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POLITICAL POWER AND PARTICIPATION: THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE TEXAS COALITION OF BLACK DEMOCRATS

John Edward Thompson, Ph.D. and Maria Christina Rodriguez, Ph.D.

Texas Southern University, Barbara Jordan-Mickey Leland School of Public Affairs, Associate Professor of Political Science and Public Administration USA and Diversity in Democracy, LLC, Research Consultant, Mexico

Abstract: This study investigates the Texas Coalition of Black Democrats' efforts in promoting political participation among diverse Texas Democrats. Informed by the concepts of civic engagement and Black political attitudes, the coalition conducted a survey to capture participants' responses on key issues affecting Black Texans. The survey highlights the coalition's commitment to empowering its members with knowledge about justice, race, equity, healthcare, economic growth, and the importance of political engagement.

Keywords: Texas Coalition of Black Democrats, political participation, civic engagement, diversity, marginalized communities.

Introduction

This study attempts to examine the extent to which the Texas Coalition of Black Democrats has developed and implemented a framework for political participation in Texas that brings together Texas democrats from various races, ethnicities, cultures, religious persuasions and backgrounds, to address issues that they believe impact their respective communities. Informed by the concept of civic engagement and black political attitude, the coalition sought to conduct a study, based on a survey that is designed to capture the responses of participants about key issues that are salient to the political interests of Black Texans. It clear from the survey questions and the responses by participants that the cTexas Coalition of Black Democrats is determined to empower its members with information that would make them knowledgeable about issues of justice, race, equity, healthcare, economic growth and the essence of political participation, that are central to its political agenda.

Extensive research shows that people who reside in these communities often bear the brunt of policies enacted that have not considered their interests or needs. The resulting effects continue to be dire and in many cases are worsening. The disparities that exist between traditional communities and marginalized communities are palpable across the spectrum of housing, education, wealth, economics, and health. Marginalized communities are not homogeneous but make up a diverse population of races, ethnicities, gender identities and orientations, national origins, physical and mental capacities and wealth.

In recent years, the significant differences in views on political and social issues have been studied in attempts to identify the disparities as well as the bases and sources therefor in order to bridge the divide toward a unified America. The primary objective of this research is specifically designed to impact the discussion through scholarly and evidence-based research, as demonstrated by the survey research below.

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Texas Coalition of Black Democrats

The Texas Coalition of Black Democrats evolved from the collective vision of a group of creative thinkers in January, 1979. It was on that date, in the home of Mrs. Sallye Moore, of Grand Prairie, Texas, that a small group of African American visionaries from Arlington, Dallas, Fort Worth, and Grand Prairie met to discuss the possibility of establishing a network between African Americans in the Metroplex. After follow-up meetings over the next six months, they decided to call a meeting of African American grassroots leaders from across the state to share the idea.

On August 25, 1979, a group of African-American leaders met at the Holiday Inn in Duncanville, Texas. Robert Malson, Assistant Director of Domestic Policy for the White House, was the speaker. The vision was enthusiastically embraced by those in attendance. They decided to convene a statewide meeting in Austin, Texas. Several strategy sessions were needed to plan such a large event that would have such significant impact on Black Texans. These planning sessions occurred in a number of cities including in Austin in October, 1979 and Corsicana in January, 1980. Three hundred fifty-six registered delegates gathered in Austin on February 22-24, 1980, at the first state conference of the Texas Coalition of Black Democrats.

The Coalition has been steadfast in its dedication to electing African-Americans across the State and amplifying issues of concern for African-Americans with local chapters across Texas. The focus of the Texas Coalition of Black Democrats is to stimulate, in African-Americans, an active interest in governmental affairs, to facilitate the participation of African Americans in the Democratic Party, to perpetuate the ideals and principles of the Democratic Party, to help acquaint voters and potential voters with the issues and candidates/elected officials, and to promote ... the highest degree of governmental response to public need. In 2018, Black candidates stepped up across the State to lead. In Texas, Black Democrats running for office included: 18 candidates for US Congress, 9 candidates for statewide office, 34 candidates for Texas Legislature, and hundreds more Black Democrats for county & local offices. In 2020, the Coalition surveyed its members to determine what we were thinking as Black Texan Democrats. From the survey, we hope to define an agenda to support our aggressive campaigns to serve as strong advocates for our community.

Methodology

The study utilized a convenient sample and when a specific sample needs to be targeted for research, the selection of the targets becomes random in nature. Disclaimer: The data described in this document does not constitute the entire make-up or ideas of Texas Coalition of Black Democrats. It is a survey of only a portion of the members of the organization. All demographic data is based on self-reported, self-identified information. This poll is simply a snapshot in time of the opinion of Texas Black Democrats at that moment in time. A total of 128 individuals responded to the poll. The margin of error for a sample of this size is approximately +/- 7%. The research was accompanied with the Texas Coalition of Black Democrats, statewide organization to conduct regular and on-going polling of the opinions of Black Texas Democrats and Black Texans in general up to the 2020 general election. Also see: Texas Coalition of Black Democrats-First Statewide Survey Results on January 2020 found: www.diversityindemocracy.com

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Table 1. Reliability Statistics

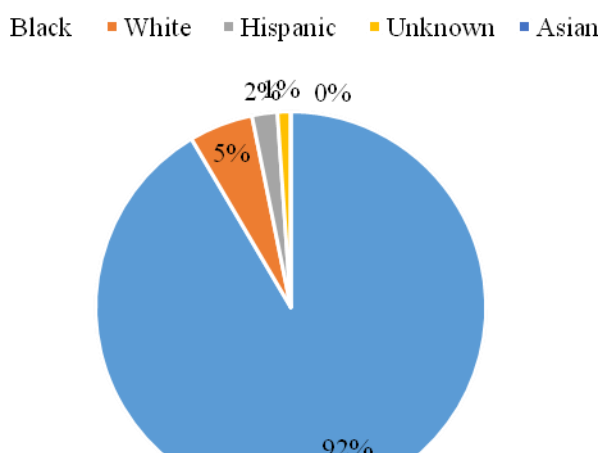
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.915	.920	128

For the purpose of this research study, item analysis were conducted to check for reliability of scale and the extraversion subscale consisted of 35 items ($\alpha = .915$) which was found to be highly reliable and within acceptable range 0.75.

Study Demographics

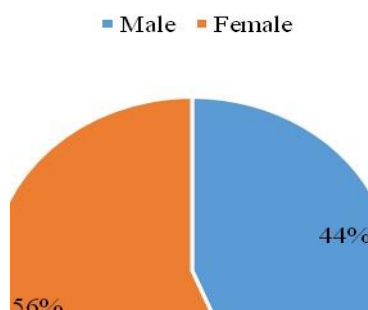
Respondent demographics: A super majority of the participants self-identified their race/ethnicity as African-American with a 91.5% response rate. Those self-identifying asCaucasian constituted 5.3% of the respondents; Hispanicsmade up 2.1% of the respondents. 1.1% of the respondents did not identify themselves by race/ethnicity.

Figure 1. Race/Ethnicity



The surveyed group was predominately female at 56.12% of the respondents while male respondents made up 43.88% of the respondents.

Figure 2. Gender



The majority of the respondents were between the ages 55-85 with no participants over the age of 85. The survey reports 26.69% of the respondents were between 65 and 85; 30.47% of the respondents were between the ages of 55 and 65; 32.81% of the respondents were between the ages of 35 and 55 years and 7.03% of the respondents that were under the age of 35. The participant's geographic dwelling data was collected by using their home zip

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codes. Almost half of the participants, 47.96%, are from the City of Houston. A super majority of the participants are from Greater Houston and Houston Metropolitan Statistical Area as determined by the US Office of Management and Budget and US Census.

The Greater Houston Metropolitan Area was disproportionately represented in this survey as the Greater Houston Metropolitan Area comprises only slightly less than a quarter (24.1%) of the population of Texas and over 50% of the survey respondents. The over representation of the Greater Houston area can affect the answers to survey as certain issues in one part of a state as vast as Texas may be discernably different from other areas of the state, especially, for example, the larger metropolitan area of Dallas-Fort Worth.

The Texas Coalition of Black Democrats takes pride in its efforts of inclusion. Rather than being an organization of leaders that issue commandments to its followers, we seek to engage our members in all aspects of our work including formulating policy and political agendas. The survey was designed to engage our members in establishing the Coalition's priorities. The survey asked respondents for their views on various issues facing our communities and world. Their responses are reflected below. **Issue One: Green New Deal**

Overview: The Green New Deal is a massive policy package proposal, often associated with one of its authors Congresswoman Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. In fact, it was first publicly introduced by Pulitzer Prize winner Thomas Friedman in January 2007.

Friedman endorsed cleaning our environment by changing —the very nature of the electricity grid— moving it away from dirty coal or oil to clean coal and renewables.¶ Former President Barack Obama added the green new deal to his platform when he ran for election in 2008. Representative Ocasio-Cortez expanded the scope of the policy to tackle economic inequality through the creation of high-quality union jobs. Focusing on reshaping the United States economy to grow the economy and create new jobs, the Green New Deal is a proposed Congressional Resolution that recommends sweeping regulations to combat climate change and limit the US carbon footprint greatly extending our role in combating climate change much further than environmental regulation as it intends to overhaul a number sectors of the US government.

The resolution in Congress from Ocasio-Cortez and Sen. Edward J. Markey (D-Mass.) [calls for](#) a —10-year national mobilization¶ that would include, without limitation:

- —Guaranteeing a job with a family-sustaining wage, adequate family and medical leave, paid vacations, and retirement security to all people of the United States.¶
- —Providing all people of the United States with — (i) high-quality health care; (ii) affordable, safe, and adequate housing; (iii) economic security; and (iv) access to clean water, clean air, healthy and affordable food, and nature.¶
- —Providing resources, training, and high-quality education, including higher education, to all people of the United States.¶
- —Meeting 100 percent of the power demand in the United States through clean, renewable, and zero-emission energy sources.¶
- —Repairing and upgrading the infrastructure in the United States, including. . . by eliminating pollution and greenhouse gas emissions as much as technologically feasible.¶
- —Building or upgrading to energy-efficient, distributed, and ‘smart’ power grids, and working to ensure affordable access to electricity.¶
- —Upgrading all existing buildings in the United States and building new buildings to achieve maximal energy efficiency, water efficiency, safety, affordability, comfort, and durability, including through electrification.¶

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- —Overhauling transportation systems in the United States to eliminate pollution and greenhouse gas emissions from the transportation sector as much as is technologically feasible, including through investment in — (i) zeroemission vehicle infrastructure and manufacturing; (ii) clean, affordable, and accessible public transportation; and (iii) high-speed rail.¶
- —Spurring massive growth in clean manufacturing in the United States and removing pollution and greenhouse gas emissions from manufacturing and industry as much as is technologically feasible.¶
- —Working collaboratively with farmers and ranchers in the United States to eliminate pollution and greenhouse gas emissions from the agricultural sector as much as is technologically feasible."

The Green New Deal in its current iteration is a nonbinding resolution that even if it were to pass would not create any new programs or enforceable regulations. It however serves as a recommended course for the legislative and executive branches on how the economy should move forward to build momentum among the US citizens and Legislators to pass enforceable laws.

Question One: Do you support the Green New Deal?

Survey Results: When the respondents were asked if they supported the Green New Deal the response was mixed. 43.55% of the respondents said Yes, 11.29% of the respondents said No and 45.16% of the respondents were undecided.

Question Two: Do you know what the Green New Deal is?

Survey Results: 57.81% of the respondents said they knew what the Green New Deal was, 39.06% of the respondents said they did not know, and 3.12% were undecided. However, only 50% of the respondents answered this question.

Comment on the survey results: This question of support for the Green New Deal cannot be fully explored without looking at the question of whether the respondents knew what the Green New Deal is. The Green New Deal is a multifaceted proposal affecting many oft-debated political platforms which would reach every corner and every member of our society. It has been described as difficult for people to truly understand and gauge what the Green New Deal hopes to accomplish. Because the Green New Deal incorporates so many different issues, it is easy to support the proposal in part with the range of support in that part varying widely from very small to very large. This may explain the range of answers and confusion of the respondent group as it pertains to these particular questions. **Issue Two: Policy Issues**

Question One: What is the most important issue Texas Democrats should address?

Overview: The survey respondents were asked to name the most important public policy issues Texas Democrats should address. This question was a bubble in question where respondents selected from an answer bank of choices, the respondents could select only one policy issue.

The three overwhelming issues chosen were Income Inequality, Voting Rights Protection, and the Cost of Health Care and Prescription Drugs with 83.33% of the respondents choosing one of these three issues. The other three issue options in decreasing order were Crime Prevention and Public Safety, Climate Change and Environmental Injustice.

Question Two: What is the most important issue in Texas that you want Democrats to address?

Overview: The survey respondents were asked to name the most important public policy issues in Texas that they wanted Democrats to address. This question was a write-in question where rather than selecting from an answer bank of choices; the respondents could identify any policy issue. Survey Results: The three top choices were Healthcare, Education, and Criminal Justice Reform with roughly 50% of the respondents choosing one of these three issues. The rest of the issues identified, with at least 2 respondents choosing that policy issue in

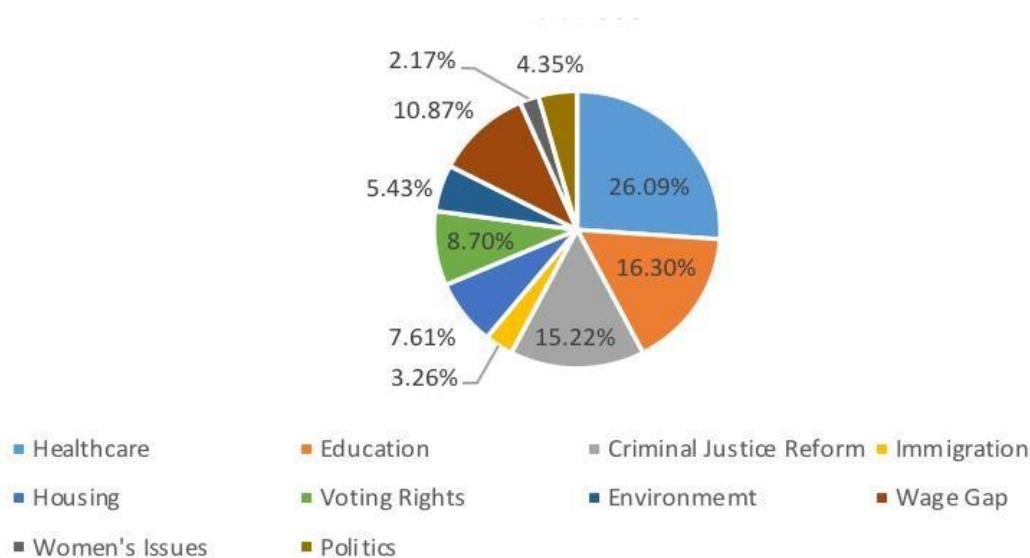
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decreasing order were Wage Gap, Voting Rights, Housing, Environmental, Politics, Immigration, and Women's Rights. The choices that were limited to 1 respondent choosing an issue were left off this reporting.

Question Four: Will you and your family members participate in the 2020 Census Count?

Overview: The Census provides a snapshot of the country and occurs once every decade. The information that results from the Census is used to dictate significant aspects of life for the citizens of the nation. It will show where communities need new schools, new clinics, new roads, and more services for families, older adults, and children. The results will also determine where hundreds of billions of dollars in federal funding are allocated to more than 100 programs, including Medicaid, block grants for community mental health services, hospitals, fire departments, school lunch programs, and other critical programs and services.

Figure 3. Most Important Issues in Texas That You want Democrats to Address



One of the important determinants of the Census is the number of seats each state has in the United States House of Representatives which can have a powerful effect on what laws are passed. The population data gathered is used in redistricting to draw congressional, state and local legislative districts. The number of seats each state receives in the U.S. House of Representatives – also known as apportionment – occurs following the completion of the Census. Article I, Section 2 of the United States Constitution requires apportionment of the House of Representatives —according to their respective numbers— while ensuring at least one representative for each state. After a breakdown in the process following the 1920 Census, in 1929 the House passed the Permanent Apportionment Act of 1929, which fixed the size of the House of Representatives at 435 members. After the conclusion of each Census, the Census Bureau uses a process known as —the method of equal proportions— to apportion the 385 seats remaining after each state receives one seat. This process uses a mathematical formula that ranks states by their population until the final seat is allocated. Apportioning seats affects elections, policy, and representation for a decade, so it is crucial that this process be done fairly and correctly. Therefore, an accurate Census is critical, because even a minor miscount can make a difference. The number of seats each state has in the House goes beyond effective representation for that state's population. It also affects presidential elections because of how states vote in the Electoral College.

Survey Results: When respondents were asked if they or their family members intended on participating in the 2020 Census, almost all respondents said that they would. 97.66% of the respondents said they would participate in the Census with 0 saying they would not. 2.34% were undecided.

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Question Five: Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: In a Democratic Texas, my concerns will be heard, respected and addressed?

Overview: Political voice and an individual's ability to effectively express their views go to the heart of democracy and is essential for citizens to take part freely in politics. Political voice's instrumental function allows citizens to control who will hold public office and to influence policies by communicating needs of the communities to elected officials.

Disparities in political voice have long been a feature of the American political landscape with patterns of advantage based on income, education, and race, among others. When some people have a megaphone while others speak in a whisper, the democratic principle of equal consideration of the interests is jeopardized. The inability to fully participate in the democratic process translates into a lack of political power resulting in underprivileged individuals continuing to endure exclusion and discrimination in the electoral process. The feeling of lack of power by one's voice being stifled in the political process is exemplified in this quote:

"People feel that they don't have any control over the process. They have this overwhelming sense — whether they're on the right or the left of the spectrum — that elites are controlling the levers of power, and that they don't have a say, whether they perceive those elites to be political or economic." — Melissa Ross, [WJCT](#) in Jacksonville Survey Results: Slightly over half of the respondents, 55.47%, believe that their concerns will be heard in Texas, 24.22% do not believe their concerns will be heard and 20.32% are undecided.

Question Six: Do you support Medicare for all Americans?

Overview: Medicare is the federal health insurance program for:

- People who are 65 or older
- Certain younger people with disabilities
- People with End-Stage Renal Disease (permanent kidney failure requiring dialysis or a transplant, sometimes called ESRD)

The different parts of Medicare help cover specific services:

Medicare Part A (Hospital Insurance)

Part A covers inpatient hospital stays, care in a skilled nursing facility, hospice care, and some home health care.

Medicare Part B (Medical Insurance)

Part B covers certain doctors' services, outpatient care, medical supplies, and preventive services. **Medicare Part D (prescription drug coverage)** Part D adds prescription drug coverage to:

- Original Medicare
- Some Medicare Cost Plans
- Some Medicare Private-Fee-for-Service Plans ☐ Medicare Medical Savings Account Plans

These plans are offered by insurance companies and other private companies approved by Medicare. Medicare Advantage Plans may also offer prescription drug coverage that follows the same rules as Medicare Prescription Drug Plans. Medicare is a national health insurance program which primarily provides health insurance for Americans aged 65 and older. Medicare for all is essentially Healthcare for all which has been a running platform for many democratic presidential candidates in the 2020 presidential election. It is also a key feature in the Green New Deal. It is a nationalized free form of health is similar to that seen in other countries like Canada.

Survey Results: The majority of respondents support Medicare-for-all with 66.14% saying yes, roughly two-thirds of the respondents; 20.47% of the respondents were undecided on how they felt with 13.39% were not in favor.

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4. Results and Analysis

The responses to the questions about the issues that were addressed in the survey demonstrate the extent to which respondents from the Greater Houston Metropolitan area were willing to engage in the discussion of issues faced by their communities that were conceived by the Texas Coalition of Black Democrats. With respect to how many participants indicated that they supported or did not support the green New Deal, authored by Congresswoman Representative Alexandria Cortez of New York and others, 43% of respondents said they did while 11.29% stated that they did not. In terms of whether or not respondents knew what the New Green Deal was, 57.8% said they did while 39.06% said they did not and 3.12% indicated that they were undecided.

The second issue, required respondents to name the most important issue that they thought Texas Democrats should address. Respondents indicated that the three most important issues were income inequality, voting rights protection, and the cost of health care and prescription drugs with 83% of respondents choosing one of these three issues. The other three issue options in decreasing order were crime prevention and public safety, climate change and environmental injustice. On the other hand, when respondents were asked what the most important issues IN TEXAS, which they wanted Democrats to address, were respondents stated that their top three choices were healthcare, education and criminal justice reform with roughly 50% of them choosing one of these three issues. The remaining issues identified, with at least two respondents choosing that policy issue in decreasing order were wage gap, voting rights, housing, environmental politics, immigration and women's rights.

The third issue that respondents addressed required them to indicate whether or not they and their families would participate in the 2020 census. By a large response rate, 97.66% of participants indicated that they would participate in the 2020 census with 0% saying they would not while 2.34% stated that they were undecided.

The fourth issues that participants responded to required them to indicate whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement that in a Democratic Texas, their concerns will be heard, respected and addressed. Slightly over half of the respondents, 55.47% believed that their concerns will be heard in Texas, while 24.22% did not believe that their concerns will be heard and 20.32% indicated that they were undecided. In the fifth issue that required participants to indicate whether or not they supported Medicare for all Americans, the majority of respondents, stated, by 66.14%, that they support Medicare for all Americans over 65, while 13.39% indicated that they were not in favor and 20.47% of respondents were undecided.

The responses of the respondents to all the questions in the survey clearly indicate that Texas democrats are very knowledgeable in the issues that are embraced by the national democratic party, the Texas Democratic party as well the Coalition of Black Democrats. It is worth noting here that the responses of participants in the surveys to these questions also demonstrate that Texas democrats are actively engaged in the political process and are willing to participate in the discussion of issues that they believe impact their communities.

The discussion above attempts to show the extent to which the Texas Coalition of Black Democrats has galvanized Texas democrats in general and African Americans in Texas are engaged in the political process by discussing or addressing those issues that they believe impact their communities. For example, a vast majority of participants in the survey self-identified their race/ethnicity as African Americans with a 91.5% response rate. Those self-identifying as Caucasian constituted 5.3% of the respondents, while 2.1% of the respondent's self-identified as Hispanics and 1.1% of the respondents did not identify themselves by race/ethnicity. Based on the overall data gleaned from participants in this study, it is clear that the Texas Coalition of Black Democrats has crafted a framework for political participation in Texas, which is informed by the essence of diversity in democracy whether it is based on race, ethnicity, gender, religion, national origin or sexual orientation. To that end, the Texas Coalition of Black Democrats is a credible advocacy group that should be nurtured and supported by Texans.

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Conclusions

This current survey of political issues that are salient to the Texas Coalition of Black Democrats leaves little or no doubt that this organization has the potential of being a viable advocacy group for Black Texans. More importantly, this analysis began with the premise that political participation in Texas should be inclusive and Democrats should seek an amalgamation of political views and opinions from various races and persuasions.