

The Family and Political Unity between Blacks and Jews in the United States

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Abstract

This article claims that there is a positive relationship or bond between Blacks and Jews in the United States. The article is divided into three parts: (1) that Black and Jewish Americans are united through family; (2) that Black and Jewish Americans are united through political ideology/party, especially the Democratic Party; and (3) the article goes on to present some factors responsible for these two important phenomena.

Introduction

On one hand, people of Black African descent in Africa and the New World are experiencing difficulty in their human interactions with peoples from other racial or cultural groups. For example, all of the business/trade, diplomatic and military contracts that Black Africans have signed with people of other racial or cultural groups have not led to a better standard of living relative to those racial groups. Proportionally, there are still more poor people with lack of basic necessities in Black African countries than in Asian or European countries (Kaba, 2006a, 2009a). It is estimated that "...total illicit outflows from the continent [Africa] across the 39 years [1970-2008] at some \$1.8 trillion ("Illicit Financial Flows From Africa," 2010, p.1). In the New World, as a group, people of Black African descent are still experiencing serious exclusion in many important sectors of those societies (Kaba, 2011abc).

On the other hand, a deeper examination of the relations between people of Black African descent in the Old World and in the New World, shows that demographically, politically, religiously, economically and socially, they are actually in very good or strategic positions than people from other racial or cultural groups. In terms of positive racial friendships or unity, at this moment in history, people of Black African descent are friends with people from all racial or cultural groups. The positive bond, unity or friendships that people of Black African descent are experiencing with people from other racial groups appear to be stronger than any negative tensions or misunderstandings between them. For example, the following articles by Kaba (2010a): "Inheritance, Race and the Four Major Factors for the Unity Between African Americans and European Americans: Land/Territory, Blood/Genes, Religion and Language"; Kaba (2011d): "Race, Conquest and Revenge: Why Do Black People Resist Racial Revenge?"; Kaba (2009b): "Explaining President Barack Obama's First Visit to Africa (Egypt): Three Phenomena of Africa and Africans as the Core of U.S.-Arab/Muslim Relations, "; and Kaba (2010b): "Michelle Obama and the Black Female Diaspora: The Most Influential Black Woman in History?", all show positive relations between people of Black African descent and people from other racial or cultural groups.

In the United States, when one extracts people of Jewish descent from the White population, one observes a positive bond or unity in many different ways between them and the Black population. Jewish Americans are united with Black Americans through family/blood, soil, political ideology/party, and the Old Testament Bible. This unity between them has contributed to the ongoing greatness and uniqueness of the United States. A careful examination of numerous published academic articles and books focusing on relations between Black and Jewish Americans from the late 1800s to present, shows that while there have been some tensions between them, overall, the two groups have a positive bond. Or that the examples illustrating unity between them are far more than the examples showing negative tensions (Bauman and Kalin, 1997; Fiebert, 2011; Glenn, 2006; Greenberg, 2006ab; Itzkovitz, 2011; Kaba, 2008, 2011c; Petigny, 2007; Salzman et al., 1992; Salzman and West, 1997; Schlosser et al., 2007; Sundquist, 2005; Vider, 2011). This paper examines unity between people of Black African and Jewish descent in the United States. First, the paper presents the claim and evidence illustrating that people of Black African descent and people of Jewish descent in the United States are related or united by family or blood.

Second, the paper presents the claim and evidence illustrating that people of Black African descent and people of Jewish descent in the United States are united through political ideology or political party. Finally, the paper presents the factors that have contributed to these two phenomena. Let us now begin by examining the family or blood ties between people of Black African and Jewish descent in the United States.

Family or Blood Ties Between Black Africans and Jews in the United States

Throughout its history up until 1966, Whites were legally banned from marrying Blacks in the United States. In 1967, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that such ban on interracial marriage was unconstitutional. Since that landmark U.S. Supreme Court ruling in 1967, there has been a visible or significant increase in the number of Black-White romantic couples by the 21st Century. For example, according to Romano (2006), significant increase in tolerance in the U.S. has led to some increase in such romantic relationships, even though a closer examination of the rates shows such couples to comprise a very small fraction, not only of all marriages, but Black-White marriages as well. In the United States, Mondak and Sanders (2003) point out that in measuring intolerance using a scale ranging from 0-15, with high scores representing intolerance, the level of intolerance declined from 7.24 in 1977 to 5.28 in 1998, a 27% decline (pp.493-494). According to Brace et al. (2002), from 1974-1998, 60% of the people in the United States (excluding Hawaii, Idaho, Maine, Nebraska, Nevada and New Mexico) were tolerant (p.176). A 1958 poll shows that only 4% of White Americans approved of Black-White marriages. By 2011, 84% of Whites approved (Jones, 2011).¹ That increase in interracial marriage approval may have contributed to an increase in Black-White marriages. In 1960, for example, there were 51,000 (.126% of all marriages) Black-White married couples in the United States. By 2000 that figure increased to 363,000 (.6% of all marriages). In 1960, 1.7% of Blacks who were married had a White spouse. By 2000, that figure increased to 4.3 percent (Romano, 2006, pp. 2-3). In 2007, there were 464,000 (0.8%) Black-White married couples in the United States (Kaba, 2011e, p.122). This now brings us to Black-Jewish romantic relationships.

Who are the White Americans involved in interracial romantic relationships, including marriage with Blacks in the United States? Although not enough data are available, Romano (2006) attempts to explain who, among White Americans tend to be involved in interracial romantic relationships with Blacks. Jewish Americans, who comprise 2% of the total population, appear to represent a substantial proportion of those White Americans involved in interracial romantic relationships with Black Americans. According to Romano, "Although there are no national statistics on Jewish-black intermarriage rate, Jewish Americans made up a disproportionate number of the whites involved in interracial marriages..." and that in a study in 1960 of 24 couples involved in interracial marriages in New York City, 50% of the white partners were Jews. Romano also points to a mid-1960s study of interracial couples in the New York Metropolitan area showing that estimates of 70 to 80% of the White spouses to Black men were Jewish (2006, pp.123-124; also see Kaba, 2008, pp.119-121). Blustain (1996) notes that "Marriage between Jews, a Council of Jewish Federations study told us in 1990, is down to 50%" (p.21), meaning that the other 50% marry outside of their group (also see Berman, 2008).

An important evidence of Black-Jewish blood or family relationships is the substantial number of Americans who are Black Jews. For example, on April 10, 1998, Michael Gelbwasser reported in an article entitled "Organization for black Jews claims 200,000 in U.S.", in the *Boston Jewish Advocate*, that a 1990 estimate put the number of Black Jews at 200,000. In the United States, one can easily find a long list of prominent Black Americans with Jewish ancestry or with at least one Jewish parent: Josephine Baker, singer (Jewish father); Darrin Bell, cartoonist (Jewish mother); Lisa Bonet, actress (Jewish mother); Troy Beyer, actress (Jewish father); Lani Guinier, law professor (Jewish mother); Rashida Jones, actress (Jewish mother); Lenny Kravitz, musician (Jewish father); James McBride, writer & composer (Jewish mother); Walter Mosley, author (Jewish mother); Rain Pryor, actress (Jewish mother); Tracee Ellis Ross, actress (Jewish father); and Robin Washington, journalist (Jewish mother). Also, in an article entitled: "Black Writers Hail Jewish Moms Cultural Blend Is Kosher With Sons And Daughters", Owen Moritz (1998) writes:

"Look who's writing about Jewish mothers. Their black sons and daughters. Literate, outspoken, successful black sons and daughters. The Mother's Day list includes Lani Guinier, James McBride and Walter Mosley. And while not an author, Elinor Tatum is very much in print. The daughter of Wilbert Tatum and his Jewish wife is now editor and publisher of the *Amsterdam News*, the nation's best-known black newspaper. "... Reuben Washington, a Boston journalist and a founder of the Alliance of Black Jews.... estimates there are 200,000 black Jews in the U.S., a number that includes those like Washington, whose father is black and his mother white and Jewish."²

According to Brettschneider (2010):

“Current estimates are that 20-25% of the U.S. Jewish community is comprised of (in U.S. parlance) people of color. If we are approximately five to six million Jews in the U.S., even with my poor math skills, I know that we are talking about a lot of people. This number is far larger than either Euro/Ashkenazi or many Jews of color imagine. Still, the number does not take into account the estimated two million People of Color in the U.S. who have a Jewish person in their family tree or who have some Jewish ancestry but don't identify as Jewish in ways recognizable to Jewish demographers. ... around the time of the height of Jews' involvement in civil rights, we also find that the amount of biracial children born in the U.S. began to skyrocket. ... the high number of unions yielding such biracial children ... were heterosexual ones between Jewish women and black men-by which is meant, Euro-Jewish women and non-Jewish (mostly) Black men” (pp.24-25; also see Kay/Kantrowitz, 2007).

The examples above highlight some important observations among people of African, European/Gentile and Jewish descent in the United States. That is, these three groups are the most spread out in significant to substantial numbers in most countries or regions of the earth, even though the total Jewish population in the world is estimated at 13.4 million (Dashefsky, 2010, p.17), while those of people of African descent are estimated by this author at 1.2 billion as of 2011, and people of European descent are estimated by this author at 1.1 billion as of 2003. In the U.S., these three groups are very unique because genetically or through blood: (1) they are substantially in other racial/ethnic groups as other racial/ethnic groups are substantially in them. So for example, in the U.S. just as there are White-Chinese (a person with English and Chinese parents, for example), White-Indians, White-Arabs, White- Japanese, White-Iranians, etcetera, so also there are Black-Chinese (a person with Black and Chinese parents, for example), Black-Indians, Black- Japanese, Black-Arabs, etcetera. If one extracts the Jewish population from the U.S. White population, one also finds Black-Jews, Chinese-Jews (a person with Jewish and Chinese parents, for example), German-Jews, Polish-Jews, English-Jews, Scottish-Jews, etcetera.

And (2) despite its active pluralism/multiculturalism, the U.S. has actually become one nation with two cultures: Anglo American culture and Hispanic/Latino culture. Again, these three groups make up a substantial proportion of both cultures. Just as there are Anglo American Blacks, Jews (Mendelsohn, 2007) and Whites, so also there are Hispanic/Latino Blacks, Jews and Whites. This is a very interesting phenomenon. So when people in the Old World (Africa, Asia and Europe) look at these three groups in the U.S., they see themselves not only in their members here, but they also see themselves in the other two groups (see Kaba, 2006b; Rifkin, 2006).

A third point that also makes these three groups unique is that if one were to go back in history in the past hundreds or thousands of years, one may find that there might have been a continuous East-West competition in the Old World (Africa, Asia and Europe) that has been occurring whereby individuals from regions in the Eastern or Western parts of each continent dominating the world at any given time. By the beginning of the 21st Century, the evidence tends to show that individuals from the Western regions of Africa, Asia and Europe combined tend to be dominating the world economically, scientifically, politically and militarily. But the interesting irony here is that these individuals are not in their ancestral lands. So for example, this author has observed that people of Western African descent who are not in West Africa are among the most influential individuals in the world, such as scientists of all sorts, politicians, businessmen and women, lawyers, professional entertainers and athletes, etcetera. Most of them are found in the United States (First Lady Michelle Obama, Attorney General Eric Holder, Oprah Winfrey, etcetera). So just as among the most influential individuals in the world are people of West African descent who are not in West Africa, so also among the most influential individuals in the world are people of Western Asian descent such as Jews who are not in Israel, and people of Western European descent (Britain, Ireland, Germany, etcetera) who are not in Western Europe. Let us now examine the political/ideological unity between Jewish and Black Americans.

The Political/Ideological Unity Between Black and Jewish Americans

One of the most important variables in social science research is that of political ideology or political affiliation. One's political ideology directly or indirectly influences their beliefs on many important issues, including abortion, taxes, what must be taught in schools and colleges, how to report historical events, the types of punishments for various crimes, foreign relations, the environment, same sex marriages and many other cultural issues. This means that choosing a political party is an extremely important decision. In the United States, there are two main political parties, Democrats and Republicans, with one of them ruling the country at any given moment.

Since the 1960s, Black and Jewish Americans have been the groups most loyal to the Democratic Party. In an article discussing the liberal behavior of Jews in the U.S., Prager notes that: "...other than blacks, no American group votes so lopsidedly for the Democratic Party" (2006, April 25). Political or social scientists studying political behavior of the dozens of different European ethnic groups in the U.S. have observed that these different ethnic groups usually start by identifying with the Democratic Party, but will switch to the Republican Party as they rise educationally and economically. In the case of Black and Jewish Americans, however, that argument is only partially accurate. Increase in educational attainment or economic progress does not lead to a switch in political party or ideology for Black and Jewish Americans (see Sigelman 1991, for an analysis on Jewish Americans). But there might be a correlation between interracial romantic relations and similarity in political ideology between Black and Jewish Americans, primarily because of the family formation that results from such unions. Black and Jewish Americans tend to be deeply united politically and ideologically. Blacks and Jews are also very committed to the Democratic Party, with both Black and Jewish women giving slightly more of their votes to the party than their male counterparts.

According to Kaba (2011c): "Since the 1960s, Black and Jewish Americans have been the groups most loyal to the Democratic Party. On average these two groups have given no less than 3 out of every 4 of their votes to the Democratic ticket in national elections since the 1960s" (p.18). In recent years, for example, in the 2006 Congressional Elections, 87% of Jews and 89% of blacks voted for the Democratic Party.³ In the 2000 and 2004 Presidential Election, 79% and 74% of Jews respectively voted for the Democratic Party.⁴ In the 2000 Presidential Election, 94% of Black women and 85% of Black men voted for the Democratic Party. In the 2004 Presidential Election, Black American women gave 90% of their vote to the Democrat Party, while 86% of Black men voted for the Democratic Party (Bositis, 2005, pp. 5-8). According to Mellman and Strauss (2005):

"There was a significant gender gap among Jewish voters in November 2004 [Presidential Election].... Though Jewish men voted for Kerry 70-28% (a 42% margin), Jewish women voted for Kerry 82-16% (a 66% margin).... The strongest Democratic subgroups were Jewish women who were 60 years of age or older (90% for Kerry...) and Jewish women under 30 years of age (88% for Kerry...)" (p.1).⁵

In the 2008 Presidential Election, 83% of Jews voted for Democrat Barack Obama (that high voting rate is second only to African Americans, 95%; 96% for Black women and 95% for Black men) (Kaba, 2011c, pp. 2 & 18; Bositis, 2008, pp.12-16). According to Caswell (2009): "His [Barack Obama] Jewish support was particularly significant because it was seen as a potential weakness in the campaign for the electoral votes of Florida" (p.396). In the conclusion of a review of *Strangers in the Land: Blacks, Jews, Post-Holocaust America* (2005), Margolies (2007) presents this interesting observation: "One may, however, speculate about his [author Eric J. Sundquist] conclusion regarding the present-day divisions of black and Jewish communities. Sundquist's *Strangers in the Land* was published in 2005. According to the New York Times, the 2006 midterm Congressional elections saw 89% of black voters voting for Democrats, as did 88% of Jews. One wonders whether in their defined apartness they are not now closer together than before" (p.816).

Furthermore, Jewish Americans continue to show strong support for America's first Black president even at a time when the country is experiencing serious economic problems. For example, according to an August 22-27, 2011 Gallup Poll results, 83% of Black Americans, 56% of Hispanic Americans and 42% of White Americans approved of the job that President Barack Obama was doing.⁶ An August 2011 Gallup report shows survey results from January 1, 2008 to April 9, 2011 that claim that in 2011, 65% of Jewish Americans approved of the job that President Obama is doing (p.19).⁷ Let us now examine some of the factors that might have contributed to the positive family and political unity between Blacks and Jews in the United States.

Factors Contributing to the Family and Political Unity Between Black and Jewish Americans

A number of important interrelated factors may be contributing to the family and political unity between Blacks and Jews in the United States. This paper will examine the following interrelated three factors: (1) Old World Racial and Geographic Ties and the Old Testament Bible; (2) Similar Historical Experiences of Oppression; and (3) the 1960s United States Civil Rights Movement. Let us examine each of these three interrelated factors.

Old World Racial and Geographic Ties and the Old Testament Bible

Geographically, religiously and racially, the continent of Africa shares a unique relationship with people of Jewish and Arab descent. If one carefully examines the world map, one tends to observe two important things.

The first is that Africa is right at the center of the world. This author has claimed that the Democratic Republic of Congo, in Middle Africa shares land border with nine other African nations, which makes it a “skip and a jump” from that nation to anywhere in Africa. Just as Congo, D.R. is a “skip and a jump” to all other African nations, so also it is a “skip and a jump” from Africa to anywhere on Planet Earth.

The second observation is that due to the construction of the Suez Canal by 1869, almost all of the landmass of Africa (11.635 million square miles) became an island. However, Africa is not connected by land to any other part of the planet, except through the Egyptian-Gaza/Israel land border. This means that for a long time in history, the only way outside of the continent by land was through Egypt to what is today Gaza/Israel. This then suggests that there has been a long history of human interactions between Africa and the Arabs and Jews. It is this relationship that contributes to the relatively significant number of Black Africans to have Jewish and Arab blood and a significant number of Jews and Arabs to have Black African blood.

Just as a large number of Black people in the Old World (from North, East and Southern Africa) have Jewish blood and, Jews in Israel also have Black blood, so also in the New World (especially in the U.S.) a large number of Blacks have Jewish blood and a large number of Jews have Black blood. For example, Steinberg (1999) points out that: “... Ethiopian Jews are both African and Jews...” (p.136). According to Strier and Roer-Strier (2005): “Ethiopian immigration to Israel essentially formed two waves occurring in the 1980s and 1990s and involving approximately 80,000 people” (p.124; also see Weingrod and Levy, 2006, p.698). Elias and Kemp (2010) point out that Ethiopian Jews in Israel numbered close to 100,000 (p.74). In their study of Black Jews (the Lemba) of Southern Africa, Spurdle and Jenkins (1996) report that:

“The results suggest that > or = 50% of the Lemba Y chromosomes are Semitic in origin, approximately 40% are Negroid, and the ancestry of the remainder cannot be resolved. These Y-specific genetic findings are consistent with Lemba oral tradition, and analysis of the history of Jewish people and their association with Africa indicates that the historical facts are not incompatible with theories concerning the origin of the Lemba” (p.1126; also see Bruder, 2008; Hull, 2009). This then brings us to the Old Testament Bible. The story of Blacks and Jews is a religious one too (see Callahan, 2006). Their history of suffering and then overcoming suffering to become among the most gifted and brilliant humans in the world is very inspiring (The story of Barack Obama, for example). The Old Testament Bible, which is thousands of years old, and contains stories of important interactions between Jews and Black people in Africa is a perfect example of how deep the relations between Black Africans and the Semitic people (Jews and Arabs) are. One of the most known stories of the Old Testament Bible is that of the prophet Moses leading his people back to Israel from Africa (see Wright 1995). In the PBS Television documentary entitled “From Swastika to Jim Crow,” it is noted that: “Since the time of slavery, Blacks have in some ways identified with the Jewish experience. They compared their situation in the American South to that of Jews in Egypt, as expressed in Black spirituals such as ‘Go Down, Moses.’ The longing for their exodus inspired the popularity of ‘Zion’ in the names of many Black churches. Black nationalists used the Zionist movement as a model for their own Back-to-Africa movement.”⁸

As the examples above show, Blacks and Jews also tend to reside close to one another in the Old World as they do in the New World, especially in the United States. They tend to reside together in high numbers or proportions in or around major cities in the United States. In the United States this was either their choice or it was forced upon them. For example, In a review of *Non-White America: Californians Coloring Outside Ethnic Lines, 1925-1955* (2008, by Varzally), Kropp (2009) writes that:

“The wealth of scholarship tracing California's racial and ethnic history and its patterns of segregation and discrimination contextualizes Varzally's study of how Japanese, Chinese, black, Jewish, Mexican, Filipino, and Native Americans understood their relationships to each other. Hemmed in by restrictive housing, employment, and education laws, minorities found themselves living cheek by jowl in urban neighborhoods. Varzally argues that ‘In these shared spaces they did not simply coexist but actively intermingled. Minorities argued, empathized, fought, allied, collaborated, and then revised their notions of community to accommodate these complex interactions’”(p.1210).

Glenn (2006) notes of “...the integration of African Americans into Jewish neighborhoods, schools, and businesses...” (p.120). Schlosser et al. (2007) write of “...cities where Jews and Blacks became neighbors...” (p.120)

According to Dashefsky (2010), as of 2010, there were 13.4 million Jews in the world and 5.275 million in the United States, and that the following are estimates of the numbers of Jews residing in or around major U.S. cities: 2,007,850 in New York City; 684,950 in Los Angeles; 345,700 in San Francisco; 270,500 in Chicago; 229,100 in Boston; 215,600 in Washington, D.C.; 119,800 in Atlanta; 91,400 in Baltimore; 89,000 in San Diego; 83,900 in Denver; 82,900 in Phoenix; and 81,500 in Cleveland. Also, as of 2010, there were 70,800 Jews in South Africa (pp.17-18 & 21).⁹ For Black Americans, the following were their populations in some of those same cities or regions in the United States as of the year 2000: New York City (2,129,762); Los Angeles (415,195); Philadelphia (655,824); Chicago (1,065,009); Baltimore (418,951) and Washington, D.C. (343,312) (Dinnerstein et al., 2003, p.219).

The above examples contribute to the bond between Black and Jewish Americans today, especially as increasing numbers of them continue to become formerly educated and learn of their similar histories. Let us now turn to the similar experience of oppression of people of Black African and Jewish descent.

Similar Experiences of Oppression

According to Mevorach (2007): "... Jews and Blacks share the triple collective memory of slavery, exile, and diaspora.... Both groups share a culture of "remembered history" in which commemoration of the past simultaneously represents a political action and enables the centrality of Israel and Africa, for Jews and Blacks respectively, as abstract homelands" (pp.208-209; also see Adelman, 1995). In an article focusing on the extremely high incarceration rates of Black people and their continuous long suffering and humiliation in the United States, Wacquant (2010) writes: "Like the Jewish ghetto in Renaissance Europe, the Black Belt of the American metropolis in the Fordist age combined four elements - stigma, constraint, spatial confinement, and institutional encasement - to permit the economic extraction and social ostracization of a population deemed congenitally inferior, defiled and defiling by virtue of its lineal connection to bondage" (p.81). Bornstein (2005) points out that: "... racist pseudo-scientists of the day [early 1900s] regularly viewed Blacks, Jews, and Irish as inferior races and would jump from one to the other often on the same page or even in the same paragraph" (p.370).

In a review of the book *Bridges and Boundaries: African Americans and American Jews* (1992, by Salzman et al.), Wright (1995) notes that: "...no two American ethnic groups have been more perceived as a tandem, as linked by a common social marginality and by the tendency of each to see the other's struggle in light of its own history, than Afro-Americans and Jews" (p.148; Glaser 1997). There is relative historical similarity between the oppression of people of Black African and Jewish descent by people of European descent. For example, today, apart from people of European descent, Blacks and Jews are the most spread out in significant to substantial numbers all over planet Earth (Kaba, 2004, 2006bc; Sheffer, 2005). This is directly a result of the actions of people of European descent. In the case of Jews, from 70 A.D., they were forced out of their homeland in large numbers by leaders of the Roman Empire who conquered and controlled most of the world during that period.

For Black Africans, they too were physically captured by Europeans in their homeland, put in chains and shipped to the New World to serve as slaves for hundreds of years. In the past 125 years alone, both Jews and Africans again suffered heavily when several millions of Jews were killed by the Germans and their allies. For Black Africans tens of millions have died due to racism in the New World and colonialism in Africa by Europeans (Reader 1998; Franklin & Moss, Jr., 1994). Both Jews and Africans have just been really freed from European domination in the post World War II era. Israel, like tens of African and Black Caribbean nations fought and gain their political independence from the United Kingdom in the post World War II era. Also when Adolf Hitler took over power in Germany in 1933, a high number of Jewish professors in Germany and other parts of Europe had to flee for their lives, with many of them coming to the United States. Many of them ended up being offered jobs at all Black colleges and universities:

"While the most famous [Jewish] refugees, like Albert Einstein, were welcomed into the hallowed halls of Eastern academia, most of these refugee scholars faced an academic world that was aloof, if not downright hostile. Much to their surprise, many of them were welcomed into a group of colleges that the vast majority of white American professors ignored – the historically all-Black colleges in the South. For the Black colleges – including Howard University, Hampton Institute, and Tougaloo and Talladega Colleges – the refugee professors provided the opportunity to add great talent to their faculty; for the professors,

the arrangement provided a new home, a classroom of students eager to learn, and an insider's look at America that few ever see. While most of these pairings between Jewish refugees and Black colleges began as marriages of convenience, very often they blossomed into love matches that lasted a lifetime."¹⁰

In addition, this author has observed that both Black Africans and Jews have been partially or permanently impacted racially and culturally by European colonization. For example, while most Black Africans managed to retain most of their Black blood, because their blood is not easily diluted by the blood of other racial groups (Romano, 2006, p. 48), they did lose most of their original culture or traditions and religions. For Jews on the other hand, they managed to keep most of their culture and their religion (Judaism), but lost some of their original blood or genetic make-up due to intermarriage with Europeans. That is why many European and American Jews are visibly different from their brothers and sisters in the Middle East — a significant number of them now have blue eyes, blond hair and very white or pink skin color just like people who originate from the northernmost parts of Europe, such as Scandinavian nations or northern Russia. Jews who remain in Israel and the Middle East for the most part look just like their Arab cousins, with relatively dark skin or complexion. For example, according to Schlosser et al. (2007):

“Another important contributor to the Black-Jewish schism centers on issues of visibility. Specifically, we are talking about aspects of one's person that could identify (or be used to identify) one as Black or Jewish. Some examples of this include skin color, facial features, body type, and surname. For Blacks, the visibility of skin color has contributed to the perpetuation of racism and the resulting socioeconomic discrimination and oppression. In contrast, most Ashkenazijews have been able to limit the effects of antisemitism by "passing" as White (i.e., being seen as not Jewish)... being seen as White in the United States is typically equated with an assumption of being Christian. Passing refers to the actions taken by a person to hide an aspect of her or his identity that is not readily apparent or visible to the naked eye. For example, Ashkenazi Jews often passed as part of the White U.S. majority by changing their names; giving up speaking Hebrew, Yiddish, or both and eschewing Jewish cultural traditions in favor of Christian ones. Passing has afforded these Jews with White privilege... and often greater socioeconomic status than Blacks, but it also came at the cost of their Jewish culture and identity.

The ability of Jews with white skin to pass was a likely consequence of the governmental focus on White/non-White distinctions in an effort to systematically oppress Blacks. Hence, the ability of many Jews to rise in their socioeconomic status at a greater rate than Blacks (because of racism) has also contributed to the Black-Jewish schism. Not all Jews, however, have the same ability to pass (e.g., Orthodox Jews). Finally, most Blacks can trace some White ancestry in their family histories either as a consequence of White slave owners raping African women during slavery or consensual interracial relationships... Regardless of the origin of the White ancestry, fewer Blacks can pass because of their skin color, other aspects of their phenotype, laws that once prohibited passing, and social mores against such a decision” (pp.120-121). Let us now turn to the next contributing factor for the unity between Black and Jewish Americans — United States Civil Rights Movement.

United States Civil Rights Movement: Black and Jewish Americans

According to Fobanjong (2002): “In the forefront of the struggle for the civil rights of African Americans was the American Jewish Community” (p.125). According to Schlosser et al. (2007):

“There are several reasons that Blacks and Jews became allies in the fight for civil rights. The shared histories of oppression have helped shape the lives of generations of Blacks and Jews. These histories of oppression contributed to shared values, such as social and community responsibility and identification with the "underdog" ... the role of religious teachings, such as the importance of love and understanding, in contributing to their shared values. At the time of the civil rights movement, the Jewish community was still reeling from the effects of the Shoah, and they continued to experience antisemitism.... As a result, many Jews related to the plight of American Blacks and felt a certain kindred spirit in the struggle against oppression. seeing the value of such an alliance, many Blacks accepted help from Jews.... The relations that developed between Blacks and Jews during the peak of the civil rights movement have been described as cooperative and loving.... Not only did Blacks and Jews band together socially and politically on the basis of their shared histories of oppression and the value they placed on social justice ... but both Blacks and Jews stood to benefit from a society that was free from discrimination....” (p.119).

A sad story that shows how much determination Black and Jewish Americans had to fight for Civil Rights was the murders by segregationists in the American South (Mississippi) in 1964 of two young Jewish men named Andrew Goodman (20 years old anthropology student) from New York, and Michael Schwerner (24 years old social worker), from New York, and a 21 year-old Black male named James Chaney, who had traveled there to help blacks gain their Civil and Human Rights through voting in elections. Young people, many of whom were Jews contributed substantially to fighting Jim Crow laws in the American South. As Vorspan (1993) notes:

“In 1964 when the Mississippi Summer was organized to combat legal segregation in the then most savagely resistant state of the Union, more than 50 percent of the young people who volunteered from all parts of the U.S. were Jewish youngsters. Two of the three martyrs of that struggle, killed by mobs in Mississippi, were Jewish; the third was Black. Most of the funds raised by such organizations as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee were secured from Jews. Rabbis marched with Martin Luther King throughout the south; many were jailed, some were beaten. Jewish political leverage – often in a three-faith setting – helped to produce the landmark civil rights laws of the 60’s” (p.9). If there is any one story that symbolizes the efforts of Jews in fighting for the freedom of Black Americans in the U.S., the story of those three young men is it. In the case of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (the leader of the Civil Rights Movement), if the two Jewish and one Black young men mentioned above who were murdered in Mississippi in 1964 are the symbolic figures of the role of Jews during the Civil Rights era, then Dr. King, Jr. is the glue that unites Black and Jewish Americans today.

Conclusion

This paper starts with the claims that Black and Jewish Americans are united by family or blood and that they are also united by political ideology or political party (the Democratic Party). The paper points to evidence that show that there are hundreds of thousands or more of people in the United States who have Black and Jewish parents or family members. The paper also points to many examples supporting the claim that Black and Jewish Americans give a very high percentage of their votes to the Democratic Party during national elections. Finally, the paper claims that some of the factors that have contributed to this unity between Blacks and Jews in the United States are: (1) Old World Racial and Geographic Ties and the Old Testament Bible; (2) Similar Historical Experience of Oppression; and (3) the 1960s United States Civil Rights Movement.

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