

The Triple Whammy of Bigotry in the 2008 Election

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It's been awhile since a black man was lynched in America, but the Rove Gang's getting the crowd ginned up for another one and the town's on edge.

The last lynching took place 10 years ago in East Texas Bush Country when three young white racists chained James Byrd, a 49-year-old father of three, to the back of their pickup truck and dragged him down the highway until his body was dismembered.

If John McCain and his character assassins and vote riggers succeed, the next one will occur in November and it may tear apart America's *body politic*.

The 2008 presidential election *will* make history. Americans will elect either their first African American president, their oldest president, or their first woman vice president who, given the medical odds, will have a good chance of becoming the first woman president.

During this election, bigotry is the elephant in the room; everybody is tiptoeing around wearing blindfolds, but it and its spoor are too much to ignore.

As an expression for an evil influence or hex, a "whammy" was added to the vernacular in 1941 when a boxing manager said a "double whammy" was the only way African-American boxer Joe Lewis was ever to be knocked out.

We will soon know whether Barack Obama and the American people have suffered a single, double, or triple whammy and we will all suffer from the assault.

Single Whammy - Overt and Latent Racism

We Americans have traveled a great distance in the past 50 years overcoming cultural racism toward those of us who are descended from slaves. We know we're getting close to the destination when an African American, the child of a white mother and a Kenyan father born into modest circumstances, has had the educational, social and political opportunities to become a United States Senator and a leading candidate for president.

The scenery becomes more diverse as we look at the faces in the multi-cultural and multiracial crowd of 80,000 Americans who stood together in Denver to cheer as Barack Obama accepted his party's nomination.

One week later, the scenery changed dramatically when we arrived in St. Paul and could easily discern the continuing effects of cultural racism reflected in the all-white faces of those who came together to nominate a rich old white man named John McCain, the son and

grandson of class privilege, as their party's candidate.

Eighty percent of Americans say they are "dissatisfied with the way things are going in the United States," and their opinion about who is best qualified to do something about it changes from week to week. Obama's three-point lead going into the Democratic convention was increased by five points after his acceptance speech.

However, after McCain chose Sarah Palin as his vice-presidential running mate, the polls temporarily gave the Republican ticket a two-point lead, but they are now shifting back. Obama currently has a 49 to 44 percent lead with those voters most likely to go to the polls in November.

It's one thing to say you're going to vote for a candidate while talking to another person on the telephone during a "scientific" opinion poll, but it's quite another thing to actually cast one's vote for that person in secret and as a matter of conscience in the voting booth. That precise moment is when latent racism may allow some voters to conceal their shame and to express their hidden prejudice.

We all know that racism exists in America, but it's difficult to measure its full extent and more particularly to predict whether it will be a deciding factor in the 2008 election.

To the extent we're hiring a president when we vote, particularly one named Barack Hussein Obama, a study conducted by two professors (Bertrand & Mullaninathan) in 2001 and 2002 is very revealing. Fictitious resumes were sent in response to 1,300 help-wanted advertisements for a broad range of jobs. Resumes reflecting comparable education and experience were assigned names that sounded either very white or very African-American.

The study found that resumes with white names were 50 percent more likely to get called for an initial interview than blacks. There was also a 30 percent increase in call-backs for white-sounding applicants with higher-quality backgrounds over less qualified whites, while high-quality resumes with black-sounding names were only called back 9 percent of the time.

A Pew Research Center poll conducted in June 2008 found 30 percent of whites and 34 percent of blacks to have "at least some feelings of racial prejudice" in response to "an honest self assessment." A month earlier, a USA Today/Gallup poll reported 42 percent of all adults believed that "relations between blacks and whites will always be a problem for the United States."

Earlier this year, a CNN poll discovered that 13 percent of whites considered themselves to be racially prejudiced; however, most telling, 43 percent of all whites said they knew someone they considered to be racist.

A CBS/*New York Times* poll in July 2008 found that 26 percent of white people believe they have been victims of discrimination, 27 percent believe too much has been made of African-American problems, 24 percent said they would not vote for a black candidate, and 14 percent believed a black candidate would favor blacks over whites if elected.

A majority of white Americans may have overcome overt racism, but it can still have an effect in more subtle, indirect ways, such as the voting booth. The difference between what voters tell pollsters and how they actually vote in races involving black and white candidates has become known as the "Bradley effect," or less commonly as the "Wilder effect."

Tom Bradley, a very popular African-American mayor of Los Angeles lost the 1982 election for governor in California to his white opponent despite a substantial lead in the opinion polls, and African-American candidate Douglas Wilder barely won the Virginia governorship in 1989 after leading his white opponent in the polls by nine points on election day.

Obama may have suffered the Bradley effect in the New Hampshire primary where he was unexpectedly defeated by Hillary Clinton. Going into the primary, Zogby and other polls had Obama ahead of Clinton by 42 to 29 percent. When the votes were counted, she won with 39 percent of the votes to his 36 percent. Results such as this can make a decisive difference in the Electoral College swing states.

The Bradley effect among white voters may be only slightly compensated by the 90 percent of black voters who are supporting Obama. These voters are already the most loyal Democratic voting bloc, with 88 percent having voted for Kerry and 90 percent for Gore.

By the same token, an increase in the African-American voters' turnout in the primaries was matched by increased voter response across the board. Overall, black voters accounted for 19 percent of all Democratic voters in the primaries, which is about average for past elections.

Subtle appeals to the racist inclinations of white voters have already been unleashed against Obama in his run for the presidency. Hillary Clinton accused him of being an "elitist" who is "out of touch" with "hardworking" (white) Americans, and Bill Clinton compared Obama's primary victories to those of Jesse Jackson during the primary campaign in South Carolina.

During the final phase of the primary campaign, Clinton skillfully pushed the buttons of low-income white workers who are more apt to blame illegal immigrants and blacks for their loss of jobs and the decline of their living standards. She won the Pennsylvania primary by ten points; one in six white voters said that race was a factor in his or her decision and 75 percent of them voted for Clinton.

The Republicans have now taken up the cudgel. During their convention, Sarah Palin made fun of Obama's work as a community "organizer" in her acceptance speech, and a prominent southern congressman referred to Barack and Michelle Obama as "uppity." Another Republican congressman had earlier used similar "Jim Crow" language to criticize Obama's readiness to handle nuclear responsibility, "I'm going to tell you something: That boy's finger does not need to be on the button."

Even before the Republican convention, McCain ran a television advertisement ridiculing Obama as a celebrity by comparing him with Brittany Spears and Paris Hilton, two white blonds. One doesn't need a degree in psychology to see the ad was of the "Willie Horton" genre designed to incite white racial fears about black men and white women.

McCain, the great deregulator, has recently started using the words "change" and "regulation" in his speeches in response to the economic collapse of the financial markets. In addition to saying he would appoint a commission to study the crisis; McCain just aired a television attack ad superimposing photographs of Obama and Frank Raines, the African-American former chairman of Fannie Mae, followed by the image of an elderly white woman.

The ad lied in saying that Raines had advised the Obama campaign on housing and

mortgage issues; Raines has never had anything to do with the Obama campaign. The use of Raines' photograph and that of a vulnerable elderly white woman is a thinly-disguised attempt to excite racial fears among whites, particularly in a subgroup more inclined to vote for a Republican candidate.

Obama has been reluctant to respond to the race baiting. He's not an unintelligent man, and he has likely weighed the decision and wants to avoid being labeled as an "angry black man" by the media if he responds to the provocations. Obama did say he did not "think that John McCain's campaign was being racist." He added, "I think they were cynical and I think they want to distract from talking about the real issues."

Earlier in the campaign, Obama said: "We know what kind of campaign they're going to run. ... They're going to try to make you afraid of me. He's young and inexperienced and he's got a funny name. And did I mention he's black?"

All of these factors and more are now coming into play as the 2008 race for the White House rounds the turn and heads for the finish line.

Double Whammy - Religion, Sex and Other Prejudices

John McCain and George Bush were the leading candidates for the Republican nomination in the 2000 presidential primary, and McCain won New Hampshire by a wide margin making the South Carolina primary a must-win situation for Bush. Karl Rove, Bush's political advisor and in-house "evil genius," immediately organized a campaign of nasty tactics that included spreading rumors that McCain had infected his "mob-connected wife with a venereal disease."

Thousands of South Carolina voters began to receive telephone calls in a "push poll" pioneered by Rove in which voters were asked if they would be more or less likely to vote for McCain if they knew he had fathered an "illegitimate black child." Bush won the primary with 53 to 42 percent of the vote.

Earlier this year, McCain stated that he has "always respected Karl Rove as one of the smart great political minds I think in American politics." McCain not only refused to condemn Rove's vicious campaign tactics, he has now come to rely on Rove's advice.

Moreover, McCain has employed Steve Schmidt, Bush's Rove-trained attack dog as a senior advisor and has given Schmidt equal status with his campaign manager, Rick Davis. Schmidt's specialty is the manipulation of the news media environment, and he's responsible for the new attack ads.

McCain's derailment of his Straight Talk Express and his deployment of the Rove attack machine are reminiscent of what happened to George Wallace in his attempts to become governor of Alabama.

In his first campaign in 1958, Wallace was backed by the NAACP and said if he didn't have what it takes "to treat a man fair, regardless of his color, then I don't have what it takes to be the governor of your great state." Following his defeat by John Patterson, an ardent racist, Wallace was heard to say, "I was out-niggered, and I will never be out-niggered again."

The open hatred for Obama expressed on some Internet sites is violent and includes identifying him as the Antichrist and calling for his assassination. One site proclaims, "Some say he has the characteristics of an Antichrist as described in the Bible," and a Google search using the terms "Obama" and "Antichrist" tracks 970,000 hits.

McCain recently aired a television ad called "The One" in which Obama is featured as a self-appointed messiah. Reflecting a belief by some fundamentalist Christians in the imminent arrival of the Antichrist and the Rapture as fictionalized in the best-selling *Left Behind* series of books, the advertisement uses virtually identical language. It begins with words flashing across the screen, "It should be known that in 2008 the world shall be blessed. They will call him The One." The allusion is inescapable.

Another falsehood being vigorously chain-mailed around the Internet by conservative activists is the assertion that Obama is a secret Islamist agent, and at least 13 percent of American voters now believe he is a practicing Muslim. Another 16 percent say they aren't sure if he's a Muslim or not, since they have heard "different things" about it.

A group called the Coalition Against Anti-Christian Rhetoric ran a television advertisement in South Dakota just before the primary showing Obama wearing a traditional native turban during an earlier visit to Kenya and edited to hear him saying, "we are no longer a Christian nation, we are also a Muslim nation."

The misleading ad eliminated the context: "Whatever we once were, we are no longer a Christian nation - at least not just. We are also a Jewish nation, a Muslim nation, and a Buddhist nation and a Hindu nation, and a nation of nonbelievers."

The proud creator of the original 1988 Willie Horton attack ad, Floyd Brown, has established an Internet website called the National Campaign Fund that accuses Obama of covering up his Muslim past.

An article in a magazine owned by the right-wing *Washington Times* ("dedicated to spreading the truth about God to the world") recently carried a story attributed to an unnamed source that Obama was educated in a radical Muslim school known as a "madrassa."

In truth, Obama was educated in a "Public Elementary School" in Indonesia which had no focus on religion and included students of all creeds. He also spent two years in a Catholic school in the same country, where the Muslim religion of his now deceased stepfather may have been entered on the records.

Straight-talk McCain once derided evangelists Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell as "agents of intolerance," and he placed last of nine candidates in a straw poll at the Values Voter Summit held by socially conservative activists last year in Washington, D.C.

Perhaps Rove reminded McCain that the 2004 vote for President Bush by 78 percent of white "born again," or evangelical Christians may have secured his reelection. In any case, McCain has become decidedly more active in soliciting the support of evangelicals and more public in "witnessing" his faith.

Not only did McCain agree to an anti-abortion statement in the Republican platform, he bypassed Tom Ridge and Joe Lieberman as running mates because their pro-choice views made them unacceptable to the extreme Christian right-wing. Although their belief in the

right of women to choose abortion would have endeared them to most women, McCain instead chose Sarah Palin, an extremist evangelical who wants to legally deny women the right to have an abortion, even in the case of rape or incest. Why?

Palin's selection appeals to radical conservatives because she lives her pro-life beliefs. Not only did Palin choose to carry and deliver a Down Syndrome child, she proudly accepts the pregnancy of her unmarried teenaged daughter who has visibly failed the abstinence test.

However, Palin does not appeal to moderate Republicans without a religious agenda. Nebraska Senator Hagel says she does not "have any foreign policy experience" and that it would be a "stretch" to say she was qualified to be president.

Conservative writer Andrew Sullivan recently commented about McCain, "because he could see he was going to lose, ... he threw caution to the wind" and decided "that he was going to reignite the culture war as a last stand against Obama. That's all that is happening right now; a massive bump in the enthusiasm of the Christianist base. This is pure Rove."

The McCain-Rove ploy was not only designed to appeal to the religious prejudices of the most narrow-minded evangelicals, it may also encourage racially-prejudiced white women to vote against their own self interests. A new ABC/*Washington Post* poll shows that support of white women for McCain has risen 20 points since his selection of Palin and now stands at 53 to 41 percent.

Finally, by picking a former beauty contestant with limited experience at governance, McCain and Rove are providing cover for racially-prejudiced white male workers to vote against their own interests. Retired Army Brigadier General Janis L. Karpinski recently wrote, "There is something sinister in Palin's attempts to seduce the voting public." General Karpinski concludes:

"Palin, however, is a dangerous choice and her style goes against the grain of feminists and women everywhere. We spent years seeking equality, and ask only for a level playing field where we can find credit for our accomplishments and capabilities and the opportunities to compete fairly. Sarah Palin can launch us back in time and remove years of progress, albeit slow and incomplete. She encourages men and women to be drawn first to the sexuality and beauty of a woman before making a decision about her credibility, intelligence and leadership. There is abundant truth in the age-old saying 'beauty is only skin deep.' We need and deserve a vice-presidential candidate who offers far more than 'skin deep' - her absolute lack of substance on the issues; her lack of experience, particularly in the international and foreign affairs environment; her lack of a sound economic policy to regain control of our national treasure; and her insistence on propelling herself as tough and capable because she can murder wildlife when there is virtually no chance of missing, are the issues of substance."

It's working! Palin is being blogged as a "right-wing redneck fantasy girl," and photo-shopped images of her wearing an American flag bikini and holding an assault rifle are flashing around the Internet. A CNN survey this week found 62 percent of men to now have a "favorable" opinion of Palin, compared to 53 percent of women, and 57 percent of men, compared to 43 percent of women, actually say she is "qualified" to be vice president.

The Rovian appeal to religious and sexual prejudices works with less-committed Democratic voters, since loyal Republicans are unlikely to cast a crossover vote. A recent AP/Yahoo poll

used a sophisticated computerized selection program to record people's reactions as black or white faces flashed on the screen and documented their impulsive responses to positive and negative adjectives.

The poll found that only 59 percent of Democratic voters want Obama to be president and 25 percent believe that "if blacks would only try harder, they could be just as well off as whites." The poll also found that nearly 17 percent of Clinton's white backers plan to vote for McCain.

Triple Whammy - Class Disenfranchisement

As we learned in 2000 and again in 2004, when all else fails, a losing candidate can simply steal the election. The public has become too apathetic to notice the loss of their vote; the single-party Congress has become too impotent to do anything about it, and once elected, the entrenched presidency becomes too powerful to impeach.

While the theft of the 2000 election can be traced to misleading "butterfly" ballots in Florida and the political decision of the Federalist-controlled Supreme Court to ignore the will of the people, and the theft of the 2004 election can be traced to manipulated computerized voting machines in Ohio and the vote suppression machinations of its Secretary of State, underlying and subverting both elections was a sophisticated and continuing conspiracy to deny and interfere with the constitutional rights of those voters most inclined to vote for Democratic candidates.

The concerted effort to disenfranchise a whole class of American voters can be traced to statements made by Paul Weyrich, one of the founders of the modern Christian conservative movement, who once described the necessity of a "cultural civil war":

"It may not be with bullets, and it may not be with rockets and missiles, but it is a war, nonetheless. It is a war of ideology, it's a war of ideas, it's a war about our way of life. And it has to be fought with the same intensity, I think, and dedication as you would fight a shooting war."

During a speech in Dallas, Texas in 1980 from a podium shared by Ronald Reagan and Jerry Falwell, Weyrich made the following statements: "How many of our Christians today have the 'Goo-Goo' good-government syndrome? They want everybody to vote. I don't want everybody to vote. Elections are not won by a majority of the people. They never have been from the beginning of our country and they are not now. As a matter of fact, our leverage in the elections quite candidly goes up as the voting populace goes down."

Efforts to suppress legitimate votes go back to the Jim Crow laws in the segregated South enacted to prevent African Americans from voting by requiring the payment of "poll taxes" and the imposition of unrealistic voting qualifications and literacy tests.

As commonly practiced today, voter suppression is an election fraud designed to illegally reduce the total vote for opposition candidates, instead of legitimate efforts to change opinions or to appeal to reason. Tactics include "caging" lists to eliminate potential voters from the opposition party's voting rolls by challenging voters who may have moved and not changed their addresses with the registrars. Other tricks include efforts to mislead voters as to the dates and locations for voting and overt and subtle threats that voting will lead to

arrests.

Republicans ordinarily defend voter suppression efforts as a response to Democratic voter registration drives which may sweep up unqualified or illegal voters. Democrats seek to register and motivate individuals who are less inclined to vote, but who are more likely to vote Democratic if they make it to the polls. These include the young, poor, students, and racial minorities.

It is this most vulnerable class of people that the voter-suppression conspiracy targets for disenfranchisement.

Former Attorney General John Ashcroft (who suffered the humiliation of being defeated in his last senate campaign by a dead man) ordered a comprehensive “Ballot Access and Voting Integrity Initiative” in 2002 requiring all U.S. Attorneys to work on voter fraud. As a result of this high priority effort, only 24 people were ever convicted of voter fraud, none of whom were ever charged with impersonating another person.

Nonetheless, Republicans have pushed through legislation in 24 states requiring all voters to present some form of identification prior to voting, and seven of these states require voters to show photo IDs. Opponents argue that these laws disenfranchise poor, elderly or disabled voters who may not have an up-to-date driver’s license, a passport or other government-issued identification.

A majority of the Supreme Court upheld the Indiana photo ID law in August 2008 ruling that the law “is amply justified by the valid interest in protecting the integrity and reliability of the electoral process.” Dissenting Justice Souter said the law “threatens to impose nontrivial burdens on the voting rights of tens of thousands of the state’s citizens.”

Current voter suppression efforts are being concentrated in a handful of “swing” states where the outcome could tilt the balance in the Electoral College in favor of one candidate or the other:

- Republicans in Michigan are planning to challenge voters whose names appear on lists of foreclosed homes;
- Republicans in Ohio want to challenge all voters who may have moved and not notified the registrar;
- the Wisconsin Attorney General has filed a lawsuit demanding that registrars verify all voters’ identification prior to the November election;
- the Florida Secretary of State will enforce the state’s “no-match, no-vote” law; and
- a Virginia registrar threatened college students with the loss of funding if they vote on campus.

The Obama campaign just joined local Democrats in filing a lawsuit in Michigan seeking an injunction against a Republican plan to challenge the registrations of voters on a list of foreclosed homes. Calling the plan an illegal effort to harass voters, the complainant alleges the Republicans want “to create havoc in the polling place, to create long lines, a clogged process.”

In a statement dated September 19, 2008, Congressman Conyers said:

“The Republican Party has had a long record of blocking eligible voters from voting. In the past two Presidential elections, the country witnessed appalling efforts to limit voter participation in Ohio, Florida and throughout the country. It is beyond disgraceful that the Republican Party now seems to be targeting those who are suffering the most. It appears that individuals who can’t recall how many houses they own don’t understand how awful it is to lose your home to foreclosure, and don’t know that you don’t need to own property to vote in the United States of America. It should surprise no one that the people who gave us the worst economy since the Great Depression would now want to prevent those victimized by this economy from voting in the coming elections. Senator McCain needs to step forward now and halt the Republican Party’s efforts to profit politically from the economic misery of others.”

Local and state governments have spent \$1.5 billion since 2003 to purchase electronic voting machines, many of which have been proven to contain programming errors and faulty designs resulting in mistakes and/or allowing the machines to be easily hacked to produce a fraudulent outcome.

Although some states and localities have abandoned the electronic machines, their use is still widespread enough to cause grave concern that voters’ choices will be subverted or ignored. Recent machine failures in Washington, D.C., Florida, Arkansas, and Ohio have caused a number of states to return to all-paper-based ballot systems.

Voters would be more likely to have confidence in the electronic machines they vote on were it not for the fact that all of the machines are manufactured by companies controlled by individuals who uniformly support the Republic Party. All of the machines operate on proprietary programming codes that are secret, even from the government entities that purchase them.

The conservative conspiracy to disenfranchise an entire class of vulnerable American voters has been highly successful in recent elections and is again poised to circumvent the will of the people. Democracy requires that every qualified person have the right to vote, and that government efforts encourage rather than discourage universal suffrage.

To the extent our governments aid and abet the conspiracy to disenfranchise our fellow voters, and to the extent these efforts are successful in the 2008 presidential election, the future of our nation is at risk.

The Aftermath

It is not difficult to see why some evangelical Christians believe we are living in the “End Times” and that the “Rapture” is imminent. America is entering the most threatening period in its history since the Great Depression, and perhaps even since the Civil War. As a nation of borrowers and consumers, our economy and banking systems are bankrupt, and our government’s only solution is to take from the poor and bailout the rich.

As a result of 30 years of deregulation and the giveaway of trillions of dollars of cheap credit by the Federal Reserve System, our economy has now pyramided out of control to the extent \$500 trillion in totally unregulated derivatives are being traded without any

accounting or governmental supervision. That is \$1,669,357 for every single one of us!

As a temporary measure, President Bush has proposed, and both presidential candidates have agreed to, a \$1 trillion government bailout. This solution will only cost each of us \$3,320, which is just the first installment.

Millions of workers who have grown accustomed to the good life are now unemployed. Food and fuel costs are skyrocketing, and medical insurance has become unattainable. Our savings, investments and retirements are threatened and may become worthless. Our SUVs and BMWs are being repossessed, we are being evicted from our apartments, and our McMansions are being foreclosed upon because we can't make the payments.

After years of declining crime rates, gun-related violence is on the rise in many of our cities, disproportionately targeting young black males. Forty percent of these young men are out of work; one of every 20 over the age of 18 is in a state or federal prison; and 28.2 percent of all African-American men will be confined at least once during their lifetime.

Overall, the United States is now incarcerating more than seven million people; one in every 32 American adults is locked up, on parole, or on probation.

Attempts to control gun violence by imposing reasonable restrictions on gun ownership were recently shot down by the Supreme Court when it overturned Washington, D.C.'s ban on handgun possession. While the decision was praised by the National Rifle Association, and presumably by Sarah Palin, professional law enforcement officers across the nation fear that it will never be possible to control gun violence.

Our occupation of Iraq and our pursuit of Osama bin Laden and other Al Qaeda leaders continues in Afghanistan and, increasingly, into Pakistan. There is also a great risk that our outgoing president and vice president will start a hot war in Iran and/or a cold war with Russia on their way out the door.

Yet we continue to have hope, and millions of us will go to the polls in November and cast our ballots having faith that it will make a difference. For African-American voters, 85 percent believe this election will be a historical moment for them and their children, the surmounting of one of the last barriers to their full participation in the American Dream.

Barack Obama has raised the hopes of many that the stupidity of the Bush Administration will end; that he will be able to restore confidence in the government's ability to protect our livelihoods, our freedoms, and our environment; that he will end the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan; and that he will halt America's march toward unrestrained militarism.

The failure of Barack Obama to be elected in November will be more, far more than a betrayal of the hopes, dreams and aspirations of millions of Americans. There is a great risk that the inauguration of his opponent will sound the death knell of America's free and democratic society, and the Liberty Bell and all it has symbolized will be tarnished and forgotten.

Is John McCain capable of presiding over the United States government? A man so unintelligent, incurious, and unmotivated as to finish at the bottom of his Naval Academy class? A man so uncaring and disloyal that he continues to deny the existence of more than 600 other living POWs he left behind in Vietnam? A man of class privilege who has never had to work a real job in his life? A man so rich that he doesn't even know how many homes

he owns? A man so senile that he doesn't know that Spain is an ally of the United States? A man so stupid that he chooses an unqualified, gun-toting, religious fanatic to be his vice president, even though the chances are he may not live out the term of his office? Most dangerously, a man with such barely suppressed rage that he regularly loses control of his explosive temper with little or no provocation?

What will McCain do if he becomes president next January? Will he surrender the extraordinary powers that George Bush and Dick Cheney have seized over the past eight years? Or will he use them in exactly the way he says he will - militarily to "defend" the country? From whom? From terrorists, or from other Americans who disagree with him?

What will the millions of disenfranchised, unemployed, homeless, sick and hungry, angry - yes very angry, and very well armed people, who have seen their dreams turn into nightmares, do? Go away quietly and not make a disturbance? Not on your life! Not on the lives of any of us.

The dozens of violent urban riots that burned through our cities in the Sixties and Seventies ended when disadvantaged people began to improve their lives and to get a bite of the American pie. The last two major riots, Miami in 1980 and Los Angeles in 1992, resulted from circumstances that should be instructive. They both resulted from the unpunished beatings of black men by white police officers.

The cities across America will not burn because an old white man fairly defeats a young black man. No, they will explode because the political, cultural and financial elite will have stolen another election from the poor and disenfranchised.

It will be ugly. It will be violent. Police helicopters will be equipped with machine guns and crowds will be mowed down without the legal benefit of arrest or trial. Military might will rule and the light of American freedom and democracy will be extinguished.

Or, the resilient strength of democracy may prevail. If elected, Barack Obama will have the opportunity to achieve the true greatness in times of crisis that has been afforded only a few of America's presidents since the founding of our nation, perhaps only Abraham Lincoln and Franklin Roosevelt.

Will Obama be able to rise to the challenge, master the issues, articulate policies, display the richness of his intellect, and reveal the depth of his soul? We will never know unless we give him the chance.

The economy will not magically improve and the violence will not suddenly subside. To the contrary, the economy will get worse before it gets better, millions of bitter people made even more hateful by the disgusting and violence-inciting campaign conducted by the McCain-Rovian gang of political cutthroats will blame the new president for their plight.

Obama may become the most hated person in the country, and the risk is great that he will suffer the fate of Lincoln.

With the 2008 election becoming a referendum on the religions of the candidates and the faith of the electorate, perhaps we should all pray for Divine guidance and the wisdom of the ages to help us survive the extraordinary crisis that will surely confront our next president and those of us who elect him.

William John Cox is a retired supervising prosecutor for the State Bar of California. As a police officer he wrote the Policy Manual of the Los Angeles Police Department and the Role of the Police in America for a national advisory commission. Acting as a public interest, pro bono lawyer, he filed a class action lawsuit in 1979 on behalf of every citizen of the United States petitioning the Supreme Court to order the other two branches of the federal government to conduct a National Policy Referendum; he investigated and successfully sued a group of radical right-wing organizations in 1981 that denied the Holocaust; and he arranged in 1991 for publication of the suppressed Dead Sea Scrolls. His 2004 book, *You're Not Stupid! Get the Truth: A Brief on the Bush Presidency* is reviewed at <http://www.yourenotstupid.com>, and he is currently working on a fact-based fictional political philosophy. His writings are collected at <http://www.thevoters.org>, and he can be contacted at u2cox@msn.com.

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