

You just gotta love those Floridians!

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Natalie P. McNeal. The Miami Herald. "Black congregation embraces GOP message." 2003/02/03.

<http://www.miami.com/mld/miamiherald/news/local/5091701.htm>

Gov. Jeb Bush could have chosen any of a thousand places in Florida to make a Martin Luther King Day speech. But he chose Worldwide Christian Center in Pompano Beach, where he received hugs and cheers.

The 1,300-member congregation at 450 N. Powerline Rd. is predominantly black and predominantly Republican — a rare combination in overwhelmingly Democratic Broward County.

"Years ago, I took a closer look at the platform of both parties," said the Rev. O'Neal Dozier, the church founder, who freely mixes politics and religion. "The [Republican] platform is more in line with the word of God. I am Republican because of conviction."

Republicans are hoping such institutions will become less rare.

Blacks have long been a core constituency of the Democratic Party. But the foundation has shown cracks, especially when Democratic members of the Broward County Commission called for the suspension of Supervisor of Elections Miriam Oliphant, a black Democrat. Many blacks felt she was being unfairly singled out.

Bush, the Republican governor, refused to suspend Oliphant. Three days later, on Martin Luther King Day, he appeared at Worldwide Christian and basked in the cheers.

Bush's relationship with blacks in Florida has often been strained, going back to his One Florida initiative, which rolled back affirmative action as it applied to the state university system's admission policies.

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Many blacks blamed Jeb Bush for the chaotic 2000 ballot count in Florida that resulted in his brother becoming president.

CHURCHES HAVE A ROLE

Dorsey Miller, a longtime Republican and Bush appointee to the North Broward Hospital District, said blacks need to have representation in both parties if they want to improve their status.

"Things are never going to change if we continue to be all one party and not the other," he said.

Republican Party leaders say black churches can play a role.

"The black churches are a wonderful source of political activity," said Kevin Tynan, chairman of the Broward Republican Party. "It's not always for my party, but they do a wonderful job of getting people interested in a race and going out and voting."

In Dozier's case, that political activism has been controversial. He has been a vocal opponent of gay rights in a county that has been at the vanguard of gay rights. Dozier has referred to homosexuality as a "sickness." He is also active in the antiabortion movement.

Dozier started his church in 1985. The congregation met in the cafetorium at North Fork Elementary School. After two years, it was time to find a new home.

He looked at what were at the time the mostly white suburbs of Plantation, Lauderdale Lakes and Lauderdale Hill.

"I felt that the blacks were not willing to accept what I was teaching," Dozier said. "I didn't want to go to an all-black community."

But he had a hard time finding a landlord who would rent him space.

Dozier said he prayed about the issue and decided to return to where he grew up: Pompano Beach, the Collier City neighborhood.

He started in a strip mall. Membership grew. He served free barbecue and an abundance of dinners to lure members.

Soon, he had enough members to move to his current location, off Powerline Road, near Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard, a pawnshop, and an abandoned apartment complex. In 1996, the church moved into its 10,000-square-foot space.

WAS MET WITH BOOS

Dozier estimates that 90 percent of the congregation votes for Republicans.

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With Republicans in control of the governor's mansion and both chambers of the Florida Legislature, Dozier finds himself with newfound connections.

In 2001, the governor appointed Dozier to the 17th Circuit Judicial Nominating Commission, a board that recommends lawyers for local judicial openings. He's the only black member of the commission.

The Republican strategy to appeal to blacks is twofold, said David Bositis, senior researcher of a think tank for black issues, the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies in Washington, D.C.

By welcoming blacks into the party, Republicans not only diversify their own ranks but make themselves more appealing to white swing voters, Bositis said.

Although Republicans have had a foothold among Broward's black elite, black Republicans are still small in number.

In 1998, 6,380 Broward County blacks registered Republican. By 2002, the number was 7,480.

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¡Ganamos todos con el Presidente George W. Bush!

Myriam Márquez. El Sentinel. "Presencia latina en la fiesta republicana." 4 septiembre 2004.

NUEVA YORK --[E]n el Estado del Sol, [] puertorriqueños de pensamiento independiente respaldaron a Jeb Bush y eligieron a Quiñones dos años atrás en un distrito predominantemente demócrata, en la Zona Cero de Florida -- el corredor de la I-4.

Los republicanos no llegaron hasta acá para conquistar el Estado Imperio. Lo que quieren asegurar es Florida, Nuevo México, Arizona y Nevada -- entre 10 estados que podrían decidir las elecciones y en donde los votos de los cubanos, mexicanos o puertorriqueños podrían darle la victoria a George W. Bush o llevarlo a su derrota. En el día de la "la compasión hacia el pueblo", todo era "¡Viva Bush!", con John Q. en el podio central del Madison Square Garden antes de que a George P. le tocara el turno de hablar sobre su tío George.

Sí, George P. El recién casado hijo de Jeb, quien en una tertulia con republicanos hispanos afirmó: "Yo no creo que la gente nace republicana o demócrata -- a menos que pertenezcan a la familia Bush".

Dos años atrás, Quiñones hizo historia cuando se convirtió en el primer puertorriqueño republicano de la Florida Central elegido para servir en Tallahassee. Si logra mantener su escaño en noviembre, podría saltar a posiciones claves de liderazgo. Pero primero tiene que cumplir con W.

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Por su parte, George P. sabe cuán importante puede ser el voto puertorriqueño. Comenzó su discurso agradeciendo a los delegados y oficiales electos puertorriqueños en el evento de "¡Viva Bush!": "Hemos logrado asegurar muchos respaldos de Puerto Rico, lo que es crítico para esta campaña".

Las raíces mexicanas de George P. tienen peso en el oeste, pero en Florida son los cubanos y puertorriqueños los que llevan la carga el día de las elecciones. George P. señaló que su padre "ha podido trascender todas las comunidades", ganando los votos de los cubanos, mexicanos, puertorriqueños y dominicanos en las elecciones de 2002.

Con el voto cubanoamericano fuertemente a favor de W. — aun cuando las nuevas y estrictas regulaciones para viajar a Cuba han causado disgusto entre algunos exiliados cubanos — el voto puertorriqueño en el área de Orlando se torna más importante aún.

Quiñones, un abogado que le recuerda a la gente que él creció "en un humilde pueblo" de Puerto Rico antes de mudarse a Orlando cuando era un adolescente, cree que el presidente puede ganar los votos hispanos de la Florida Central, que Al Gore capturó en el 2000. "Los valores hispanos tradicionales de trabajo arduo, y compromiso con la familia y con el país" se alinean muy bien con el mensaje de compasión con estilo conservador de Bush.

No en balde las encuestas indican que Bush está ganando terreno, estado por estado, mientras John Kerry parece estar perdiendo apoyo entre electores hispanos de estados clave que podrían decidir la elección. Ciertamente Kerry tiene una mayoría de los votos hispanos a través de la nación, pero en el día de las elecciones, es el voto de cada estado el que cuenta.

Nancy Acevedo, una delegada de Longwood, dijo que los asuntos más importantes para los votantes hispanos no difieren mucho de aquellos que son considerados prioritarios por todos los electores: una economía fuerte, cuidado de la salud asequible y buenas escuelas. El enfoque republicano, piensa Acevedo, "ofrece al pueblo más alternativas y menos gobierno".

Massey Villareal, presidente de la Asamblea Republicana Nacional Hispana, predice que Bush ganará porque las políticas de reducción de impuestos del presidente están ayudando a los pequeños negocios y llegando a la clase trabajadora. "Los hispanos están abriendo negocios cinco veces más rápido que ningún otro norteamericano", dijo Villareal, quien dirige una compañía de alta tecnología en Texas.

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