Vantage Point Vignettes

Comments and Commentary by Dr. Ron Daniels

*Georgia On My Mind*

The Unfulfilled Promise of the Black Vote Revisited

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Georgia is very much on my mind these days because the epic battle being waged in that state for control of the U.S. Senate will likely determine whether the quest for a more perfect union will move forward or be obstructed by radical rightwing forces who fear the loss of “White identity” power and privilege. My fear is that rather than message to motivate a massive Black voter turn-out, resources will be disproportionately invested in pursuing White voters who frankly are not inclined to vote for a Black or progressive candidate, in this case the Rev. Raphael Warnock and Jon Ossoff.

This is not to say that there are no White voters who will support Warnock and Ossof -- a minority of moderate, liberal, progressive Whites will indeed back them. However, in a state like Georgia there are not enough of this constituency to win the day. The key to victory is building a Black led rainbow coalition to motivate and mobilize Latinos, Asian Americans and Native Americans, the majority, along with a persuadable minority of White voters. And the factor that looms large in this formula is the Daniels’ Axiom which I explain in an article entitled *The Unfilled Promise of the Black Vote*. Here is an excerpt from that article in my book Still on This Journey: The Vision and Mission of Dr. Ron Daniels:

“For decades I have been hammering home the point that in a low voter participation environment, the group that effectively educates, mobilizes and organizes its voters to turn-out on election day will wield power disproportionate to its numbers in the overall electorate. Put another way, a relatively small group that registers and turns out a high percentage of its potential voters will exercise greater influence than a much larger group that fails to register and turn-out a high percentage of its potential voters. This is a Daniels’ political axiom. And, as Frank Watkins, Advisor to Rev. Jesse Jackson puts it, ‘an organized minority is a political majority.’ ” [Read full article here: <https://ibw21.org/commentary/vantage-point-articles/the-unfulfilled-power-of-the-black-vote/>]

To further illustrate this Axiom I have repeatedly asserted that “the biggest political party in America is not the Democrats or the Republicans, it’s non-voters! This is slightly hyperbolic, but in the U.S., even in presidential elections when voter turn-out is highest, pundits and commentators declare that it is a major success if slightly more than 50% of the eligible voting population bothers to vote. By comparison, in other western democracies like Canada, England, Germany, France, 75% or more of the eligible electorate routinely votes in elections for Prime Minister or other major offices. The U.S. has a low voter participation environment where large numbers of White folks, and yes, Black folks do not vote. Therefore, those who do vote will win! The Senate race in Georgia is a case in point.

Atlanta’s Mayor Kiesha Lance Bottoms has recently sounded the alarm that **1 million of the 2.5 million eligible Black voters in Georgia did not cast a ballot in the November 3rd presidential election where Joe Biden defeated the Orange man by 12,000 votes**. Let me re-run that for emphasis: **1million eligible Black voters stayed at home while Biden narrowly defeated Trump by 12,000 votes.** In case it’s not resonating**, the point is that if 50,000 more Black voters had been motivated to cast ballots for Biden, he would have defeated Agent Orange by a margin of 62,000 votes!** No doubt millions of White voters stayed at home also. Hence, the Daniel’s Axiom applies. There are easily enough eligible Black voters in Georgia to send Warnock and Ossoff to the Senate!

But, to achieve the victory, Warnock and Ossoff should focus on messaging and mobilizing calculated to wake-up a sizable number of Black voters, what Rev. Jesse L. Jackson has termed, “the rocks just laying around” [ Listen to his David vs Goliath speech on the IBW website at <https://ibw21.org/editors-choice/rev-jesse-jackson-on-the-value-of-the-black-vote/> ], hundreds of thousands of those one million eligible Black voters who slept and missed the November 3rd election. My concern is that rather than boldly embracing this formula, anxiety driven political consultants will caution against this approach out of concern for alienating White voters. This fear of alienating White voters could be fatal. As previously stated, a minority of moderate, liberal, progressive Whites in Georgia will support Warnock and Ossof simply because the alternative of Perdue Loeffler is so nauseating. But, trying to appeal to voters mesmerized by the Orange man is a waste of time and resources.

**Remember, Biden’s margin of victory over Trump was 12,000 votes in an election where 1 million eligible Black voters were not motivated to cast their ballots.** What a righteous irony it is that the key to victory in the Special Election for Senate and the fate of the nation is in the hands of these millions of Black voters whose forebears once picked cotton on plantations and suffered the violence and indignities of apartheid. The hour is late but it’s not too late. The challenge is to motivate the “rocks just laying around” to rise up and march on ballot boxes on January 5, 2021 so that the movement toward a more perfection union can inch forward! Scores of leaders and legions of get out the vote volunteers, led by Black women are on the ground in Georgia working to achieve this righteous outcome! The fate and future of the nation is in Black hands!

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