



**“Challenging People to Shape a Better Future Now”**

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## Black Voters: Ignored, Taken For Granted

What will it finally take for Black people to accept the fact that we have no real political clout? A little influence, yes, but no power. If our voting bloc were as strong as we like to think, the Republicans would not ignore us and the Democrats would not take us for granted. If we had real political power, both Mitt Romney and Barack Obama would have accepted the invitation by the National Newspaper Publishers Association (NNPA), NAACP, American Urban Radio Network, MSNBC-TV, and the Griot, to a debate at Lincoln University on October 9. But both candidates declined.

Yet, Romney did more than a half-hour and Obama did an hour on the Spanish-language TV network, Univision, both answering questions specifically related to Hispanics. Jewish people always get their audience with the candidates, and the gay groups never fail to get their face-time with the president – Romney won't have anything to do with them – but Black folks never get the same positive response when it comes



### ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

James Clingman

to being included in such events. Ever wonder why?

It is so obvious that Black folks are the last to be included, if not omitted altogether, in political discourse when it comes to debates, press conferences, and private meetings, that is, unless you are Jay-Z and his friends who are willing to bring \$40K to the table – \$50K if you want to hang with Romney.

Not that we learn anything new from political debates, as scripted as they have become. But it would be nice to have the candidates dis-

cuss specific Black issues every now and then. It would be great to see several, not just one, Black reporter asking both candidates questions relevant to Black people. You know, the way the Hispanic and Jewish people do.

So what does all of this mean? Is it that Blacks are willing to accept symbolism and platitudes over substance and pragmatism? Does it mean that we are willing to do the opposite of what MLK

had been waiting for 300 years and could ill-afford to continue to keep waiting.

What King called the “fierce urgency of now” was his response to the waiting game being promoted by some of his critics during the early 1960s, but as Howard University’s African American Resource Center Director, E. Ethelbert Miller, shared on NPR: “How long is now”? Miller reminded us that King’s “I Have a Dream” speech was based on an

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“Why We Can’t Wait?” King opposed the gradualist approach to the work in which he was engaged, noting that Black people

economic premise, i.e. debt, a bounced check, and the “economic condition and problems in America.” How true.

## University of Texas’ History of Racism

The affirmative action program at the University of Texas now under review by the United States Supreme Court should not be looked at in isolation. As Justice Sandra Day O’Connor wrote in *Gutter v. Bollinger*, an affirmative action case involving the University of Michigan, “context matters when reviewing race-based governmental action under the Equal Protection Clause.”

An amici curiae (friend-of-the-court) brief filed by the Advancement Project, an equal opportunity advocacy group, in support of the University of Texas provides excellent context of how the issue of race has played out in Texas and the University of Texas for decades.

“UT is the progeny of a state that seceded from the Union in 1861 with the explicit goal of preserving ‘negro slavery’ for ‘all future time,’” the brief observed. “Even after rejoining the Union and despite passage of the Reconstruction Amendments, Texas sought to implement its goal of excluding blacks from public life and political personhood. In the early decades of the twentieth century, the Court repeatedly struck down Texas statutes designed to deny blacks full citizenship.”

The brief noted, “*Nixon v. Herndon*, 273 U.S. 536 (1927), ranks among the many Texas-based cases that illustrate the state’s relegation of blacks to second-class citizenship. The litigation involved Dr. L.A. Nixon, a black physician in El Paso, Texas and a member of the Democratic Party. Dr. Nixon filed suit claiming he was unlawfully excluded from participating in the Democratic Party primary elections. The case made its way to the Supreme Court, where Justice



### THE CURRY REPORT

George E. Curry

Oliver Wendell Holmes, writing for a unanimous Court, held that Dr. Nixon’s rights had been violated under the Fourteenth Amendment.”

Despite the ruling, Texas refused to allow Dr. Nixon to participate in the political process. He appeared before the Supreme Court again five years later and

College.

“As the public face of the struggle against segregation in higher education, Sweatt faced harassment, on and off UT’s campus,” the brief recounted. “During Sweatt’s first semester at the law school, a cross was burned on the law school grounds. Opponents of integration threatened Sweatt’s life, in person and by mail. Vandals defaced his home and threw rocks, shattering windows. Sweatt fell ill and struggled academically, financially, and personally. Life at UT became unbearable. Sweatt eventually dropped out of school—a “physical and emotional wreck.”

Blacks who followed Sweatt at

ma, purely on account of race.”

Not surprisingly, the Brown decision was not well received in Texas.

“One of the most significant racial flare-ups in recent years at UT concerned a campus landmark built in 1954 and named in honor of William Simkins, a professor at UT’s law school from 1899 until his death in 1929,” the brief stated. “Within five weeks of the Supreme Court’s decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, UT named its new dormitory in honor of Simkins ...

“Simkins was not merely a member of the Ku Klux Klan. He, along with his brother Eldred James Simkins (a regent of UT from 1882 to 1896), was ‘a criminal and a terrorist, a gun-toting, mask-wearing, night-riding Klansman who headed a group in Florida that murdered 25 people in three years in just one county.’”

The Advancement Project brief stated, “Black students continued to experience a hostile environment. In 1969, for example, Professor Robert Hopper greeted black sociology major Rosetta Williams on the first day of class in a most unwelcoming way. ‘I want feedback from the students because I don’t want you sitting around like a bunch of niggers nodding your heads not saying nothing.’”

A campus statue of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was defaced in 2003 and again in 2004. The *Daily Texan*, the campus newspaper, came under fire earlier this year when it published a cartoon that mocked the killing of Trayvon Martin, unarmed Florida teenager, and ran a feature referring to him as “a colored boy.”

As Justice O’Connor stated, context matters.

“[University of Texas] is the progeny of a state that seceded from the Union in 1861 with the explicit goal of preserving ‘negro slavery’ for ‘all future time’”

got another ruling that forced Texas to comply.

Higher education was also subject to state-mandated segregation.

“Texas’s flagship university was founded by white Texans for white Texans,” the Advancement Project brief stated. “UT categorically barred black Americans from the University and from its graduate and professional schools.”

In one of the most famous Supreme Court cases, *Sweatt v. Painter*, the court forced the University of Texas Law School to admit Herman Sweatt, a qualified African-American who had graduated from Jack Yates High School in Houston and Wiley

the University of Texas also faced barriers.

“UT excluded blacks from living in the on-campus dormitories designated for whites and specifically forbade all black students from entering the living quarters of white women,” the brief recounted. “UT established separate and inferior residential housing for blacks. UT barred black students from intercollegiate athletics, excluded them from extracurricular activities such as music and theater, and permitted segregated fraternities and sororities. UT even banned black students from using the same bathroom facilities as whites. All told, in Sweatt’s wake, blacks faced an all-encompassing stig-