

Some thoughts on the Presidential election: (09/17/08)

- We do not know the effect that racism will have on this election. The best data I know is old - going back to Los Angeles, 1972. Working for Tom Bradley a year before he became Los Angeles' first African-American mayor, we conducted a door-to-door survey of voters. Half were shown pictures of the candidates and half were not. Bradley did about 5-7% better among people who did not see the pictures and who may not have known he was African-American. When he ran for Governor of California in 1982, all the public polls and the exit polls had Bradley winning. He didn't. Of course, both of these were a long time ago, but they were also in more liberal areas of the country.
- Best news of the month: A recent CNN poll reported that twice as many voters blame the Republicans as blame the Democrats for the current economic crisis.
- If anyone thinks Obama should stay positive: Negative campaigning is extremely important, especially for the Obama campaign for 2 reasons. First, while it is important to establish in voters' minds why they should vote for Obama-Biden, they also need to know why they should not vote for McCain-Palin. Second, in the wake of the vitriolic speeches by Palin, Giuliani and others at the Republican convention, as well as the scurrilous campaign being waged by the ex-Bush people working for McCain, Obama needs to fight back against the Republicans and prove that he is tough enough to be President, or else people will feel: "if you can't stand up to the Republicans, how are you going to stand up to Russia, China, Iran, Al Qaeda, etc."
- The recent theme that the McCain campaign is constantly lying about their own and the Democrats' records is starting to take hold. If you say something often enough, with a basis of truth to it, it will be only a matter of time until it becomes a widely held, almost axiomatic, belief that McCain is running a sleazy campaign that bears only occasional resemblance to the truth. Even Karl Rove thought McCain had gone too far.
- The latest polls in key states show the race very close in most of them.
- More than any year except perhaps 1960 and 1980, the debates will determine the results of this election. As was the case in 1980, when Reagan demonstrated to an electorate that was wary of him that he was up to the job, Obama needs to prove the same thing. If he can, then he should win.
- Interesting item, especially for Florida: Apparently, a cousin of Michelle Obama is a Rabbi, with a mostly African-American congregation in Southwest Chicago. Rabbi Capers Funnye and serves on the Chicago Board of Rabbis. Why don't all the Jewish voters in Florida know about this?
- Although the main focus of the campaign must be on John McCain, I have thought for a while now that it is time for the Democrats to take off the gloves towards Sarah Palin, but through surrogates, not by Obama or Biden. The press has not been willing to do it - they are too cowed by the Republicans. However, the refusal by her and anyone in her administration to testify about "troopergate" should be a big story. It is one thing for a President to claim "executive privilege," but a completely different matter for a governor to make the same claim. On top of her widely proven false claims about the "bridge to nowhere," her record on earmarks, her charging a per diem when she worked at home, etc., her image may be beginning to erode. Plus, she is an extreme right-winger, who supports Creationism being taught in schools and supports banning abortion even in cases of rape, incest and when the mother's life is in danger.
- The other day I had a scary flashback to the famous Saturday Night Live skit in 1988, where actors playing the candidates are debating and the Michael Dukakis character looks at the camera and says: "I can't believe I'm losing to this guy."