personality. . .an inner divinity that he always can alone bring out in himself," and which leads directly to moral relativism. And feminists

conservative thinking rather than marching left, upholding the mores of their grandmothers rather than aspiring to loftier goals of their mother's generation. I listen to stories ranging from a female student involved in an arranged marriage to students who are hysterical because they came to law school to find a husband and have difficulty in attaining that goal by graduation. When I asked a student why she was so concerned that at the age of twenty-four she had not yet found a husband, she responded that she was "not a complete woman if she didn't have a man."

The historical conflict between black and white women on women's issues seems to go on unabated. In fact, the difficulty for many black women in supporting Hillary Clinton is far more divisive, with calls from political writers to equate support as something that the Clintons take as a foregone conclusion from black voters.⁶⁷ Was the women's movement really about middle class white women? Do post- movement minority women, specifically black women, remain in the mindset that gains must be made on a group level rather than through individual effort?

The concepts of social conservatism versus economic conservatism have been argued since the turn of the twentieth century by Booker T. Washington, who espoused economics as the foundation of the newly emerging black community. W.E.B. DuBois mounted a campaign for racial equality through integration. Black political conservatism grew out of the evangelical black church, which is connected to present day prosperity Bible teachings.⁶⁸ Will religion continue to be the basis of growth for the black community? Though the black church has historically been the guardian of the black community, can it continue to dictate behavior which is counter to black women's best interest?

The present political environment is the first presidential campaign in American history where not one, but two candidates of traditionally unrepresented groups have emerged as viable contenders for the highest political office in the land. This dilemma poses particular problems for the electorate obligated to make a choice between candidates who share fairly similar political positions. Since Americans have never had to contend with the issue of race or gender in a candidate, the populace and the media are treading through uncharted territory as to the proper etiquette in discussing difference—not from ideological perspectives but from gender and racial difference. Though civility has existed in the early phase of the campaign, questions of race

refuse to be submissive to men in both church and family, which the Religious Right views as anti-scriptural. Feminists, per Falwell, 'have never accepted their God-given roles.'). See also *Summary of Findings: Pragmatic Americans Liberal and Conservative Social Issues*, PEW RESEARCH CENTER FOR THE PEOPLE AND THE PRESS, Aug. 3, 2006, available at <http://www.people-press.org/reports/display.php3?ReportID=283> (last visited Apr. 20, 2008).

67. Liz Halloran, *Bill Clinton Asks for a Second Chance*, U.S. NEWS AND WORLD REPORT, Feb. 11, 2008, available at <http://www.usnews.com/articles/news/campaign-2008/2008/02/11/bill-clinton-asks-for-a-second-chance.html> (discussing Bill Clinton's comments regarding Obama). See also, Melissa Harris-Lacewell, *Mammy Goes to Washington?*, THE ROOT.COM, Feb. 7, 2008, available at <http://melissaharrislacewell.com/Blog/?p=30> (last visited Apr. 19, 2008) (Author discusses historical relationship between white and black women.).

68. See generally NAPOLEAN HILL ET AL., *THE PROSPERITY BIBLE: LANDMARK WRITINGS ON THE INCREDIBLE PROSPERING POWERS OF THE HUMAN MIND* (Penguin Group 2007).

and gender have begun to rear their heads, eclipsing the real issues regarding the economy, the war, education and health care.

Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama's qualifications and political positions are dwarfed when the media focuses the discussion on race and gender. In a nation where color-blindness for race and breaking through the glass ceilings for women seem like laudatory goals, these hot-button obvious issues take center stage in political discourse. If anyone believes that we have not surmounted race and, to an extent, the gender issue in this country, let this election be a reminder that America still has a long way to go.

Historically, the development of religious freedom parallels various movements from the devolution of slavery, the importance of immigration, and the acceptance of women as fully incorporated members in American life. Religion was important in not only keeping slaves enslaved but also in alleviating the travails of slavery. Similarly, women have always been seen as second class citizens in this society—under the control of their fathers, brothers, or husbands. Whether woman or slave or both, the law and religion worked in virtual collusion to help maintain control over not only her property, but also her body; more specifically, they negated her ability to speak freely. Religion played an especially important role in subjugating women's rights to her father or husband's control. The inability of eighteenth century women to speak in public was not only sanctioned by law, but most importantly reinforced by the church. In the nineteenth century women attempted to gain the right to vote after the passage of the Women's Property Act, but were constrained by the edicts of the church and upheld by the reinforcement of the law.

The significance of religion to minority groups, especially religious blacks, is poignant because of the continued adherence to rules that seemingly benefit families while being detrimental to women. I contend that evangelical blacks have embraced the social political questions of the day, such as abortion and gay rights often at their own peril. The press fails to appreciate the depth of religiosity in the black community that would vote against economic interests to give George Bush enough "value" votes in Ohio to catapult him to victory in 2004.

Perhaps this is *that unique time in American history* to open up the dialogue about race and gender; understanding that though we have made societal progress, the growth and development of the conservative religious movement may halt the progress and retard the development of women and their vote in the future. The 2008 Presidential election raises the complexities of race and gender in such a way that it offers the perfect opportunity to revisit the issues of gender and race—especially for black women. This is the perfect opportunity to understand that personal power is not delegated from above or only available in the afterlife. The future is now and it is time to turn the page.