

Race and gender equality

Sociology



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Race and Gender Equality: Implications of the Obama-Palin 2008 Campaigns

This paper provides an observation on race and gender equality in the U. S. It examines the political party choices for candidates in the 2008 presidential elections and the implications of those choices. The paper will have an introduction on the situation preceding the election and the issues at hand, with special focus and emphasis on racial and gender related themes. The paper will attempt to draw conclusions on the implications of the choices and what those choices mean to the American people. The paper will include a conclusion based on the events that occurred before, during, and after the presidential elections.

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The 2008 United States presidential election was unique from past elections in many ways. The most significant differences were that for the first time in the nation's history, there was a black man vying on a Democratic ticket for the presidency and a woman vying as running mate for the Republican candidate. As stated by Hollar (2009), the Democratic Party nomination of Mr. Barack Obama and the picking of Mrs. Sarah Palin for the Republican running mate were unprecedented. For the first time, voters were presented with candidates of different races and gender. The traditional voter considerations still lingered, like, which candidate was best suited for The White House, what do the candidates stand for on important issues like the economy, education, health, security, etc.? Additionally, the voters had to also ask themselves if they were ready for a black president or a woman vice-president. Debates were centered around racial and gender issues, with both sides trying to downplay them and asking Americans to instead vote on issues.

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The differences on the issues on governance for the two parties are centered mainly on government, social values, and taxation. Obama was for a government used as a tool for the greater good, he supported modern values, and progressive taxation. Sarah Palin supported empowerment of the individual to promote greater good, traditional family values, and small government with low taxation. However, according to University of Michigan (2008), these issues seemed to be overshadowed by race and gender issues, which brought about discussions on the compatibility of political leadership and social identities. A great deal of media coverage remained narrow and stereotypical. Both teams had to overcome these stereotypes. Examples of negative stereotypes they had to confront included, black people cannot offer guidance on economy and defense, women cannot comprehend the complexity of running a government etc. In their defense, candidates from both sides of the divide conducted themselves well and avoided hard stances that would have created racial and gender tensions.

Conclusion

Black women as a voting bloc faced a unique, unprecedented dilemma in the 2008 presidential race. They had a choice between voting for their gender and voting for their race. The Obama camp attempted to assuage this voting bloc by making Hillary Clinton a pivotal member of the Democratic campaign. Obama's win gave confidence to minorities that they are truly part of America and it was a huge step in the fight for racial equality. Though Sarah Palin never became vice-president, her fight for the second highest office in the land brought together women from all walks of life. As suggested by Economics and politics (2012), many women who were previously ignorant or apathetic to political issues now had sharp

awareness of the workings of government and critical issues of governance. The 2008 candidate choices were a huge step for all of America towards equality for people of all racial backgrounds and genders.

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