



HAITIAN PRIORITIES PROJECT

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Is America or the Electoral College ready for an African American and/or a Woman Commander-in-Chief?

HPP encourages the Democratic Party, as well as universities, churches, grassroots organizations and the general public, to launch a national debate on race and gender relations in America before the next election.

Unlike Haiti, Britain, Canada, Liberia, the Philippines, India and Jamaica- countries who have had women as commander-in-chief or Prime Minister, America has never had a woman or a minority in its highest leadership position.

Brooklyn, New-York. At no time in US history has the Democratic Party been more poised to lead America than in the next election. From eight years of problematic Republican leadership, we have experienced a total degradation in America's moral authority, exemplified by (but not limited to) the commutation of Scooter Libby's sentence, the White House's refusal to subject its offices to judicial inquiries, the weakening of congressional powers, and two major wars with little domestic or international support.

When President Bush assumed the presidency we had a fledging economy with interest rates at their lowest in over 30 years and a fairly positive international image. Now we have a struggling economy with interest rates at a historical high. Recently, President Bush publicly recognized that despite Republican efforts towards the "War on Terror," Al Qaeda has reorganized and strengthened under Republican leadership; no doubt bolstered by a war gone sour in Iraq and Afghanistan. The Republican Administration has increased the US presence in Iraq even with Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki's assertion that Iraq is now able to implement its own security measures. Is America ready for a change in leadership?

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While it might seem that the chronic mismanagement of the nation's affairs by the Republican Party has left Americans calling for drastic regime change, we at Haitian Priorities Project (HPP) are not so sure. ***Race and gender in America are still volatile issues in American politics and culture, and the American people are reluctant to address these concerns.*** The fact that two of the Democratic Party's most visible front runners are, Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton, is forcing America to at least consider this taboo subject.

At HPP we believe that race and gender will have a major impact on the next election. In order for the Democratic Party to maintain its competitive edge, **we must launch a national debate on race and gender relations.** Too much is at stake to ignore how race and gender are still key factors in shaping national discourse, policies and politics. Nonetheless, many would like to pretend that advances in civil rights have rendered "identity politics" antiquated agendas. Too many women and people of color remain marginalized by discriminatory practices but also in political representation and policies.

Disturbingly, much of the American media is working against racial and gender reform in US politics to maintain the status quo by keeping power in the hands of the historically powerful. Even though Barack Obama is one of the most qualified candidates in the presidential race for 2008, he has been labeled "inexperienced" despite the fact that he has served at the local, state, and national level in American politics. Hillary Clinton's considerable political experience as First Lady and Senator has demonstrated her fluency in issues concerning America. Are these qualifications enough to overcome the race and gender problem crippling America or cut through the defamatory rhetoric of conservative right-wingers?

Like many concerned citizens, HPP believes that George Bush's second term has left America at a critical juncture. The Republicans may be at their weakest point, but the *Democratic Party need to engage in honest dialogue about race and gender that will bring America to Dr. Martin Luther King's vision: a country where an individual will be judged not by the color of their skin or gender, but by the content of their character.* Electing an African American and/or a woman will bring America into the 21st century with other nations where the human spirit has prevailed over divisions from race, gender and religion.

Is America ready to take this step? The next election will most likely demonstrate how far America has come or how far it still has to go.

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