

A Blueprint for Black Power Analysis of the Bufoonery of Black Conservatives

by

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Abstract

Black conservatives have received considerable attention from the white media because their ideas are thoroughly applauded and widely supported (Steele, 1991; Loury, 1995). On all sides of the intellectual debate, everyone seems to think they have the answers to the ills of this society. Amos Wilson wrote about Black Neo-Conservatism and discussed the social development of real characters such as Clarence Thomas, Thomas Sowell, Michael Steele and Herman Cain. The purpose of this article is to study the contemporary perspective of Black conservatives from the view of Amos Wilson's (1998) "Blueprint for Black Power: A moral, political and economic imperative for the twenty-first century".

Keywords: Black Power, Black Conservatives, Amos Wilson, African American Historical Thought

Black conservatives have received considerable attention from the white media because their ideas are thoroughly applauded and widely supported (Steele, 1991; Loury, 1995). To be black and conservative, however, is a strange oxymoron. For a person who has had their heritage denigrated and their culture and history denied and destroyed, it is strange that they would choose to wholeheartedly and blindly support the very system that caused the self-hate. Black conservatives have easy and open access to the media, so conservative values and their positions are more publicized (Williams 2006, Steele, 1990; Loury, 1995). On all sides of the intellectual debate, everyone seems to think they have the answers to the ills of this society. The purpose of this article is to study the contemporary perspective of Black conservatives from the view of Amos Wilson's (1998) "Blueprint for Black Power: A moral, political and economic imperative for the twenty-first century".

Wilson was a prolific scholar in the realm of black intellectual thought (1978; 1990; 1992; 1993; 1998; 1999), but there are many scholars in academia who have never been introduced to his political analysis or social commentary. In his lectures and publications, he reminds us that a person who conserves is saving an item of value, and the idea of being a conservative is to maintain existing institutions. By definition, conservatives are hostile to change and/or opposed to hasty changes or innovations. If the preference is to have the structure of the constitution to be conserved and to remain as it was originally written, then it is understandable for a white intellectual in the United States to be a conservative. Conservatives think about, prosperity, freedom and how life was in the past. However, prosperity and freedom are just hollow words without meaning because a certain group of people (i.e., Africans) were enslaved when the words were constructed. In sum, there is a need for a blue print of black power analysis of the bufoonery of Black conservatives.

Wilson's Thoughts

Analyses and social critiques of Black thought were published by prominent scholars such as e. Franklin Frazier (1957) and Harold Cruse (1967), but Amos Wilson thoroughly dissected the social impact of the Black conservative movement. Cruse published his book in 1967 and there were no references to Black conservatives 45 years ago. The last chapter in Wilson's (1998) "Blueprint for Black Power" is titled "The Crisis of Leadership", and this title is related to Cruse's (1967) book in which he provides an historical analysis of the failure of Black leadership. Wilson (1998) wrote a section on Black Neo-Conservatism that sheds light on the social development of real characters such as Clarence Thomas, Thomas Sowell, Michael Steele and Herman Cain. The aforementioned characters were respectively a Supreme Court Justice, an author, a political organizer, and a business owner. These are only a few names, but Black conservatives have infiltrated every influential aspect of society.

In the “Blueprint for Black Power: A moral and political economic imperative for the twenty-first century”, Wilson (1998) reminds us that, “This group of theorists and polemicists has no significant organization or constituency in the Afrikan American community to speak of (p.837).” He continues, “the Black neoconservative establishment is used as cannon fodder in defense of White racism and domination against both Black and White liberals and Black nationalist” (p.837). White conservatives, republicans and the right-wing media label President Obama as a “socialist” because of the fears of the constant call for government intervention to uplift the socially depressed and politically oppressed Black masses. Conservatives have hostile views opposing the belief that governments and industry should make special efforts on behalf of Blacks in the form of reparations (Loury, 1995).

Wilson was astute in explaining how many Black conservatives have been appointed to influential offices and professional positions and how they receive favorable exposure in the mainstream print and electronic media. Wilson (1998) cited the work of Cruse (1967) to discuss the impact of these well-paid Black conservative propagandists. Cruse (1967) reminds us that even though Black conservatives are the prime beneficiaries of the maximum social, educational and professional advances resulting from civil rights legislation, they paradoxically oppose the very collectivistic civil rights activities which have made their occupational positions possible.

Black conservatives have no intention, ability or will to develop an internal Black base from which to build political power. They function only to encourage the government to use its punitive power to chastise and control the “bad behavior” they see among Blacks. Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas is a prime example of this tendency among Black conservatives. The actions of Clarence Thomas are the most perverted display of dysfunctional conservative thinking. His legal decisions helped to facilitate the execution of a potentially innocent man named Troy Davis in Georgia in 2011. The record of Thomas on the Supreme Court has been embarrassingly unsympathetic to the rights of those who have been wronged by the system (Merida & Fletcher, 2007). His only interest is to interpret the constitution.

Black conservatives present themselves as the antithesis of the bad niggers by overcompensating with extreme anti-black rhetoric. Politics, academia, the media and the private sector have all nurtured high-profile neoconservatives to be “spokepersons” for the race. According to Wilson (1998), “The process of discrediting Afrocentric ideology; discrediting its rationales, undergirding thought and scholarship; assassinating the characters of its proponents; intimidating, isolating and dis-employing them, is in full-throttle” (p.232). An effective strategy involves the invention and employment in vastly increased numbers of a species of Blacks called conservatives. Wilson (1998) reminds us that in the academic realm, the establishment of neoconservative viewpoints serves “to prevent among African American peoples the dissemination of an Afrocentric ideology that effectively challenges the basic assumptions which justify and undergird White Supremacy, and to thwart the coalescence of an African-centered consciousness and identity among African peoples through the generation of ideological confusion, fragmentation and contradiction” (p.233).

Thus, the key to the white establishment's maintenance of a white supremacist structure is to permit the Black conservatives to have open access to media outlets that circulate their ideas while concomitantly suppressing African-centered ideas.

Uncle Tom Thinking and Think Tanks

To circulate ideas, it is influential to have an organization that can back your ideas. Wilson understood this dynamic and that is why he emphasized Think Tanks as a viable structure to gain power. Wilson (1998) posits that Black conservatives have no significant organization in our community. According to Wilson (1998), they have managed to "worm" into the consciousness of the community and society in general. White conservatives, on the other hand, have organized on every social realm (Wilson, 1998). In politics, old school Dixiecrats like Strom Thurmond have resurrected into the modern day Tea Party. These types of groups have always shown their pronounced hostility to racial coalition. They have a reputation for shameless exclusion and this has cost them votes of entire racial groups, jeopardizing their electability and long-term survival. However, it is argued here that an investment in Black conservatives is a strategy designed to promote a re-packaged racism.

In a book called the "American Directory of Certified Uncle Toms" (2002), it indicates that Black conservatives share certain characteristics that are appealing to whites. Perhaps this is why President Nixon's political associate, H.R. Halderman (1994), asserted that Nixon covertly encouraged working with Uncle Toms instead of militants. Uncle Toms generally oppose affirmative action, set-aside programs, minimum-wage laws, welfare, race-conscious regulations, and reparations for slavery. They favor the death penalty, "get tough" crime policies, privatization, and voucher systems for public housing and for education (Lowe, 2002). They support American intervention in South and Central America, and are unquestioning supporters of Israel in the battle for the Middle East (Lowe, 2002). Black conservatives are the staunches supporters of the old Uncle Tom mantra related to the one-negro rule: if one negro can make it, only individual Black laziness prevents the rest of the Blacks from achieving success (Lowe, 2002). Hence, Black conservatives appeal to whites primarily because of their often-harsh criticism of "Black behavior," placing it – and not racism – as the cause of Blacks' degraded condition. They project a perverse malevolence toward their own poor Black people and relish every public opportunity to voice it (Lowe, 2002).

The blame the victim, tout the tormenter philosophy is the hallmark of both Black conservatism and Uncle Tomism. This phenomenon coincides with Wilson's view that the central function and role of the Black neoconservative is to put a Black face on White Power. Shelby Steele (1990), Thomas Sowell (1996) and Glen Loury (1995) are notable Black conservatives that provide window dressing at white Think Tanks. Clarence Thomas also served on a white Think Tank before joining the U.S. Supreme Court.

The American Enterprise Institute, the Heritage Foundation, the Hoover Institute, the Olin Foundation, and the Bradley Foundation are examples of white policy making organizations which support Black conservatives in numerous ways. Black conservatives and Uncle Tom thinking have been a reliable and trustworthy voice for the white Think Tanks that have been used as a political stance against the liberal foundations which historically propped up and supported the civil rights establishments (Wilson, 1998).

Fractured Psyches and the Falsification of Consciousness

It is not in the best interest of time to individually explore the psychic phenomena that has created Black conservative thought. Human beings have the right to think and believe whatever they desire. Therefore, it is not a personal attack on the individual character, but we need to understand the nature of how a system can create a delusional behavior in which the logic of self-preservation fails. In “Blueprint for Black Power”, Wilson (1998) does an elaborate job convincing the reader that Black conservative ideology is disempowering for Afrikan peoples. Wilson highlights the reality that Black neoconservatives cannot present Black America with proactive proposals for Afrikan liberation and empowerment, but only reactionary and accommodative ones. As a psychologist, Wilson was a master at explaining the psychic and mental nature of our dilemma as a people.

Prior to the “Blueprint for Black Power” (1998), Wilson wrote “The Falsification of Afrikan Consciousness: Eurocentric history, psychiatry and the politics of white supremacy” (1993) to delve into the impact of historical and societal amnesia. Similarly, decades ago, the black psychiatrist Frantz Fanon, also explored the consequences of having a fractured psyche. In his classic book, “Black Skin, White Masks” (1957), he states that the environment and society are responsible for our delusion, and once that has been said, the rest will follow of itself, and what that is we know the end of the world” (p. 216). In other words, there is hope and a possibility to regain a proper consciousness if we understand how we are being controlled. Our fractured psyches have been created by a world we did not construct. Our consciousness has been falsified and we must end this inferiority and self-hate by addressing it in the mirror. In the mirror you see yourself. Similar to Wilson (1993), Fanon (1957) reflects that the Negro is seeking to protest against the inferiority that he feels historically. Since in all periods the Negro has been an inferior, he attempts to react with a superiority complex.

Many Black conservatives seem to have a collective mental lapse in terms of recognizing that there are social factors that have created the dividing of two nations, one black and one white (Hacker, 1992). Historical amnesia is key, and Fanon, like Wilson, understood the seriousness of the matter. According to Fanon (1957), “Without a Negro past, without a Negro future, it was impossible for me to live my Negrohood. Not yet white, no longer wholly black, I was damned (p.117).”

Moreover, Wilson (1998) exposes the dubious argument that Black neoconservatives make that past oppression of Blacks and their continuing racial domination by Whites does not provide satisfactory explanations of the current socioeconomic subordination and marginality of people of African descent. Hence, historical amnesia has wiped away the past.

It is interesting to note that many of the Black male conservatives are married to white women. Perhaps this explains some of the self-hate that could slowly ooze from one's consciousness. Fanon (1957) states that if a Black male "is overwhelmed to such a degree by the wish to be white, it is because he lives in a society that makes his inferiority complex possible...to the identical degree to which society creates difficulties for him, he will find himself thrust into a neurotic situation" (p.100). Clarence Thomas is both a classic and contemporary example of this type of individual neurosis that is contaminating the political, social and legal enterprise of the United States (Brock, 2002; Mayer and Abramson, 1994). This is stated so broadly because the neurotic behavior of a relatively young Black conservative like Thomas on the U.S. Supreme Court has ushered in an era of magnified self-hate.

We know Clarence Thomas, however, it is also important to remember Glen Loury? Loury was emerging as exactly the kind of person he had warned black America to avoid (Woo, 2005). His story highlights the appearance of Black conservatives. He was the darling of the Republican Party in the 1980s and a favorite of the Reagan administration (Woo, 2005). In addition, he was an outspoken and highly visible supporter of Clarence Thomas and wrote a book that blasts affirmative action and criticizes the actions of inner-city blacks (Loury, 1995). He was one of the most sought-after conservative radio and television commentators in the country. However, his fractured psyche has been given a little self-medication. A few years ago, he was labeled by the media as one of the most prominent Black conservatives in the nation, but he has supposedly shed that label and drastically shifted his politics to the left (Loury, 1995). He began to reflect on the damage he had done to the progressive movement of people who looked like him (Loury, 1995). In an article reflecting on Loury's mental transition, Woo (2005) states Loury eventually realized that "many of the things he had said or written were damaging the cause he was trying to further – the advancement of black society (p.27)." Loury (1995) also asserts:

What I didn't realize was that my role as a kind of rank-breaking truth teller, a black who wouldn't adhere to party lines, who speaks his own mind, was doing great damage politically to the causes I believed ...when I was aligning myself with Republican and conservative interests, I thought I was just telling the truth as I saw it and that it was needed to be said. When in fact, I was helping to legitimate a political movement that had no interest whatsoever in promoting the well-being of the people I cared about. I ought to have been smarter about it. (p.34)

From a Wilsonian perspective, one can take the position that it is not easy to be smart when your psyche is fractured and your consciousness is falsified.

Four Decade Analysis (1980-2020)

The first conference of Black conservatives in 1980 was sponsored by the Reagan-inspired Institute of Contemporary Studies, and attracted about 125 Black lawyers, physicians, dentists, Ivy League professors, and commentators (Council of Black Internal Affairs, 2002). A year later, when Thomas Sowell announced that he would start an organization explicitly intended to counter the NAACP, he reportedly received immediate pledges of \$1 million from white foundations and corporations. Despite the investment, the effort failed (Council on Black Internal Affairs, 2002). In 1987, however, Glen Loury was selected to be the next under secretary of education in the U.S. Department of Education (Woo, 2005). If not for personal problems, Loury was in line to be the second-highest-ranking person in the Reagan administration.

At this juncture, it is critical that we examine a four decade (1980-2020) analysis of the entrenchment of conservative views and predict how Black conservative thinking will impact the current body politic. In the 1980s, the strong opinions of an actor influenced the political landscape. Ronald Reagan was a Hollywood actor who acted perfectly for the corporate enterprise. Reagan's financial deregulations ushered in an era of rampant greed in finance and the Republicans ruthlessly hacked back New Deal and Great Society social programs to finance tax cuts for their Wall Street cronies (Ferguson, 2012). While we often hear neoconservatives invoking the spirit of Reagan when philosophical thoughts on conservative values are espoused, in the decade of the 80s, both Reagan and G.H. Bush set the foundation for the contemporary views on conservatism. Reagan's Vice-President was G.H. Bush who eventually became President. G.H. Bush was ex-CIA, so the clandestine movement to usher in more conservative values was in place. In fact, it is G.H. Bush who nominated the controversial Black conservative Clarence Thomas for the U.S. Supreme Court.

A slight change occurred in the 1990s when President Bill Clinton and his administration created policies that were more liberal in tone (Robinson, 2001). As a two-term President, Clinton's policies caused the conservative movement to slowly simmer and then boil over to the election of another Bush, G.W. Bush. As like-minded family members, the republican and conservative views of his father were re-energized. Living through the early 2000s with the re-election of G.W. Bush, the United States experienced a repression of human rights. The creation of Homeland Security initiatives and the Patriot Act have been the culmination of conservative views that have put a stranglehold on true freedom (Robinson, 2001).

The conservative movement created an economic collapse in the financial sector, the mortgage crisis, fabricated wars, and legal proceedings that have limited the opportunities for freedom and equality in this society. A change was requested by the American people and the election of President Obama in 2008 was a history making event. However, the election of a Black man as the President of the United States caused a vicious backlash and a perverted rise in conservative views. The Tea Party was created and formed as a political movement to push both a conservative and racist agenda. In the midst of this political climate, the Republicans selected a Black man named Michael Steele to be Chairman of the Republican National Convention. This is strange because Black people (after the Reconstruction era) have never directed Republican affairs prior to Obama. Steele was presented as a ploy to divert the political intentions of African Americans. During the campaign for Obama's second term, an attempt was made to find another Black man to combat Obama. In a mysterious rise to the forefront, the Black conservative Republican named Herman Cain was touted as the best the Republicans had to offer. Herman Cain and his Black conservative views failed. However, the views of Cain glaringly revealed the buffoonish and intellectually clownish mindset that can result when black people are used as titular heads for the conservative movement. It must be observed and not overlooked that the Black Supreme Court Justice, Clarence Thomas, was involved with and/or associated with the neo-conservative Tea Party because his wife, Virginia, was a speaker, convener and supporter for Tea Party events.

During Obama's presidency, the presence of Black conservatives appeared to be purposefully created. In a racist society, it is imperative to seek changes from multiple levels. Yet Black conservatives seem to be pawns in the game to thwart progress. A buffoon espouses trickery to please the master and Black conservatives become puppets in the old game called divide and conquer. Even more disappointing is how the media helps to generate so-called progressive black thinkers like Tavis Smiley and Cornel West to attack the Presidency of Obama. While Obama's policies have been both liberal and conservative, there is no blind support that all President Obama has done is progressive. It is understood why Smiley and West are disappointed, but their opposition to Obama is just as bad as Black conservatives attacking Obama. It is emphasized here that any Black conservative who thinks that this day and age requires conservative thinking is out of step with establishing true equality.

In January 2012, there was a nationally televised debate that appeared to be an open and sanctioned Klan rally. During the 2012 South Carolina Primary elections debate it was revealing to hear the white conservative Newt Gingrich berate the Black conservative Juan Williams. Gingrich was the candidate and Williams was a moderator during the debate. Gingrich was irritated by a question from Williams and there was an openly condescending tone sent from the candidate to the moderator and the racially-charged environment found jeers from the audience supporting the position espoused by Gingrich (Fox Nation, 2012). Williams is an established, approved and certified Black conservative of the white establishment. However, he was treated like Dred Scott by his fellow white conservative brother Newt Gingrich. Gingrich won the Primary in South Carolina and the race-baited politics were in full effect.

Thus, any Black person attempting to be a part of this kind of racist thinking espoused by conservatives is truly manipulated away from a progressive consciousness. Williams is very connected in society and American culture. His views are well respected by the media and that is why he was serving his employer (i.e., Fox News) to participate in the 2012 debate in South Carolina. His track record is thorough and he has worked for the Washington Post, National Public Radio (NPR) and Fox News Channel. As mentioned, Black conservatives have easy access to the media to flaunt their buffoonish diatribe. Thus, it makes sense that it was the conservative Fox News enterprise that rescued Williams when he was removed from NPR for making black skin white mask comments about immigration. His conservative views against another minority (i.e., Hispanics) in the United States made him sound just like a white person.

In fact, a strong tenet of Black conservative thought concerning other minorities is to compare American Blacks and various immigrant groups on economic achievement and professional success. Black conservatives would say Black Americans lacked the same positive virtues to excel. Wilson (1998) refutes this insidious comparison and he emphasizes that people are socialized and members of immigrant groups have been socialized to function as they do. Human beings are diverse, but it becomes buffoonish when a Williams, Thomas and Cain attempt to make sense in a racist society. They end up looking like intellectual clowns. At some point their views were valued by the white establishment because black conservatives support the notion that ignorant Black people are the sole reason for their demise. It sounds so clear, eloquent and real when a conservative Black person opens their ill-informed mouth and manipulated mind to excoriate the Black community in which they have a lost connection. It is not as though Black conservatives cannot change their views over time, but the question becomes, "Is the change genuine?"

Future Direction

Black conservatives utilize and advocate the theme that other Blacks are not productive in society because of internalized deficiencies. However, the Black conservative movement can be neutralized with the presence of a very different power play. If other so-called minority groups such as women, Hispanics, or Native Americans made a successful bid to the White House, then the discourse would change. If there is another force such as the aforementioned examples, then Black conservatives would more than likely lose their political impact without the white male ally as President. In the realm of politics, we can expect the possibility of a woman to be President in the near future. With Sarah Palin, Michelle Bachman and Hillary Clinton receiving significant support during their political rise, the future of women in politics looks good. If Obama was not the candidate in 2004, there was a high probability that Hillary Clinton would have been elected as President.

It is logical to predict that there will be intense racial politics in the next few years with the ascendancy of the Obama era. The structure of American society has created a complex mixture of ideologies which seem to be worsening with the way information is now gathered. The media is controlled by a few and those few are in control of the economy. We are no longer as dependent on the print media as the internet has taken over how information is acquired. The quick access to information can, however, be misleading. Therefore, the power to influence minds is strategic, and Black conservatives have become a potent intellectual force to stop or hinder progressive movements in society.

Amos Wilson spent his intellectual skills dissecting the social psychology of our dilemma. In between the pages of his work are the answers and the plans. Many before Wilson have written “plans” for our liberation, so we do not need to continually reinvent solutions. Wilson cites Chancellor Williams’ (1987) classic text “The Deconstruction of Black Civilization: Great Issues of a race from 4500 B.C. to 2000 A.D.” in “Blueprint for Black Power” (1998), but what was not mentioned was his later work “The Rebirth of African Civilization” (1993) in which Williams also provides an outline for Black self-determination. I take the position that Wilson should get a posthumous Nobel Prize for his magnum opus, “Blueprint for Black Power” (1998). It is deeply filled with sociological, political and economic analyses. Although Wilson is now deceased, his words have helped to provide an acute awareness of our contemporary reality. Wilson was astute on many topics relative to Black conservatives and many of his predictions have been on target. As a black power advocate, Wilson completely dismisses the Black conservative view that there is no need for an African-centered sociocultural and/or politico-economic system. Black conservatives argue that this approach would retard Black acceptance in a White or multicultural world, but Wilson completely destroys this dubious argument throughout his entire text. What needs to be done to counteract the Black conservative mentality is to establish Progressive Think Tanks to seriously work on collective capitalism.

Racial politics remain intense with Obama’s second term and it will get worse for him, his family and the Black community. Many of President Obama’s decisions have left the Black community confused. However, a thorough reading of the “Blueprint for Black Power” (1998) provides sheer clarity. We can expect the White establishment to continue attacking any view that appears to threaten white privilege. Since the conservative movement has ushered in the philosophy of states rights, there are vicious polemical debates that will brew. Black conservatives will be problematic as Americans search for equal rights under the constitution. The impact of a Black conservative like Ward Connerly, for example, helped to influence the affirmative action academic landscape with Proposition 189 in California. Connerly continued to impact states like Michigan and currently the state of Arizona is a prime example of a state with recognized conservative views that have ignited racial polarization.

The state of Arizona has pushed legislation to remove ethnic studies from the public school system. With laws such as 15-112 in Arizona, the closing of the American mind will happen. Wilson wrote “Blueprint for Black Power” (1998) as a moral, political and economic imperative for the 21st century as a guide to assist Black people in constructing a new reality. In order for his words to not be in vein but to become reality, we must read, prepare and get busy because our freedom depends on it.

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