

Racism Reflection November 30, 2020 NSMC Dan Graber

Please don't get upset that this is another article that is focused on the United States. Why? First, give me articles like this about Canada!

Second, reflecting on another society, helps give us insights into our own issues. This is why MCC, missions and the variety of agencies, programs and opportunities we have offer us interactions with people of other countries, races, and cultures, is so valuable. They help us see ourselves. Their questions and observations – if they are bold enough to ask, often give us pause and cause to reflect on ourselves.

Third, learning about history and why things are the way they are today, because of past actions and attitudes in history, helps us choose to reboot. Most major issues and patterns don't just occur overnight. Groundwork is laid, intentionally or unintentionally that affects us today. This is one reason it's so hard for society and for individuals to change. We like what we like what we like – even if it's unjust and sinful and selfish. It becomes normal in our thinking, acting and perspectives.

Fourth, studying how people who call themselves Christians are viewed, wherever they are from, is important for us as we see if our behavior, habits, attitudes, justice system and so on, reflect Jesus and the Bible.

So compare the observations of this article with our situation in Canada. Then consider which party you voted for, why and who. History and personal bias shapes us more than we want to accept. How would you write an article like this for Canada, Canadian history and current politics?

Phil Vischer: This Is How Race Shapes the Way Christians Vote

By Jessica Mouser October 13, 2020 ChurchLeaders.com

In his latest [video tackling](#) the complexities of [race](#) in the United States, VeggieTales creator Phil Vischer explores the question, “Why do white Christians vote Republican and Black Christians vote Democrat?” There are many factors that play into the answer to this question, but Vischer suggested the reasons have a lot to do with the very different histories and life experiences of white and Black Christians in the U.S.

“Everyone knows conservative Christians vote Republican,” said Vischer. “It's like one of the rules of nature.” But at the same time, “Most African Americans self-identify as Christian and most African-Americans vote Democrat.”

As an illustration of that point, Vischer cited data from Pew Research Center that found that [96 percent of Black Protestants](#) voted for Hillary Clinton in 2016, while [81 percent of white evangelicals](#) voted for Donald Trump. How is it possible for two groups of people who claim to be following the same faith to come to such different conclusions about which candidate or party they will support? To answer this question, Vischer gave a brief history lesson, starting in 1870.

Phil Vischer on the History of Our Political Parties

When Black men [gained the right to vote](#) in 1870, the terms “Democrat” and “Republican” had connotations very different from what we think of today. President Abraham [Lincoln](#) was a

Republican, and when they got the right to vote, most Black people were Republicans as well. “In fact, the first 23 Black congressmen were all Republicans,” said Vischer. This was in part because of Lincoln, but also because most slave owners and many members of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) were Democrats.

The commitment Black people had to the Republican party was shaken, however, by the **Great Compromise** of 1877. **Lincoln’s assassination** in 1865 had jeopardized the voting rights of Black Americans in the South, so Republican presidents sent federal troops there to protect those rights. But when the election of 1876 fell into a deadlock that threatened to send the country into another civil war, Rutherford B. Hayes (a Republican) became president in exchange for the withdrawal of the troops in the South that had been protecting African American rights. “Yep,

Northern Republicans sort of threw southern Black people under the bus,” said Vischer. Between 1868 and 1898, the South had elected 22 Black representatives. But when the federal troops were withdrawn, the “elimination of Black votes was so complete,” said Vischer, it would be 30 years before another Black man would be elected to Congress.

States then passed Jim Crow laws and Black people became more vulnerable to the KKK. This led to the **Great Migration**, where six million African Americans left the South to escape segregation and lynchings. Another advantage of leaving the South was that in the North, Black people could vote. Some still voted Republican because of Lincoln, but Republican leaders were not advocating for them, and in 1926, the **NAACP** encouraged Black voters not to be loyal to either party.

During the Great Depression, unemployment was twice as bad for Black people in the North as it was for white people there, and the Black community favored Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal. Roosevelt was a Democrat, and he “received overwhelming support from Black voters.” Another noteworthy event during this time was **Arthur Mitchell**’s election to Congress in 1934. He was “something Washington had never seen before: A Black Democrat.”

For the next 20 years, said Vischer, the Republican and Democratic parties each supported different civil rights measures and Black voters voted for both Democratic and Republican candidates. “Though today this seems hard to believe,” he said, “there used to be conservative and progressive wings of both parties.” The conservative Southern Democrats and conservative Republicans were united in their desire to limit the size of the government. Both factions also opposed new civil rights measures. So fighting for states rights and limited government became associated with opposing civil rights.

As Northern Democrats proposed more civil rights legislation than Republicans did, Black voters gradually voted Democrat more than they voted Republican. And as the Southern Democrats continued to oppose civil rights laws, this tension, said Vischer, led to a “breaking point, and that break would radically alter American politics.”

The political career of **Strom Thurmond**, who was governor of South Carolina and then a senator for five decades, “almost perfectly illustrates the shift in political parties over the last 80 years,” said Vischer. Thurmond was a Southern Democrat and a staunch advocate of keeping the South segregated. When Harry Truman integrated the Army and proposed “aggressive civil rights legislation,” Thurmond and other Southern Democrats formed the States Rights Democratic Party, or the “Dixiecrats,” “a conservative party dedicated to preserving segregation.”

Thurmond ran against Truman for president and lost, but continued fighting integration. When John F. Kennedy, a Democrat, publicly supported the civil rights movement, and Lyndon B. Johnson, also a Democrat, signed the **Civil Rights Act**, Southern Democrats like Thurmond began switching to the Republican party.

“Over the next few years, segregationist Democrats like Thurmond jumped to the Republican party in droves,” said Vischer, “and the South began shifting from blue to red. The identity of the Democratic party as progressive was settling in, and a new wave of conservative Republicans was about to shift the brand there as well.”

This shift can be seen in the careers of Barry Goldwater, a Republican who opposed the civil rights bill; Richard Nixon, who became president by appealing to white voters in the South; and Ronald Reagan, who appealed to states rights and happened to launch his presidential campaign in a **Mississippi** county where three civil rights workers were murdered.

“Between 1968 and 1988,” said Vischer, “the Republican Party had become the party of white, Christian, conservative America, and the Democratic party was now the party of radical, progressive leftists and hippies. Oh! And black church ladies.”

To understand this development more clearly, Vischer asked viewers to consider the meaning of the terms “progressive” and “conservative.” The word “progressive” means we are improving and moving forward while “conservative” denotes the idea that we are holding on to our values instead of losing them. Said Vischer, “The best way to explain why white Christians vote for conservative candidates and Black Christians vote for progressive candidates may simply be this: what do we see when we look in the rearview mirror?”

When white Christians think of the past, they think of a time where abortion was illegal, gender roles were clearer, there was prayer in schools, and most Americans went to church. Black Christians, said Vischer, see something “very different”: fire hoses, lynchings, and church bombings. They also see politicians like Strom Thurmond fighting integration and white Christians supporting him to the point of keeping him in the Senate for five decades until he died in office at age 100.

“When white Christians look at the Supreme Court,” said Vischer, “they see the reason abortion is legal in school and prayer isn’t. But when Black Christians look at the Supreme Court, they see the reason they can vote and pursue housing and employment without blatant discrimination. That difference in perspective has a huge impact on whether you see the federal government as part of the problem or part of the solution. Having the right to hear a Christian prayer in your local public school doesn’t mean much if you’re not allowed to attend your local public school.”

It is unfortunate, said Vischer, that we only have two major political parties and that these parties generally force us to choose between progress and maintaining our values. The Bible actually calls us to both, he said, and “neither party lines up with that very well. But I hope at least now you understand how Christians from different backgrounds can read the same Bible, **pray** to the same God, and come to very different conclusions about who is going to get their vote.”