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FEDERATION FEATURE**The Democrats' Missing History**By **JEFFREY LORD***August 13, 2008*

As Democrats prepare to nominate Sen. Barack Obama to be the first black president, the Democratic National Committee and its chairman, Howard Dean, have whitewashed the party's horrific and lengthy record of racism. The omission is in the section of the DNC Web site that describes the party's history. The missing history raises the obvious question of whether the Democrats, unable or simply unwilling to put their party on record as taking direct responsibility for one of the worst racial crimes of the ages, will be able to run a campaign free of the racial animosities it has regularly brought both to American presidential campaigns and American political and social life in general.



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What else to make of the official party history as presented by the DNC on its Web site? It is a history so sanitized of historical reality it makes Stalin look like

David McCullough.

The DNC Web site section labeled "Party History," linked [here](#)², is in fact scrubbed clean of the not-so-little dirty secret that fueled Democrats' political successes for over a century and a half and made American life a hell on earth for black Americans. Literally, the DNC official history, which begins with the creation of the party in 1800, gets to the creation of the DNC itself in 1848 and then--poof!--the next sentence says: "As the 19th Century came to a close, the American electorate changed more and more rapidly." It quickly heads into a riff on poor immigrants coming to America.


In a stroke, 52 years of Democratic history vanishes. Disappeared faster than the truth in the Clinton administration. Why would this be? Allow me to sketch in a few facts from those missing 52 years. For that matter, lets add in the facts from the party history before and after those 52 years, since they aren't mentioned by the Democrats' National Committee either.

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So what's missing?

- There is no reference to the number of Democratic Party platforms supporting slavery. There were six from 1840 through 1860.
- There is no reference to the number of Democratic presidents who owned slaves. There were seven

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from 1800 through 1861

- There is no reference to the number of Democratic Party platforms that either supported segregation outright or were silent on the subject. There were 20, from 1868 through 1948.
- There is no reference to "Jim Crow" as in "Jim Crow laws," nor is there reference to the role Democrats played in creating them. These were the post-Civil War laws passed enthusiastically by Democrats in that pesky 52-year part of the DNC's missing years. These laws segregated public schools, public transportation, restaurants, rest rooms and public places in general (everything from water coolers to beaches). The reason Rosa Parks became famous is that she sat in the "whites only" front section of a bus, the "whites only" designation the direct result of Democrats.
- There is no reference to the formation of the Ku Klux Klan, which, according to Columbia University historian Eric Foner, became "a military force serving the interests of the Democratic Party." Nor is there reference to University of North Carolina historian Allen Trelease's description of the Klan as the "terrorist arm of the Democratic Party."
- There is no reference to the fact Democrats opposed the 13th, 14th and 15th amendments to the Constitution. The 13th banned slavery. The 14th effectively overturned the infamous 1857 *Dred Scott* decision (made by Democratic pro-slavery Supreme Court justices) by guaranteeing due process and equal protection to former slaves. The 15th gave black Americans the right to vote.
- There is no reference to the fact that Democrats opposed the Civil Rights Act of 1866. It was passed by the Republican Congress over the veto of President Andrew Johnson, who had been a Democrat before joining Lincoln's ticket in 1864. The law was designed to provide blacks with the right to own private property, sign contracts, sue and serve as witnesses in a legal proceeding.
- There is no reference to the Democrats' opposition to the Civil Rights Act of 1875. It was passed by a Republican Congress and signed into law by President Ulysses Grant. The law prohibited racial discrimination in public places and public accommodations.
- There is no reference to the Democrats' 1904 platform, which devotes a section to "Sectional and Racial Agitation," claiming the GOP's protests against segregation and the denial of voting rights to blacks sought to "revive the dead and hateful race and sectional animosities in any part of our common country," which in turn "means confusion, distraction of business, and the reopening of wounds now happily healed."
- There is no reference to four Democratic platforms, 1908-20, that are silent on blacks, segregation, lynching and voting rights as racial problems in the country mount. By contrast the GOP platforms of those years specifically address "Rights of the Negro" (1908), oppose lynching (in 1912, 1920, 1924, 1928) and, as the New Deal kicks in, speak out about the dangers of making blacks "wards of the state."
- There is no reference to the Democratic Convention of 1924, known to history as the "Klanbake." The 103-ballot convention was held in Madison Square Garden. Hundreds of delegates were members of the Ku Klux Klan, the Klan so powerful that a plank condemning Klan violence was defeated outright. To celebrate, the Klan staged a rally with 10,000 hooded Klansmen in a field in New Jersey directly across the Hudson from the site of the convention. Attended by hundreds of cheering convention delegates, the rally featured burning crosses and calls for violence against African-Americans and Catholics.
- There is no reference to the fact that it was Democrats who segregated the federal government, at the direction of President Woodrow Wilson upon taking office in 1913. There *is* a reference to the fact that President Harry Truman integrated the military after World War II.
- There *is* reference to the fact that Democrats created the Federal Reserve Board, passed labor and child welfare laws, and created Social Security with Wilson's New Freedom and FDR's New Deal. There is

no mention that these programs were created as the result of an agreement to ignore segregation and the lynching of blacks. Neither is there a reference to the thousands of local officials, state legislators, state governors, U.S. congressmen and U.S. senators who were elected as supporters of slavery and then segregation between 1800 and 1965. Nor is there reference to the deal with the devil that left segregation and lynching as a way of life in return for election support for three post-Civil War Democratic presidents, Grover Cleveland, Woodrow Wilson and Franklin Roosevelt.

- There is no reference that three-fourths of the opposition to the 1964 Civil Rights Bill in the U.S. House came from Democrats, or that 80% of the "nay" vote in the Senate came from Democrats. Certainly there is no reference to the fact that the opposition included future Democratic Senate leader Robert Byrd of West Virginia (a former Klan member) and Tennessee Senator Albert Gore Sr., father of Vice President Al Gore.
- Last but certainly not least, there is no reference to the fact that Birmingham, Ala., Public Safety Commissioner Bull Connor, who infamously unleashed dogs and fire hoses on civil rights protestors, was in fact--yes indeed--a member of both the Democratic National Committee and the Ku Klux Klan.

Reading the DNC's official "Party History" of the Democrats and the race issue and civil rights is not unlike reading "In Through the Looking Glass": "When I use a word," Humpty Dumpty said, in rather a scornful tone, 'it means just what I choose it to mean--neither more nor less.' "

Here's this line from the DNC: "With the election of Harry Truman, Democrats began the fight to bring down the final barriers of race . . ." Truman, of course, was elected in 1948, and to his great credit he did in fact, along with then-Minneapolis Mayor Hubert Humphrey, begin to push the Democrats towards a pro-civil-rights stance. This culminated in the passage of the 1960s civil rights laws--legislation that redid what had been done by Republicans a hundred years earlier but undone by the Democrats' support for segregation. But the notion that "Democrats *began* to bring down the final barriers of race" raises the obvious questions. What were these barriers doing there in the first place? And who exactly was responsible for creating them?

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AS IF TO CONFIRM the "Who, me?" racial psychology behind the DNC Web site, Nancy Pelosi's Democrats passed a House resolution on July 29 sponsored by Tennessee Democrat Steve Cohen. The resolution, passed by voice vote, concludes this way:

Resolved, That the House of Representatives--

- (1) acknowledges that slavery is incompatible with the basic founding principles recognized in the Declaration of Independence that all men are created equal;
- (2) acknowledges the fundamental injustice, cruelty, brutality, and inhumanity of slavery and Jim Crow;
- (3) apologizes to African Americans on behalf of the people of the United States, for the wrongs committed against them and their ancestors who suffered under slavery and Jim Crow; and
- (4) expresses its commitment to rectify the lingering consequences of the misdeeds

committed against African Americans under slavery and Jim Crow and to stop the occurrence of human rights violations in the future.

What word is missing here?

You got it. The word "Democrat." Never mentioned anywhere. As with the DNC website, all these terrible things--somehow, apparently, it seems, so they keep hearing--happened. Ms. Pelosi, Mr. Cohen and their fellow House Democrats just can't understand how. But, you know, whatever. They are sorry. Really.

Are they? Let's take them up on this.

After all those Democratic platforms and conventions that championed slavery and segregation, what do you think the chances are they will use the occasion of Mr. Obama's nomination to have the Democratic platform formally apologize for the active, frequently violent and decidedly official support of the Democratic Party for slavery, segregation, lynching, the Ku Klux Klan and all the rest?

Better yet, do you think they'll pass a resolution promising to use the funds raised from all those Jefferson-Jackson Day fundraisers to pay reparations for slavery? (Did I mention that while the DNC discusses party co-founders Jefferson and Jackson, it neglects to mention that between them the two owned an estimated 360 slaves?)

Will the NAACP and other groups seeking reparations from nongovernment entities for their role in supporting slavery (companies like Aetna, Wachovia and Chase along with educational institutions like Brown University) finally zero in on the prime historical mover behind some of the worst chapters in American history? Will they sue the Democrats?

The Democrats are poised to nominate a black man for president of the United States. But will they apologize for slavery? Will they start paying reparations not from tax dollars but their own dollars for what they have done?

Do they have the guts to publicly admit what serious history records of their deeds? Are they capable of running a campaign without playing the race card as they have played it for the better part of two centuries? Can they even escape the race psychology that has indelibly branded them as America's Party of Race?

Or, when it comes to their own responsibility for race relations in America, will they order up more of what, under the circumstances, is a very appropriate word for the DNC website?

Whitewash.

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