

# The Conscience of Conservative Blacks

## **Essays from the**

Heritage Resource Bank Meeting  
April 29, 2004  
Chicago, Illinois

## **Speakers/Authors**

Lee H. Walker  
Bruce Montgomery  
Hardy Murphy, Ph.D.  
Reverend Ceasar LeFlore  
Elroy Leach, Sr., Ph.D.

Foreword by Edwin J. Feulner

Epilogue by Lee H. Walker

Edited by Joseph L. Bast

## **Published by**

The New Coalition for  
Economic and Social Change

and

The Heartland Institute

# The Conscience of Conservative Blacks

Copyright © 2005 by  
The New Coalition for Economic and Social Change

Published by  
The New Coalition for Economic and Social Change  
19 South LaSalle Street #903  
Chicago, Illinois 60603  
phone 312/377-4000  
fax 312/377-5000  
[www.newcoalition.org](http://www.newcoalition.org)

All rights reserved, including the right to reproduce  
this book or portions thereof in any form.

Opinions expressed are solely those of the authors.  
Nothing in this report should be construed as necessarily  
reflecting the views of The New Coalition for Economic and  
Social Change, The Heritage Foundation, or The Heartland  
Institute, or as an attempt to influence pending legislation.

Additional copies of this booklet  
are available from The New Coalition and  
The Heartland Institute for the following prices:

1-10 copies	\$5.95 per copy
11-50 copies	\$4.95 per copy
51 - 100 copies	\$3.95 per copy
101 or more	\$2.95 per copy

# Table of Contents

Acknowledgments .....	1
Foreword .....	3
By Dr. Edwin J. Feulner, <i>The Heritage Foundation</i>	
What Is Black Conservatism? .....	7
By Lee H. Walker, <i>The New Coalition</i>	
Turning Ideas into Action .....	15
By Bruce Montgomery	
Buying In with Vigilance .....	25
By Dr. Hardy Murphy	
Black Faith and Black Conservatism .....	33
By Reverend Ceasar LeFlore	
African-Americans: The New Frontier .....	43
By Dr. Elroy Leach, Sr.	
Epilogue .....	49
By Lee H. Walker	



## Acknowledgments

The essays in this volume are based on presentations made on April 30, 2004 by five conservative African-Americans at the annual meeting of The Heritage Foundation Resource Bank. The meeting took place at the Renaissance Hotel in Chicago.

The panel was brought together by Lee H. Walker, president of The New Coalition for Economic and Social Change, a nonprofit organization based in Chicago. Walker is also a senior fellow at The Heartland Institute. He moderated the panel and helped produce this book.

Approximately 100 people from around the country attended the session and listened to the panel. Judging by the enthusiastic applause after each presentation and the prolonged conversations when it ended, it is safe to say the panelists were well received.

We wish to thank Bridgett Wagner, director of coalition relations for The Heritage Foundation, for inviting Lee Walker to assemble the panel and for making all the necessary arrangements. Erica Lieberman, with The Heartland Institute, did an expert job transcribing the taped recording of the panel.

Funding for this book was provided by donors to The New Coalition and The Heartland Institute and grants from the Ceres Foundation and J.M. Foundation.

*Joseph L. Bast*

The Heartland Institute

December 15, 2004



# Foreword

By Dr. Edwin J. Feulner<sup>1</sup>

Each year, The Heritage Foundation Resource Bank provides the opportunity for hundreds of think tank executives, policy experts, elected officials, activists, and others to come together and discuss ways to advance the conservative principles of free markets and limited government. As president of The New Coalition for Economic and Social Change, Lee Walker has worked for 24 years to do just that. At the 2004 Resource Bank, we were fortunate to have Lee chair a panel discussion on the “conscience of black conservatism.”

Nineteen-eighty was an important year for black conservatives. The idea of the New Coalition—now a leader in the conservative black movement—was born at a conference organized that year by Henry Lucas and Thomas Sowell. It was also the year Ronald Reagan—a true conservative the likes of which Americans had not elected president in decades—shocked the political establishment by carrying 45 states. It was the year that a third of the Polish

At the 2004 Resource Bank, we were fortunate to have Lee chair a panel discussion on the “conscience of black conservatism.”

---

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Edwin J. Feulner is president of The Heritage Foundation.

population declared their support for Solidarity, and the Polish Communist Party granted Polish workers the short-lived right to strike. And it was Margaret Thatcher's first full year as prime minister of the United Kingdom.

Of course, nobody would suggest that conservatism was born in 1980. For centuries before, thinkers like Edmund Burke, Adam Smith, Friedrich Hayek, Russell Kirk, and Milton Friedman spread conservative ideas through their writing while activists from the American Founders through to Barry Goldwater and Walter Judd advanced the principles of conservatism in the political arena.

Booker T. Washington was not only an important black figure in this country's history; he was an important conservative figure as well.

As Lee Walker details, the history of conservative blacks also long pre-dates 1980. Take, for example, the important work of Booker T. Washington in advancing education, religion, and an entrepreneurial spirit in this

country. As he said, "with the exception of preaching the Gospel of Christ, there is no work that will contribute more largely to the elevation of the race in the South than a first-class business enterprise."

Booker T. Washington was not only an important black figure in this country's history; he was an important conservative figure as well. And his influence is proof that conservatism among blacks is not a new idea, nor is it destined to be the exception to the rule.

Many of the ideas conservatives fight for are appealing no matter what the color of one's skin. Freedom, opportunity, prosperity, and civil society are important to everybody, and it should come as no surprise that they are important to

conservative blacks. President Bush has challenged the notion that blacks should see no alternative to the Democratic Party. It is just as important that it be made clear that conservative policies can succeed for all people. We must hammer this point home so that one day the many blacks who recognize and enjoy the opportunities created by a free society can be called what they truly are—simply and proudly conservative Americans.

We must hammer this point home so that one day the many blacks who recognize and enjoy the opportunities created by a free society can be called what they truly are—simply and proudly conservative Americans.

Edwin J. Feulner, Ph.D.  
President  
The Heritage Foundation  
August 2004



# What Is Black Conservatism?

By Lee H. Walker<sup>2</sup>

Good morning. I am Lee Walker, president of The New Coalition for Economic and Social Change, a nonprofit education and research organization based in downtown Chicago. It is a privilege to be here today, and I thank The Heritage Foundation for allowing me to pull together this panel for the Annual Resource Bank Meeting.

My task this morning is to be one-fourth panelist and three-fourths moderator. This panel was a creation of The New Coalition for Economic and Social Change, so please allow me a few minutes to explain what The New Coalition is.

The New Coalition was founded in 1980 following a major conference in San Francisco at the Fairmont Hotel.

## **The New Coalition**

The New Coalition was founded in 1980 following a major conference in San Francisco at the Fairmont Hotel. That meeting was the first time since Booker T. Washington died

---

<sup>2</sup> Lee H. Walker is president and director of The New Coalition for Economic and Social Change. His email address is [lwalker@newcoalition.org](mailto:lwalker@newcoalition.org).

in 1915 that a predominantly black group gathered to discuss conservative public policies. Of the speakers before us that day, one is in this room, Ed Meese III. Along with Ed were Milton Friedman, Thomas Sowell, Clarence Thomas, and Walter Williams.

The New Coalition's mission is to cultivate effective multi-ethnic spokespersons, with conservative and libertarian views, and to help them gain access to forums where major public policies are being debated.

I became president of The New Coalition and “keeper of the flame” in 1993, after taking an early retirement from the headquarters office of Sears, Roebuck and Company. I have been working full time on The New Coalition for the past 11 years ... without a salary, I might add. If I do not earn

something in 2004 (if it is only a dollar a week) I am going to sue *myself* for reparations!

The New Coalition's mission is to cultivate effective multi-ethnic spokespersons, with conservative and libertarian views, and to help them gain access to forums where major public policies are being debated. We at The New Coalition are committed to creating a genuine dialogue between blacks and other ethnic groups on the one hand, and the largely white conservative and libertarian movement on the other.

### **What Is Black Conservatism?**

Black conservatism is not a new mindset within black America. The first institution of conservative thinking was the black church. Black conservatism has been written about and discussed by a number of writers and thinkers during the past 24 years, but never really defined. For much of the past

50 years it has often been dismissed as an oxymoron or something less than a respectable point of view.

In 1908, Kelly Miller, the first black scholar to graduate from Johns Hopkins who later became dean of Howard University, wrote an essay titled *Radicals and Conservatives*. Miller described the followers of Booker T. Washington as conservatives. I believe the word

I believe the word “conservative” is best used as an adjective and not a noun.
--

“conservative” is best used as an adjective and not a noun. Thus conservatism is best understood as a state of mind and a type of character, a way of looking at the social order. It’s a set of traditional principles and a philosophy. Conservative Americans want to reserve the best of the past and make improvements; conservatism is not about radical change unless the times demand it.

I had an opportunity to discuss black conservatism with Dr. Russell Kirk at a meeting like this one on April 15, 1983. Why do I remember the date? He autographed and dated my copy of *The Conservative Mind*. We talked about Booker T. Washington, the most powerful black American of his time, and perhaps of all time, and surely the most influential conservative thinker of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

### **Black versus White Conservatism**

A conservative black’s overriding interest is in preserving and extending liberty and freedom as expressed in the Declaration of Independence. Being familiar with the long history in which freedom was denied to our ancestors, parents, and even to us in our own lives, we are especially sensitive to threats

to it today. You might say history has made blacks experts on reclaiming freedoms. We do not need to read white economists or political philosophers to teach us about what it is like to be deprived of basic freedoms.

Our first concern when addressing public policy will always be, “are we maximizing liberty and freedom?” We never want to debase the dignity of any human being.

Conservatism is also about conserving the best of the past. Conservative blacks are committed to this as well.

Conservatism is also about conserving the best of the past. Conservative blacks are committed to this as well. The oldest and still most important conservative institution in black America is the church. That is where much of our

leadership came from and many of the first schools open to blacks, and many fine schools serving black students across the country today. In many black communities, churches serve as engines of economic development, too.

Discussing the similarities and differences between white and black conservatism is similar to discussing how black and white Christians differ. They may belong to the same denomination and even the same church, but when they attend church on Sunday mornings, the service and the experiences may be very different.

### **Why “Black Conservatives” Are Rare**

Over the past two decades, conservative and libertarian ideas have gained an important foothold in the black community. Surveys show a majority of blacks consider themselves conservative, not liberal, on many issues. On some social

issues and school reform, blacks are “to the right” of whites.

Yet self-proclaimed “black conservatives” are rarely seen or heard in public debates. The reason is obvious: Conservatism in the black community is widely associated with white racism. Black and white liberals work to create that perception in countless speeches, columns, and television ads during political campaigns. Some white conservatives do the same. The perception, if left unchallenged, eventually is accepted as reality. Unfortunately, conservatives have done little to challenge that perception.

Then there’s the double standard. A white liberal can say “I am for affirmative action” to a predominantly black audience, and he’s met with a standing ovation. If a black public figure such as Colin Powell is for affirmative action, he is met with skepticism and criticism from the liberal black leadership for not taking a firmer stand.

If a black public figure such as Colin Powell is for affirmative action, he is met with skepticism and criticism from the liberal black leadership for not taking a firmer stand.

The uses of the terms “affirmative action” and “conservative” in public debate actually have a lot in common, and help explain why the words so fiercely divide both black and white communities.

Affirmative action has been perceived by whites as being good for blacks and bad for whites. Conservatism has been perceived by blacks as being good for whites and bad for blacks. The logic is almost entirely the same on both sides—the only people we see on television or in newspapers who benefit from affirmative action are blacks, and the only beneficiaries of conservative policies we see are whites, and often wealthy and privileged whites at that.

Yet, whites have enjoyed and benefitted from affirmative action—and by this I mean favorable treatment not based on merit—more than any other group in America. It's unavoidable because whites have far bigger and better networks and more assets than blacks, so when it comes to recommending someone or taking a chance on hiring or doing business, most of the time whites choose people they know or who come recommended by someone they know. But how often do we see these white beneficiaries of affirmative action in the news?

Social Security privatization would be a boon for blacks, who often die before they become eligible for Social Security benefits. But how often do we see the black beneficiaries of conservative policies in the news?

Similarly, blacks benefit the most from conservative policies. Tax cuts make a bigger difference to low-income families, entrepreneurs, and small investors than to the rich and secure. Deregulation lets small companies and people with new ideas compete with big corporations, which often hide behind the high cost of

complying with complex regulations. Social Security privatization would be a boon for blacks, who often die before they become eligible for Social Security benefits. But how often do we see the black beneficiaries of conservative policies in the news?

### **The Progress Being Made**

Having said that, let me hasten to add that we are making real progress in communicating to whites that not all blacks seek government assistance at the expense of their freedom, and to

blacks that not all conservatives are racists.

A young man from a Chicago suburb called Thomas Sowell last month, and wanted to know how he could learn more about conservatism. Tom told him to read *The Federalist Papers*. A little later on, Tom was talking to a mutual friend on the East Coast, and he said, “This fellow emailed me, wanting to know more about conservatism.” The next day, I received a call from a Heritage Foundation employee saying, “Lee, my husband wants you to talk to this young man.” I did, and that young man is attending this conference today.

I received an email just last week from a young lady who is a banker. She says “I am 32 years old, married, with two children. I spent a long time in the Gulf War.” She then recited all of the conservative principles we share. She said, “But I am not a Republican.” And I said, “Welcome to the fold. We’ll move the movement ahead if this is not about party.”

Younger blacks are much more concerned about their economic future than older blacks, and are more likely to be an independent than wedded to the Democratic Party.
---

Adam Meyerson from The Heritage Foundation wrote some 20 years ago, “A substantial minority of African Americans are going to begin identifying with political conservatism rather than political liberalism.” And when that happened, he said, many would be Democrats.

A recent study from the Joint Center for Political Studies in Washington, DC shows Meyerson was correct. It indicates that younger blacks are much more concerned about their economic future than older blacks, and are more likely to be an independent than wedded to the Democratic Party.

Adam was correct. The earthquake has started. I am hearing and feeling the tremors all the time. But the beneficiary of the change probably will not be the Republican Party, unless it changes its business dramatically.

### **About the Panelists**

It is my privilege to introduce the members of our panel.

The earthquake has started. I am hearing and feeling the tremors all the time.

Bruce Montgomery is a journalist and author, a graduate of Northwestern University's School of Journalism with a graduate degree from Dartmouth, and a certificate in technology from the University of Chicago.

Dr. Hardy Murphy is the superintendent of the Evanston/Skokie school system, a suburb north of Chicago. He is new to the area. He is a Texan, an educational psychologist by training, with a doctorate from the University of Texas.

Reverend Ceasar LeFlore is a Baptist pastor and Midwest Regional Director of LEARN, the Life Education and Resource Network, a community organization that is really presenting conservative principles to students in its church and neighborhood.

Dr. Elroy Leach, Sr. is professor of economics at Chicago State University. He holds a doctorate in economics from the University of Illinois.

# Turning Ideas into Action

By Bruce Montgomery<sup>3</sup>

Too often, good ideas are found or proposed at a conference, but they do not go anywhere. There are good speeches, great sermons, and wonderful food and camaraderie, and people are all hooped up—but only for a day or two. And then usually they go their separate ways, maybe they continue to read and stay connected, but the moment is lost and the idea that once seemed so exciting is lost.

What is lost is more than just a promising idea. People who watch this happen say, “Why did you go out there and talk about those things and share those ideas? Nobody’s really going to do anything. Nothing will change.” The whole point of meetings like this one is thrown into question. The perception is created that causing change is too hard, too much of an uphill battle. Those who seek change find themselves alone.

Too often, good ideas are found or proposed at a conference, but they do not go anywhere.

Thankfully, exceptional men are among us. Even when the founders and the people who attended the original meeting of The New Coalition in San Francisco in 1980

---

<sup>3</sup> Bruce Montgomery is a journalist and author.

decided to go their separate ways and set down the torch, so to speak, Lee Walker decided to pick up that torch and keep those ideas and the dream of creating a real social movement alive. I want to thank Lee for doing so, and I think he deserves a round of applause from everyone here.

## **How Ideas Spread**

Many years ago, I felt I was the only black person in Chicago who felt government programs were not working. “Am I crazy?” I thought. “Is everybody in Chicago walking around with blinders on? Does nobody else see that these programs are not working? It is time for a change. Somebody has to take these ideas on their back if we are ever going to see any difference.”

Many years ago, I felt I was the only black person in Chicago who felt government programs were not working. “Am I crazy?” I thought.

And then I overheard a man talking sense on these issues, and I thought, “Finally, there’s someone else who sees what I see.” One thing led to another, and soon I was involved with Lee Walker in the founding of The New Coalition

here in Chicago.

I remember one time Lee called me and said, “Bruce, I want you to come over to the Knickerbocker Hotel. I have a young man that I want you to meet. I think you’ll enjoy what he has to say.” I didn’t know this man from Jones. We met and talked—there could not have been more than seven of us in a hotel room, exchanging ideas. That young man was Newt Gingrich, before he was anybody. It was an exciting exchange of ideas.

There was another time when Lee said, “Bruce, let’s go to Washington, DC and talk about what is new in domestic policy and economic development.” He knew that as a business person, my main interest was economic development and job creation, and that I felt current policies were failing to accomplish anything positive.

Model Cities, the main economic development program at the time, was a joke. All these government programs were a joke, they were not making a difference at the grassroots level, and I knew that. Anybody with common sense could tell that they were not working. But government officials and various advocates refused to admit they were not working, and they were not searching for new ideas.

Because the ideas Lee introduced me to over the years rang true with me, I was moved to action. I was not the only one. Thousands of people have heard Lee Walker on radio or read his articles in *Crain’s Chicago Business*, *The Defender*, the New Coalition’s newsletter, *News & Views*, or elsewhere and either changed their minds or were moved to action.

Model Cities, the main economic development program at the time, was a joke. All these government programs were a joke, they were not making a difference at the grassroots level, and I knew that.

People want substance. They want a foundation. They want to know that somebody they can trust has taken the time to critically review, and not just passively accept, ideas and opinions that have been passed down through the ages.

## The Power of Ideas

The people who have joined The New Coalition are open and receptive to new ideas. We are not going to blindly accept ideas based on who says them or just because they came from a particular direction. We want to be true, we want to be thoughtful, we want to reach our own conclusions about what needs to be done.

Reagan showed us the awesome power of one man's imagination to shape and form the way millions of people think, genuinely changing the world for the better.

Ideas can be incredibly powerful. We heard earlier today about the real Ronald Reagan, the Reagan we didn't know, who believed strongly in the power of ideas and of sharing those ideas, not necessarily with people on the Hill

or in Congress, but with people throughout society and around the world. Reagan showed us the awesome power of one man's imagination to shape and form the way millions of people think, genuinely changing the world for the better.

There is power in ideas. There is power in imagination. There is power in free thinking. And each one of us is free to choose among competing ideas, and those ideas *must* ring true. Not can, not possibly, but *must*. When you hear the truth, you know what it is, and it nags you from a deep core in your being. That there is something here of substance, something here that is divine, and it's an opportunity for me to accept or reject. It is my choice, but I know that there is some meat on these bones.

The black community is more open to adopting and acting on new ideas than ever before. It is better educated, and there are more black professionals than ever before. It is more geographically dispersed. The passage of time has dimmed or

erased some of the bad memories of the past. Black leadership and sources of information and opinion are becoming more diverse, just as they are in the white community.

All this means *now* is a more promising time for new ideas to gain ground in the black community than ever before. People are listening, learning, and ready to act on ideas that are different from those their parents believed or expressed by aging and increasingly irrelevant civil rights leaders.

### **Ideas in Action**

Last night, an award was given to a great American, Virginia Walden Ford, president of DC Parents for School Choice. As she said during her acceptance speech, the award was actually a recognition of a collaboration or partnership of people who shared a vision and worked hard and long to turn it into action. That effort, amazingly enough, took place right in the heart of the federal government, in Washington, DC.

All this means *now* is a more promising time for new ideas to gain ground in the black community than ever before.

The victory in Washington, DC for school choice is a model for turning ideas into social movements, and then into social change. People in that community decided. It was debated and written about and talked about from a lot of angles, but when the time came for the idea to become action, the real force for change came not from think tanks or politicians but from real parents, people on the street, the people who believed in school choice because of their care and their love for their children, their families, and their

neighborhoods. Because they had the force of ideas on their side, they were able to overcome seemingly insurmountable obstacles.

Here's another example of ideas in action. I just came back from a trip to Nashville, Tennessee. My daughter, who is graduating from St. Ignatius College Prep, here in Chicago, is looking at attending the historic Fisk University in Nashville, and a dual degree program with Vanderbilt. I was in Nashville inspecting the university, reading the newspapers and hearing the news. I heard a story about two talk radio show hosts, one white and one black, who almost single-handedly stopped the state government from raising taxes.

Because they had the force of ideas on their side, they were able to overcome seemingly insurmountable obstacles.

I often hear people say no one really listens to small radio talk shows, that they cannot really change things. But these two journalists heard the talk about the government increasing taxes to spend on schools and other government programs and said, "Not on my watch. It is not going to happen. We do not need it, we haven't done what we can do to reduce wasteful spending, it is not going to happen." They stood up and took their message to the street and explained it every day on a talk radio station in Tennessee. And when the time came for legislators to vote, when everyone thought the deal was done, that tax hike did not pass. These young men, black and white conservative men of principle, on a talk radio station in Tennessee, are given credit for holding the line on those taxes.

What happened in Washington, DC and Tennessee needs to be repeated over and over again if we wish to see our ideas

translated into action. We need to convey our ideas to individuals and organizations that can start brush fires of discussion and debate leading to grassroots social movements calling for reforms, and only then will we see the political changes needed to bring about real changes in people's lives. It is about faith in action. We've seen demonstrated in Washington, DC and many other places that new partnerships and new coalitions can achieve results in the face of seemingly insurmountable opposition.

### **Advice for the Conservative Movement**

A commentator last night said, "The intellectual battle has been won." In some ways it has, but we know there is still a lot of work to do. We still must act. We must put faith and action together, and make the difference in all of our communities.

In the school choice arena, great victories have been achieved in Milwaukee, Cleveland, Colorado, and Florida. These victories were achieved because new partnerships came together, people who might have walked past each other are stopping and taking the time to ask what they can do to help make change. That is how ideas spread and turn into action. That is how intellectual victories become political change.

These victories were achieved because new partnerships came together, people who might have walked past each other are stopping and taking the time to ask what they can do to help make change.

Too often, policy guys simply want to pass their papers back and forth. "I will give you my paper; you give me your paper. You read mine and comment on it, and I will read

yours.” And we believe sometimes, because we are passing these around in the halls of academia, that the people on the street corner wouldn’t understand it, it is over their heads, so we exclude them from the debate.

Obviously, this is mistaken. Do not wear blinders and believe the people who you have been sharing your papers with for the last 20 years are the only people who care about the ideas or matter in the debate. There are many other people who care about these ideas, people who are more likely to become active than your fellow researchers. Unless your ideas are communicated to them they will never become active, never result in a change in public policy.

It is not enough to have an idea; we need to help other people see our idea. To take action, we must take our message to the people.

I suggest that you use The New Coalition and groups similar to it to move your ideas to people who can turn ideas into action. Invite different people into your institutions and into your policy discussions. Ask them what they think about your papers. It may be a mother from DC who gives you the most salient advice on the legitimacy of your ideas, the best way to express them, and the actions that can be taken to make them work. That mother could ignite the brush fire and build the new coalitions, partnerships, and collaborations that success requires.

It is not enough to have an idea; we need to help other people see our idea. To take action, we must take our message to the people. New information technologies give us an opportunity to create what I call a “grassroots grapevine.” Thanks to email, the Internet, small radio stations, and broadband dispersion we can reach new audiences more

effectively and less expensively than ever before.

## **Conclusion**

People—black and white—are ready to hear the truth. They are frustrated by the lack of diversity of ideas in the media choices they have, and they are exercising their freedom of choice and investing their time to go online and search out these ideas and share them with their friends.

Thanks to new technologies, we can have a faster change in the next three years than we have seen in the last 20. Conservative ideas and philosophies can spread like a brush fire, creating real social movements, and change will happen.

Thanks to new technologies, we can have a faster change in the next three years than we have seen in the last 20.

So my advice to you is to be creative, establish and work with new coalitions, and celebrate diversity and the exchange of ideas. Do these things, and they will bear fruits and action in our society.

Thank you.



# Buying In with Vigilance

By Dr. Hardy Murphy<sup>4</sup>

I would like to thank Lee Walker and The New Coalition for having me here today. I have had a chance to talk with Lee on a number of occasions, and I am not sure if I can serve as an advocate at this point, but I can say that as a result of our conversations, I am certainly beginning to question a lot of things about my own experience and about what the future might be like.

I woke up one day not too long ago and I realized something about what it means to be a conservative. I was struggling for my own definition of it, in terms of what the practical impacts of it might be, and

I am certainly beginning to question a lot of things about my own experience and about what the future might be like.

I said to myself, after I paid my house note, that anyone who has a mortgage is a conservative. I dare anyone to debate that point with me. And I will tell you one other thing about my own personal debate: If I pay any more for a gallon of gas, I am going to be a *confirmed* conservative!

---

<sup>4</sup> Dr. Hardy Murphy is superintendent of the Evanston/Skokie school system, a suburb north of Chicago.

## **At the Center of the Debate: Inequality**

“There is all the difference in the world between treating people equally and attempting to make them equal.” No issue is debated more heatedly in the public sphere than the role of our societal institutions in bringing about greater equality. We see it in arguments that range from school vouchers to the teaching of history, and culturally relevant kinds of teaching of history and the science of politics.

No issue is debated more heatedly in the public sphere than the role of our societal institutions in bringing about greater equality.

This debate ranges from the drawing of boundaries from congressional districts to debates surrounding at-large versus single-member seats at the local level, and campaign finance reform to empower the many over the few. It

is also present in the current controversy surrounding racial profiling in law enforcement and the tension that perpetually strains government, business, and industry.

Astride the tension that permeates the debate is the concept of affirmative action and its role in defining conservative issues, liberal approaches to solving society’s problems, etc. Unfortunately, when you look at the life experience of people, it also defines both where we have come from and where we are going. I believe that ultimately, we have a struggle to define these issues in a way so that race does not matter.

The underlying imperative that continues to drive this debate forward is, of course, that when one examines the quality of life experiences in our society by race, ethnicity, and gender to a lesser extent, a statistical delineation of inequity leaps from the numbers. What to do about it and how

it got there are the issues.

Inequality defines contemporary policy at every turn. Of course, the dilemma is not unique to our era. It reaches as far back as the African slave trade and continued into the Reconstruction era following the Civil War. In between all of these events, we witnessed the creation and dismantling of the tangible instruments of discrimination and oppression that were Jim Crow, redlining, and the selective discrimination of unionism. Belief systems about this history are what cause opinions within and between communities, and especially within the African-American community, to differ regarding how to address inequality today.

### **Buy In or Buy Out?**

Now through the issues of the moment, we are dealing with something that, at any point in time in our history, has always been a matter of heated debate. When we start talking about the individual and collective reaction to the social,

political, and economic environment defined and created by the institutions of our society, the ones that service this debate, we are looking at education, law, government, and politics. These debates and events have, in many ways, been consistent and predictable. In this sense, for this topic at hand, differences and solutions to the problem were debated from the slaves' quarters, in churches, and in the schools that followed.

These debates and events have, in many ways, been consistent and predictable. In this sense, for this topic at hand, differences and solutions to the problem were debated from the slaves' quarters, in churches, and in the schools that followed.

And now we bring this debate to contemporary

representative government. Should one as an individual, or as a group, pursue a constructive course of change through a participatory inclination within the rules of our institutions of our society, or should there be a non-participatory assault upon the status quo that rejects the finer points of our system? Should we do it that way, and focus upon its limitations, rather than its opportunities?

I think that is the crux of the debate. Do we buy in? Or do we buy out? I think this defines the extremes of this continuum.

I think that is the crux of the debate. Do we buy in? Or do we buy out? I think this defines the extremes of this continuum. And that debate is something that rages not just within the African-American community, but in the

larger political continuum of conservatism versus liberalism.

Now concomitant with this choice, the role of our political and economic system, as the vehicle for changing the life experiences of its citizen participants, has always been the elephant in the middle of the table. Is its role to create opportunity by a redistribution of advantage? Or is its role to do so by removing the obstacles of the same? How one behaves, how one believes, and how one beholds amidst the infinite complexity of these concerns ultimately defines the idea of conservatism, even among African-Americans, in a way that unfortunately too often is fettered and distorted by the politics of race and class.

### **Progress Is Occurring**

The Gordian knot of this equation is whether we are shaped by this system, or do we shape it. Are we masters of our

destiny, or are we slaves to it? Certainly there is no absolute here, and in the final analysis, a little of both occurs. As a result, when you have people as individuals who participate (or not) in our society in different ways, the collective experience of this individual participation can be described along racial and ethnic lines too often.

Depending upon whether one sees the glass half full or half empty, this experience of life in our society is beginning to blur at the edges, and is becoming less defined. I believe that, because I believe that progress has occurred and is occurring. If one believes that we are not fettered by history, but we acknowledge the facts of all that transpired before, then we are able to have a rational approach to action that may unfold and may allow our esteem to be preserved. We need not operate from a standpoint of expecting and depending upon a handout. Then you have a healthy approach to addressing life's challenges.

We need not operate from a standpoint of expecting and depending upon a handout. Then you have a healthy approach to addressing life's challenges.

If one beholds that opportunity exists, amidst the inevitable discrimination that accompanies the choices and values of every man, then constructive participation within the framework of a democratic system results in enterprise, and ultimately enterprise will be the great equalizer. And I might add that this is also contingent upon an understanding of progress and that it has occurred, how it has occurred, and how we maximize the leverages within our system to make it continue. If one behaves in a matter that is consistent with the rules of the game then the benefits and rewards of constructive enterprise will be extracted from existing

opportunity and create an infinite array of opportunity for those yet to come behind us.

## **The Continuum of Conservatism**

How does all of this define the continuum of conservatism and its tension within the African-American community?

The answer is simply this: Our lives are merely defined by this spark of energy that we carry around within us. It activates us for however long we have here on God's green earth, because this is merely just a travel through space and time, and at some point we will pass our individual intersects. This bundle of energy is finite. It must be marshaled and expended through a series of choices that, by their very design, leave us satisfied or wanting.

Our lives are merely defined by this spark of energy that we carry around within us. It activates us for however long we have here on God's green earth, because this is merely just a travel through space and time, and at some point we will pass our individual intersects.

In pursuing these life expectations, we must decide to buy in or to buy out of our system. We can participate in it, or we can reject it. This choice has consequences for a race of people that has been historically disenfranchised, and enfranchisement ultimately means participation in the core values that define a democratic society: the pursuit of excellence, both individually and collectively; productive pursuit in employment and in daily life; and responsible citizenship as an obligation and as an opportunity.

I believe that conservatism unfettered by the perseveration of fanatics and zealots understands this. It

acknowledges opportunity in the system. It acknowledges the relevance of time; that where we are now is many years from where we were, no matter what the pessimists and the cynics may say. That where we are going is not nearly as far as where we've come from, and that equality truly may be just around the corner.

On a more practical note, as I said earlier, anyone with a mortgage is a conservative, and to this I can add, anyone with a teenager *better be!* Once one acquires this privilege of citizenship, we are more inclined to

This, then, defines the face of black conservatism: the pursuit of these rewards through the use of intellectual capital, with reasoned ambition and emotions, and practical solutions.

pursue change without destabilization, and that is very important. A society in disarray benefits no one and the system has proven that it yields unparalleled and unprecedented rewards.

This, then, defines the face of black conservatism: the pursuit of these rewards through the use of intellectual capital, with reasoned ambition and emotions, and practical solutions. It is the route to significant group-benefitting achievements that change our social environment and enable the holding of jobs, the payment of bills, and the preparing of a way for the generation that follows.

One could say that black conservatives buy in, but with vigilance. They have an understanding that true freedom does not attenuate the expectations of anyone, that self-reliance is a virtue, that our individual and collective destinies are of our own making, and that every breath is precious and not worth wasting.

Thank you for your attention.



# Black Faith and Black Conservatism

By Reverend Ceasar LeFlore<sup>5</sup>

Good morning everyone. My name is Reverend Ceasar LeFlore, and I am the Midwest Regional Director of LEARN, which is the Life Education and Resource Network. It is the nation's largest affiliation of black pro-life and pro-family ministries.

I am also the current chairman of the Illinois Freedom Project, a fledgling public policy impact group designed to promote ideals that would emancipate the minds of black Americans from the plantations of failed political policies inherent in the Democratic Party.

The fact that we are even discussing it here, at this very distinguished venue, is very encouraging to me.

I would like to thank The Heritage Foundation and Mr. Lee Walker for this excellent opportunity to participate in this morning's discussion on "the conscience of black conservatism." The fact that we are even discussing it here, at this very distinguished venue, is very encouraging to me. It is wonderful to observe all of the progress that has been made in this nation since so many blacks have decided to

---

<sup>5</sup> Reverend Ceasar LeFlore is Midwest Regional Director of LEARN, the Life Education and Resource Network.

“come out of the closet,” if you will, and publicly discuss what it means to be black conservatives. I can say that I am personally extremely proud of being a bona fide card-carrying member of that infamous subculture in America, known as the Religious Right.

My only question is, why are there not many more, abundantly more, black religious leaders over here with me?

### **Opposition in the Black Community**

I can say that I am personally extremely proud of being a bona fide card-carrying member of that infamous subculture in America, known as the Religious Right.

If the truth be told, there was a time several years ago when I was not so bold in this admission, especially around people of my own kind. It wasn't that I was ashamed of my ideologies and opinions, because I believe that I have always had the courage of my convictions. It is just

that I had become so fatigued by constantly having to defend myself and my beliefs against people who debated not entirely upon the facts concerning each particular issue, but many times out of emotional volatility, out of rage and out of ignorance, out of tradition, and even racism.

I constantly felt the need to prove that I wasn't, as many would label black conservatives, a sell-out, or an Uncle Tom, or a wannabe, or, as I have been called, and please excuse my language, “a superficial, pseudo-intellectual Negro, too blind to see that the white man was using me, and others like me, to divide black people.”

Now, it is needless to say that I did not quite concur with those particular assessments of my character, however they

did vividly illustrate two significant points, one being that on the south side of the City of Chicago, blacks who would identify themselves as conservative were about as abundant as Jewish rabbis in the Nation of Islam; and secondly, that liberal leaders, both black and white, had been so successfully influencing the beliefs of our community that there was simply no tolerance for any dissenting opinions concerning what was best for us individually and collectively.

The name-calling showed that any black man or woman who did not fall in line behind the ineffective black leadership that we've trusted over the past years, was considered a traitor and should not be trusted. You had to toe the party line, vote as they say vote, boycott what they said to boycott, and support the black candidate whether you agreed with him or not. And if you chose to dissent, then the question concerning your blackness would arise. I pray that you can see why I may have had some reservations about making public pronouncements of my conservatism, but thank God those days are gone.

The name-calling showed that any black man or woman who did not fall in line behind the ineffective black leadership that we've trusted over the past years, was considered a traitor and should not be trusted.

Thanks to people like many of you in this room and prominent black conservatives, like Ambassador Alan Keyes, Earl Jackson, Armstrong Williams, my friend Star Parker, Willie and Gwen Richardson, Johnny Hunter, Pastor Hiram Crawford, and Lee Walker, I no longer feel as if I am alone in the struggle for renewed black commitment towards the Godly values expressed in the true conservative platform.

In fact it may have been a bit audacious on my part to ever consider that there were not many others like me, who did not base their opinions and beliefs upon what was accepted within the popular culture, but rather looked to a higher authority and a greater wisdom to determine by what standards we should live, and to who we are ultimately accountable.

### **Convictions and Principles**

You see, a very funny thing happened to me on my path of spiritual development—I developed convictions and principles. As I looked at the issues confronting our nation, and then looked into the Bible to determine my position on them, I found that the positions I had held based on just the traditional loyalty to my party and to what was prevalent in the popular culture, put me at odds against what my beliefs concerning my faith were. And these things did not pass the “smell test.”

You see, a very funny thing happened to me on my path of spiritual development—I developed convictions and principles.

When I looked at the issue of abortion, and I saw how it was decimating the black community, and I looked into my political party, that I had been so loyal to, and I found no remedies there to address that. And when I looked at the decimation of the black family, and I looked within the policies of the party, and the philosophies that I had been loyal to, I saw no remedies there, so it did not pass the “smell test” with me anymore, so therefore I could not, in good conscience, continue to support and to participate with those

who were not seeking to bring a remedy to things that were decimating our community.

And when I started identifying myself, and started being active concerning my beliefs, I started being looked at with the eye of suspicion. People started saying that I was changing, that I was all of a sudden trying to become somebody that I really wasn't. They said that I was trying to live in an area where I had no right to be.

It would seem to me that anyone even faintly insinuating that black people should not be allowed to think for themselves and speak their minds are guilty of racism, and when those who make these statements are themselves black, they are guilty of a most vile form of racism and self-hatred, much more devastating than anything that the KKK could ever inflict upon black people.

How could anyone say that a love for the family and good family values and expressing reverence for the sanctity of life, self-responsibility free from undue government interference, self-responsibility and a love for God and country are not characteristics prevalent within the black community? Recent studies are revealing that blacks, in whopping percentages, are in favor of welfare reform, school choice, anti-crime initiatives, lower taxes, parental rights, and other issues usually identified with the conservative right. It would seem to me

How could anyone say that a love for the family and good family values and expressing reverence for the sanctity of life, self-responsibility free from undue government interference, self-responsibility and a love for God and country are not characteristics prevalent within the black community?

that a great number of us are conservative, but we have yet to realize that fact.

## **A Transformation of Self**

I believe it was Winston Churchill who said that if you were not a liberal when you were young, you had no heart, and if you were not a conservative by the time you were older, you had no brains. I believe that when we think about these things and then consider what our positions should be on them, it makes a *change in us*. It causes us to look at our positions and take responsibility for them. If these revelations are true, then why is it that when an African-American identifies himself as a conservative, or even worse, a conservative Republican, the first thoughts and images that come to some people's minds are of one selling out or dumping his own people?

I believe that when we think about these things and then consider what our positions should be on them, it makes a *change in us*. It causes us to look at our positions and take responsibility for them.

Why is it that they cannot simply allow that over the course of time, many of us have realized the failures and troubles and inequities inherent within the liberal philosophies of today, and are appalled at the self-serving compromises being made by many of those who are presumed to speak

for black America? Many of those same liberal leaders who are now advocating abortion rights and gay rights at one time were the moral vanguard of our community and spoke openly against the spread of such things.

Black leaders, especially those in the clergy, enjoyed unprecedented trust and support from our communities. We

depended on them to stand in the gap for us both socially and spiritually, and to sound the alarm when actions detrimental to our well-being were being brought against us. Now for some reason—and I am afraid it has something to do with power, position, and cash—they have seemed to change their minds, focus, and direction. And since they have changed their minds about issues so important to us, it stands to reason that we, too, can change our minds about them and call into question their commitment to our community.

### **A Moral Issue**

You see, conservatism versus liberalism is not a racial matter. I believe in the bottom of my heart that it is a moral issue. Right and wrong are not distinguished by race, color, or creed, but find their validation in the hearts of those who accept them and govern their lives accordingly. God requires a standard and He does not compromise. If our beliefs, as conservatives, are more in line with His word and directions for our living, then we must at all cost compel all others, our brothers and sisters, to seek His purposes for our life.

Right and wrong are not distinguished by race, color, or creed, but find their validation in the hearts of those who accept them and govern their lives accordingly.

You see, as a preacher I have to say this, that it was God who brought black people through slavery and the struggle for civil and human rights. It was God who kept our families together during the turbulent periods of our nation's history and during times of great poverty and oppression. Now the faith in God and respect for His established standards and standards of acceptable and unacceptable behavior was good

enough for the pioneers of the Civil Rights Movement, why then is it not sufficient for those who would come behind benefitting from those early struggles?

Trying to erase the moral code from the consciousness of people does not relieve them of the responsibility to live thereby. It only makes them culpable in its neglect, and qualifies them for the penalties thereof.

Trying to erase the moral code from the consciousness of people does not relieve them of the responsibility to live thereby. It only makes them culpable in its neglect, and qualifies them for the penalties thereof. Who can say that they love people while encouraging them to make themselves liable to continued

oppression, degradation, and unnecessary suffering? Who could claim to be concerned about the standards by which we live, and demonstrate that concern with clear conscience by promoting death and slaughtering of innocence which accompanies the acceptance of abortion, which is the sacred cow of liberal politics?

I ask you, which demonstrates a greater love, holding fast to the moral principles that which God granted us our liberties, the principles of ethical behavior, virtue and government, self-discipline, self-motivation, and a respect for life? Or should we continue to pursue a liberal doctrine that requires that we must be militant and never patriotic?

Must we support government-sponsored abortion on demand for all women regardless of age, length of term, or motivation? The continuation of welfare and government dependency, that we should shun personal responsibilities for ourselves, and blame others for all of our problems? Should we continue to vilify men like Clarence Thomas while we

glorify characters like R. Kelly? Why would we ever choose Whoopi Goldberg over Condoleezza Rice?

### **The Call to Action**

I am of the opinion that the Bible is always our target as it concerns the fallibility of humanity. The Bible states that people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. I believe, as my father would often say, that if

The Bible states that people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. I believe, as my father would often say, that if people knew better, they would do better.

people knew better, they would do better. It is important that those of us who have been crawling out of the darkness of failed liberalism and into the light of the conservative philosophy must continue to shine light back into the darkness, thereby showing some others the way out.

We must, at all cost, continue to speak out against abortion and against those who would, through ignorance, facilitate the greatest evil to befall all people, especially black people, since the days of slavery. We must not seek to destroy those acting without a full understanding of the magnitude of their actions. Rather, we should seek to educate them, and, with love, show them the error of their ways.

God has given us an excellent opportunity to show the depths of our convictions and the strength of our resolve. Being conservative and being religious and committed, will give us an exalted platform from which we can proclaim our Gospel and show forth the praises of a God who grants directions, wholeness, and righteousness in our standards of living.

Thank you very much.



# African-Americans: The New Frontier

By Dr. Elroy Leach, Sr.<sup>6</sup>

Thank you so much. This morning I am very glad to be here. My son, Elroy Jr., who is here today, is also a graduate of Chicago State University.

By the way, you notice the accent? It is from the Republic of Guyana, South America, just in case you're wondering where it is from. I remember fully well coming to America on the 24<sup>th</sup> of January, 1969. I touched down at Kennedy Airport, and I was greeted by some Hispanic person, and the person asked me, "Where are you from?" And I said, "Well, Guyana, South America." And the person said, "*Como esta usted?*" I said, "Yes, I come to stay!"

I touched down at Kennedy Airport, and I was greeted by some Hispanic person, and the person asked me, "Where are you from?" And I said, "Well, Guyana, South America." And the person said, "*Como esta usted?*" I said, "Yes, I come to stay!"

This morning, I am here to speak on the topic "African-Americans: The New Frontier." I will show where we are, and what we ought to be doing.

---

<sup>6</sup> Dr. Elroy Leach, Sr. is professor of economics at Chicago State University.

## **Where We Are Now**

At the moment, there are about 34 million African-Americans in this country. About 76 percent of us are living above poverty. Did you know that? There's only about 24 percent regarded as poor, meaning you have an income that is less than \$30,000 per year. However, only about 7 percent of us are making \$75,000 or more per year. The national average is 15.8 percent.

Please do not blame the whites for the fact that relatively few African-Americans are wealthy. Do not lay all of that on them. How come? Because the whites are by no means the highest paid group in this country.

Please do not blame the whites for the fact that relatively few African-Americans are wealthy. Do not lay all of that on them. How come? Because the whites are by no means the highest paid group in this country.

Let me give you some statistics. For the entire country, 15.8 percent are making \$75,000 or higher. The poorest ethnic group is Hispanics, with only 5.6 percent earning this much, followed by African-Americans at 6.8 percent, followed by whites at 16.8 percent, and at the top of the list, Asians, at 23.1 percent. Therefore, all of that cannot be discrimination! Whites are not going to discriminate against themselves!

## **Business Ownership**

My point is to call on the brothers and the sisters to stop blaming the white man, and stand in front of the mirror. The problem is how we do our economics. As a group, our total income in the year 1999 was \$572.1 billion. At that time, we had a little bit more than 800,000 businesses across the

United States, and the total revenues for those businesses were \$71.2 billion.

Yes, that is a lot of money, I agree. But look at the Asians. They had almost a million businesses, they had an income of \$800 billion, and the amount spent in their businesses was just a little bit more than \$306 billion. They are once again at the top of the group.

Go to the Hispanics. They had about 1.2 million businesses, and the total income going to their businesses at that time was \$186 billion, more than twice the income of our businesses.

Now, you may say, "How come?" Well, go back to see where we are. Take a walk through the neighborhood. Who owns the stores? One of the problems in our community is that a long time ago, we threw away the baby with the bath water. With desegregation, we stopped shopping at the neighborhood stores that were formerly owned by African-Americans, and those stores went out of business. Today we spend most of our money elsewhere, and blame everybody else for our problems.

With desegregation, we stopped shopping at the neighborhood stores that were formerly owned by African-Americans, and those stores went out of business. Today we spend most of our money elsewhere, and blame everybody else for our problems.

### **What Should Be Done?**

I am not a racist, but I am a realist. And I am calling on African-Americans to start doing something. I am saying we have to accept responsibility for ourselves. We have to stop using racism as a crutch. We have to stop blaming everybody

for our misery. We have to start pooling our resources, starting businesses, and supporting those businesses.

Have you ever looked at the basketball court, the football field, all the major leagues? Look how many black millionaires are there. Why can't they start pooling some resources? Investing in light manufacturing, making clothes, shoes, and all of those things? Creating jobs? Why can't we start pooling our resources, go into businesses?

The institution that creates wealth is called business. That is where we need to go. We need to have more graduates at a college level. We need more people in the technical areas.

This is what we need to do. Yes, the black ministers have been saying this for a long time. Louis Farrakhan, in some ways, in some cases, he has some of the message, but he's not the messenger. He's not the right messenger, there's too much hatred there. The Democratic

Party is not the messenger either. Their solution is just to "vote for us." I am saying, get into business!

The institution that creates wealth is called business. That is where we need to go. We need to have more graduates at a college level. We need more people in the technical areas. Every year this country is bringing in about a quarter-million people from India to work in computer programming. They are outsourcing jobs to those places. Some of your income tax forms will be taken care of over there. One of the reasons is that we are not turning out enough graduates in the technical fields.

Mr. Bill Gates—a conservative by the way—recently made a \$7 billion donation to the New York College Fund, so that African-Americans can study to become computer

programmers, not just the users. We have to start graduating more people in those technical fields.

## **The Power of Investing**

Also, we have to get into stocks. We have to start owning wealth. The average net income for African-Americans, and again the year is 1999, was a little bit over \$8,400. Compared with whites, which was about \$65,000 at that time. For most of us, too many of us, investment is limited to just, well, some money in the bank. Well, we have to start thinking stocks and mutual funds.

Here is my “three zero rule” for investing: Take the amount you are able to invest in a mutual fund every month, add three zeros behind it, and that is the amount you will have in 20 years. In other words, if all a person is able to invest is \$50 a month, in 20 years he or she will have more than \$50,000 in investments. \$50 a month is only \$600 a year! Keep that up for 40 years, you’re at a million dollars.

Here is my “three zero rule” for investing: Take the amount you are able to invest in a mutual fund every month, add three zeros behind it, and that is the amount you will have in 20 years.

We need to get this kind of information out. The way people acquire wealth is by investing it in business. It is not so much voting for the Democrats, it is about investing.



# Epilogue

By Lee H. Walker<sup>7</sup>

The presentations by Bruce Montgomery, Dr. Hardy Murphy, Rev. Ceasar LeFlore, and Dr. Elroy Leach demonstrate a new level of awareness among black Americans of conservative and libertarian ideas and sophistication about how to address them. Blacks are becoming philosophically more compatible with conservative social and economic policies.

Rev. LeFlore summed it up by quoting Winston Churchill, “who said if you were not a liberal when you were young, you had no heart, and if you were not a conservative by the time you were older, you had no brains.”

Rev. LeFlore also said, “I believe that when we think about these things and then consider what our positions should be on them, it makes a *change in us*.” All the speakers agreed on the need for a national discussion in the black community about conservative values. Such values and personal accountability are the keys to resurrecting a real determination for

All the speakers agreed on the need for a national discussion in the black community about conservative values. Such values and personal accountability are the keys to resurrecting a real determination for educational, economic, and social progress.

---

<sup>7</sup> Lee H. Walker is president and director of The New Coalition for Economic and Social Change. His email address is [lwalker@newcoalition.org](mailto:lwalker@newcoalition.org).

educational, economic, and social progress. These views do not belong to a particular political affiliation, class, or economic level. They simply describe good citizenship.

Bruce Montgomery pointed out that having good ideas or winning debates isn't enough: We need to communicate these ideas to as many people as possible. This can be done by using talk radio, as the talk show hosts in Tennessee did, or by using the new technologies of email and the Internet. Celebrities also play a key role in this: Bill Cosby recently set off a firestorm of controversy by commenting on this very subject. His speaking out could not have happened at a more opportune time.

As Walter Williams has written, black people in the United States as a group have made the greatest progress, over some of the highest hurdles, in a shorter span of time than any other racial group in history.

### **What Do Blacks Have to Conserve?**

As Walter Williams has written, black people in the United States as a group have made the greatest progress, over some of the highest hurdles, in a shorter span of time than any other racial group in history. Black Americans are

among the world's most famous personalities—Oprah Winfrey, Michael Jordan, Bill Cosby, Tiger Woods, the Williams sisters, to name a few. The former chief officer of the world's mightiest military force, Colin Powell, now Secretary of State, is black.

As Dr. Leach reported, more than three-quarters of black families now earn in the middle- or upper-income ranges. And consider this: 49 percent of black families owned their

own homes in 2000 (up from 43 percent in 1990), and the average black household income (in constant dollars) rose 27 percent—from \$23,979 to \$30,439—during that same period. If blacks in the U.S. were a separate nation, it would be the 13th or 14th richest nation in the world.

Dr. Murphy told us blacks accomplished this by “buying in with vigilance.” That means participating in the democratic and capitalist institutions of society, rather than standing outside them and complaining about their workings. It means taking advantage of the opportunities they present, rather than focusing on the increasingly small number of doors that have stayed shut. But it also means, Dr. Murphy further reminds us, that we must remain vigilant about not losing sight of the values and choices that made us who we are today.

Few slaves or slave-owners would have believed such achievements were waiting in the future. Yet we are not reminded of this impressive rising up of a race in school textbooks, in histories either academic or popular, or by popular commentators on race relations today, whether they are conservative or liberal. It’s as if part of American history were omitted, the part about how black Americans embraced the ideas of freedom and self-responsibility, and how when they were finally released from the chains of slavery and Jim Crow laws, most blacks eagerly and successfully took part in the American Dream.

It’s as if part of American history were omitted, the part about how black Americans embraced the ideas of freedom and self-responsibility, and how when they were finally released from the chains of slavery and Jim Crow laws, most blacks eagerly and successfully took part in the American Dream.

This is the history and legacy that conservative blacks

seek to conserve. Not memories of victimhood, losses, and injustice, but of rising above obstacles and accomplishing more than anyone thought possible. As Booker T. Washington wrote, “I have learned that success is to be measured, not so much by the position one has reached in life, as by the obstacles which he has overcome while trying to succeed.”

As Booker T. Washington wrote, “I have learned that success is to be measured, not so much by the position one has reached in life, as by the obstacles which he has overcome while trying to succeed.”

### **Black Conservative History**

The idea for this panel resulted from my efforts to expand my knowledge of the history of black conservatism, because if you don’t know your history, charting your future can be difficult. It was a little surprising, then, that the speakers focused on

today and tomorrow, and spent very little time on the past. Perhaps an epilogue is a good place to mention what the speakers did not say.

My colleague Jay Parker in Washington, DC says, “the very idea of black conservatism seems unreal to some observers, both black and white. This reveals an almost total lack of awareness and understanding of black history and the black intellectual tradition in the United States.”

According to Peter Eisenstadt, editor of the 1999 book, *Black Conservatism: Essays in Intellectual and Political History*, “The recent emergence of conservative blacks provides an opportunity to take a long overdue look at the history of conservative thought among black Americans. Its history is long and its impact has been persuasive. Any

comprehensive history of black American thought that ignores the conservative impulse will be one-sided.”

Conservatism was, in fact, the dominant political philosophy in black America at the turn of the twentieth century. One of its leading lights was Alexander Crummell, born in New York City in 1819, a Harvard graduate, ordained an Episcopal priest and founder of a church in Washington, DC. He founded the American Negro Academy in 1897, a forum for black intellectuals.

Crummell was the first black American to construct an openly conservative political program. In describing the essence of black conservatism, he asserted that some black Americans “should be ranked among conservative men in this country, and stand among the firmest upholders of law and authority. One should be counted as the constant foe of revolution, communism, and revolt.” Crummell’s hero was Alexander Hamilton, and he criticized Thomas Jefferson and the Declaration of Independence for asserting that government derives its consent from the governed rather than from God.

Conservatism was, in fact, the dominant political philosophy in black America at the turn of the twentieth century.

Though Crummell was deeply conservative, he disagreed with conservative Booker T. Washington (1856-1915) for not making political and legal equality a priority equal to education and economic progress. It was a major disagreement between Northern and Southern conservative blacks, but for many years Washington was on the most popular side. As Kelly Miller wrote in 1908, “Washington had, by far, the largest group of followers, which included the

business class, educators and the masses.”

Washington sought to instill conservative values in the black community because he knew they would be the building blocks of later success. In one of his speeches he said, “The Negro should acquire property, own his own wagon, milk his own cow, raise his own crop, and keep out of debt, and when he acquired a home he became fit for a conservative citizen.” Washington was describing a middle-class family lifestyle of self-reliance ... the American dream.

Washington sought to instill conservative values in the black community because he knew they would be the building blocks of later success.

### **“Uncle Tom” or the “Wizard of Tuskegee”?**

Washington had to live with criticism during his life—criticism that has echoed through time and is still heard today—that he was too modest

in his demands on white society. It is the same criticism leveled against conservative blacks today. But after Washington’s death in 1915 and when his personal papers were given to the Library of Congress, it was discovered that Washington was achieving tasks practically impossible for blacks to do at that time, such as hiring whites to spy on whites and hiring lawyers to fight the Jim Crow laws through the courts.

Washington could have proved to his critics at any time that he was not an “Uncle Tom,” but he understood the strength of opposition to his cause and the value of doing things quietly and without provoking opponents. He had a practical plan for his people and built institutions—including

a school, Tuskegee, that still stands today. His opponents were popular speakers and quick to mouth the popular leftist ideologies of the day, but they had no practical plan.

How much further along would the race be today had the “Wizard of Tuskegee” lived another twenty years?

## Conclusion

I am acutely aware that the meaning of the terms “conservative black” and “black conservatism” have been seriously damaged since the days of Crummell and Washington. Today in the black community these terms almost uniformly bring to mind negative images. One of the most troubling and divisive perceptions held by too many blacks is that “conservative” means right-wing, anti-black, racist, and Republican. History, and the thoughtful speakers on the Heritage panel, demonstrate how false this perception is.

One of the most troubling and divisive perceptions held by too many blacks is that “conservative” means right-wing, anti-black, racist, and Republican. History, and the thoughtful speakers on the Heritage panel, demonstrate how false this perception is.

Conservatism doesn’t belong to a political party. It is a state of mind and a type of character, a way of looking at the social order. The conservative tradition has deep roots in the black community because blacks as a people have much to conserve, beginning with traditional family values and culture. Conservative ideas have been a part of black religious, business, and social thought since the eighteenth century. George S. Schuyler, a journalist, in his 1966 autobiography titled *Black and Conservative*, described the

American black as the “outstanding example of American conservatism: adjustable, resourceful, adaptable, patient, and restrained.”

Whether or not you agree with these essays regarding obstacles faced by black Americans, we all can agree that something must be done. We know that if the “dream” is to be realized, new voices must be raised, alternative solutions sought, and fresh ideas tried. Blacks cannot afford to be silent in the national debate about how the country will be governed.

Assembling this panel was a small step in that direction. I thank the supporters of The New Coalition along with our friends at The Heritage Foundation and The Heartland Institute for their assistance in making the panel, and this book, possible.

We know that if the “dream” is to be realized, new voices must be raised, alternative solutions sought, and fresh ideas tried. Blacks cannot afford to be silent in the national debate about how the country will be governed.

I would be remiss if I didn’t mention that after we organized The New Coalition in 1980, Willa Johnson, then with The Heritage Foundation, worked closely with us. When we had our first conference, we used envelopes from The Heritage Foundation to send invitations and news releases, so they would open the envelope!

Thank you Willa, for helping us then, and for attending the panel discussion where these essays were presented.





## About The New Coalition

The New Coalition for Economic and Social Change is a nonprofit educational organization devoted to introducing people of color to conservative, moderate, and libertarian ideas on public policy by finding effective spokespersons for those ideas and developing and providing forums for discussion of the major public policy issues of the day.

The New Coalition produces research and commentary on the major issues of the day, ranging from health care and environment to economic development and civil rights. It hosts frequent events featuring prominent conservative blacks and others, and provides support and mentoring to the next generation of conservative blacks.

The New Coalition needs your help! We need you to attend our events and introduce us to your friends, coworkers, and family. We need you to write for *News & Views*, our quarterly newsletter, and recommend us to others who can write and speak on our behalf. And, of course, we need your financial support: Memberships start at just \$19. Contributions made payable to The Heartland Institute (write "New Coalition" on the memo line) are tax deductible under Section 501(c)3 of the Internal Revenue Code.

For more information, please contact Lee Walker, president of The New Coalition, by calling 312/377-4000, or write to The New Coalition, 19 South LaSalle Street #903, Chicago, IL 60603, or send email to [lwalker@newcoalition.org](mailto:lwalker@newcoalition.org).



## About The Heartland Institute

The Heartland Institute is a tax-exempt, nonprofit research organization devoted to meeting the information needs of elected officials, journalists, and the interested public on a wide variety of public policy topics.

More than one hundred academics and professional economists and nearly 500 state elected officials participate in Heartland's research program by conducting peer review of works such as this, suggesting topics, and contributing research and commentary. Some 1,400 donors support Heartland's work with charitable contributions.

Since its founding in 1984, The Heartland Institute has published hundreds of commentaries, more than 100 policy studies, and a dozen books. It publishes four national monthly public policy newspapers: *School Reform News*, *Environment & Climate News*, *Health Care News*, and *Budget & Tax News*. It also offers a clearinghouse for the work of other think tanks on its Web site at [www.heartland.org](http://www.heartland.org).

Heartland's work is overseen by a 16-member Board of Directors. Contributions to The Heartland Institute are tax deductible under Section 501(c)3 of the Internal Revenue Code.

For more information, call 312/377-4000, or write to The Heartland Institute, 19 South LaSalle Street #903, Chicago, IL 60603, or send email to [think@heartland.org](mailto:think@heartland.org).

# Become a New Coalition Member

**\$19 Member**

*News & Views* newsletter, invitations to events, and other publications and updates.

**\$39 Member**

All of the above benefits plus *The Heartlander* and *School Reform News* from The Heartland Institute.

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Payment for membership

+

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Tax-deductible contribution

=

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Total enclosed

Check    Money Order    MC    Visa    Am Express

Card Number \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Street \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Please make your check or money order payable to The Heartland Institute and write "New Coalition" on the memo line.

Fax this completed form to 312/377-5000 or mail to The New Coalition, 19 South LaSalle Street #903, Chicago, Illinois 60603. *Questions?* Call 312/377-4000.