

STUDY GUIDE

I'M GAY...CONSERVATIVE... SO WHAT?

KEY TERMS: patriotic values

free-market
activists

conservative
open-mindedness

NOTE-TAKING COLUMN: Complete this section <u>during</u> the video. Include definitions and key terms.	CUE COLUMN: Complete this section <u>after</u> the video.
Why is Mr. Benson a conservative?	How does Mr. Benson reconcile being gay with being conservative?
What percentage of LGBT voters voted for the GOP in the last four general elections?	Why does the Left reject those who do not agree with them politically?
How many elections would Democrats win if they didn't have overwhelming support from minority and 'victim' groups?	

DISCUSSION & REVIEW QUESTIONS:

- Towards the beginning of the video, Mr. Benson explains that, "...my values define me, while my sexual orientation sometimes feels more like – well – a footnote... When it comes to my political beliefs, my orientation is only one part of the story. It's not the totality of who I am... Far too often, people are sorted by their gender, or their skin color, or their sexual orientation, or any other immutable characteristic that have nothing to do with ideas or values." Why do you think that progressives are so heavily preoccupied with categorizing and judging people based on superficial traits such as skin color, sexual orientation, etc... rather than on categorizing and judging people based on value systems, character traits, ideology, or any other substantive quality? Explain. Do you agree with Leftists that identity should be all encompassing when evaluating a person? Why or why not?
- Mr. Benson goes on to further explain that, "...in my day-to-day life and work, I spend more time thinking and writing about the failures of Obamacare, for example, than I do about "LGBT issues," whatever that term might mean on any given day. Just like any conservative, I want taxes low, the military strong, and don't even get me started on single payer health care or late-term abortion. I'm a conservative because when I think critically about the issues, I usually end up on the right end of the spectrum. It's that simple." What do you think Mr. Benson means when referring to LGBT issues as '...whatever that term might mean on any given day?' Why do you think that Mr. Benson, and many others, 'end up on the right' of the political spectrum when they think critically about the issues? Explain.
- Later in the video, Mr. Benson points out that, "Conservatives are often much more tolerant of dissenting views than those who fancy themselves the torch-carriers of open-mindedness... Cross the Left on a hot-button social issue, and you're out. You see, some on the Left believe they're entitled to control the thoughts and votes of certain groups of people - namely minorities and so-called 'victims groups.'" Do you agree with Mr. Benson's assertion that conservatives tend to be so much more tolerant of opposing viewpoints than progressives tend to be? Why or why not? Why do you think that some Leftists feel entitled to pressure and compel minorities and 'victim groups' to think and vote exclusively along the progressive agenda?
- Mr. Benson later argues, "...the truth is, the left isn't entitled to a damn thing. To paraphrase my coauthor and friend, Mary Katharine Ham: 'We didn't get liberated in order to be told by liberal activists exactly what we're allowed to think, or how we have to vote.' A free-thinking, free citizen of a free country is not obliged to believe anything because somebody else believes he 'ought' to think or 'ought' to vote or 'ought' to rank his (or her) priorities differently." Do you agree with Ms. Ham's point? Why or why not? What factors do you think contribute to the Left feeling so entitled in the first place? Explain.
- Towards the end of the video, Mr. Benson notes that, "...many other gay people approach these issues and their voting criteria differently – and I respect that. That's their call, even if it's not how I choose to operate... Like I said, I'm a Christian, a patriotic American, and a free market, shrink-the-government conservative – who happens to be gay. That's how I choose to rank my priorities. And you know what that's called? It's called progress." What do you think Mr. Benson means by this last statement? How do you approach your own ideology formulation and 'voting criteria?' Explain.

EXTEND THE LEARNING:

CASE STUDY: Black Voters

INSTRUCTIONS: Read the article “Black Voters to Democrats: You’re Welcome,” then answer the questions that follow.

- Who did the author’s father say their family was ‘cheering for’ in the election, and what was his reasoning? What percentage of Alabamians going to the polls in the senate election were black? What outcome did that likely have on the election? Who won? Why was the winner so popular amongst black voters? What does the author claim the Democratic Party doesn’t spend enough money on? What does the author claim the Democrats need to do in order to be competitive nationwide? According to the author, what do the Democrats need to do in order to win more elections?
- What messages and lessons did this author learn from her parents? Why do you think that, “...blacks are the ones who have a much more robust history of turning out to vote and winning elections for Democrats.” Why do you think that the author and her family frame their outlook on the elections based on superficial identity, and similarly believe that conservatives view them based on superficial identity as well? Do you think that the author’s use of Roy Moore as an example was valid to support her argument? Why or why not?
- Do you think that this article supports any points made in the video? If no, why not? If yes, which statements in the article support the points expressed in the video?



QUIZ

I'M GAY...CONSERVATIVE... SO WHAT?

1. Conservatives are often much more tolerant of dissenting views than those who fancy themselves the torch-carriers of open-mindedness.
 - a. True
 - b. False

2. Without the overwhelming support of _____, the Democrats would win very few elections.
 - a. women
 - b. Hispanics
 - c. African Americans
 - d. All of the above.

3. Exit polling shows that in the last four general elections, between __ and __ percent of LGBT voters pulled the lever for the GOP.
 - a. 5; 12
 - b. 11; 20
 - c. 14; 29
 - d. 28; 32

4. What happens to members of the gay community who don't toe the left-wing political line?
 - a. They're tolerated.
 - b. They're glorified.
 - c. They're ostracized.
 - d. They're embraced.

5. Which of the following does *not* define Mr. Benson?
 - a. His sexual orientation.
 - b. His American patriotism.
 - c. His support of the free-market.
 - d. His support of small government.



QUIZ - ANSWER KEY

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<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/13/opinion/alabama-black-voters-democrats.html>

Opinion | Contributing Op-Ed Writer

Black Voters to Democrats: You're Welcome



Kashana Cauley DEC. 13, 2017



An early-morning voter on Tuesday in Birmingham, Ala. Credit Bob Miller for The New York Times

The first election I can remember was the race between George H. W. Bush and Michael Dukakis in 1988. Dressed in footie pajamas, I stayed up late with my political die-hard parents. They tried and failed to avoid swearing as the map on television turned red.

“Who are we cheering for?” I asked them.

“The blue people,” my dad said, because the red people “don’t like us.”

Who is “us?” I asked.

“Black people,” he said.

You could call my dad’s opinion reductionist. Or you could acknowledge that in the Alabama Senate election on Tuesday, the red people voted for Roy Moore — a guy who said the slavery era was the last time America was “great.”

I stayed up late on Tuesday, excited by exit polls showing that some 30 percent of the Alabamians going to the polls were black, a higher percentage than in either of the presidential elections Barack Obama won. Mr. Jones rode to a one-and-a-half-point victory in one of the reddest states in America thanks to black voters. That was his only real path to the Senate: Whites in Alabama have a longstanding preference for Republicans, and blacks, 27 percent of the state’s population, make up a large chunk of Democratic voters there.

Most of Alabama’s white voters did choose Mr. Moore, either despite or because of his support for slavery, the allegations that he had sexually assaulted girls as young as 14 and the fact that he was twice removed as a justice on the Alabama Supreme Court for disobeying federal court orders.

Alabama’s black voters overwhelmingly chose Mr. Jones, and turned out in force despite numerous obstacles placed in front of them. The state’s voter ID law — passed in 2011 to undermine “the black power structure,” as a legislator had described it — has an outsize impact on black and Latino voters because they are less likely to have the financial resources (for transportation and a fee) and get time off from work to get an ID. On Tuesday some black voters reportedly received text messages that told them to report to the wrong polling places. Others found that they had erroneously been marked “inactive,” so they had to fill out a form and update their address before they could vote.

It’s not an accident that Doug Jones was so popular among black voters. He prosecuted two Ku Klux Klan members for the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing in Birmingham that killed four black girls in 1963. Mr. Jones also campaigned with quality black surrogates, like the former basketball player Charles Barkley, Senator Cory Booker, the former Massachusetts governor Deval Patrick, Representative John Lewis and Representative Terri Sewell, Alabama’s only congressional Democrat. Mr. Obama even recorded a robocall for him. Mr. Jones visited black churches and historically black colleges, and focused much of his get-out-the-vote effort on black voters.

His strategy was much more effective than, for example, that of Jon Ossoff, a Democrat who lost his bid for a Georgia House seat this year. He didn’t focus as much on personal appearances, or on corralling prominent black surrogates. The black turnout in that race was lower than in previous elections.

Mr. Jones’s victory should wake up the Democratic Party. Black people made up 13 percent of Democratic voters in 1992, but that figure rose to 23 percent by 2014. Yet a majority of them think the party takes them for granted and doesn’t even try to win their votes, according to a 2017 survey. We are drowning in reports on how Democrats can win the white working class. But blacks are the ones who have a much more robust history of turning out to vote and winning elections for Democrats.

Nor does the Democratic Party spend enough money addressing the policy concerns of black voters. It does not routinely condemn racial inequality, out of a fear of turning off white voters, nor does it make specific appeals to black voters on issues like jobs and education. Yet black voters arguably made the difference in the Alabama election and the Virginia governor’s election, and we drove President Obama to victory twice. Surveys have found that politically inactive minorities are easily persuaded to get off the sidelines when cultivated by political parties.

But voter suppression remains a significant barrier to black turnout. Numerous states have passed stricter voter ID laws in recent years. Consider Wisconsin, which Mr. Trump won by only 22,800 votes; a court found in 2014 that its voter ID law meant 300,000 state residents didn't have an ID they could use to vote.

To be competitive nationwide, Democrats need to fight voter ID laws, pass automatic voter registration, restore the Voting Rights Act to its full strength and work to re-enfranchise ex-felons, who deserve to be fully reintegrated into society. Democrats should also make policy appeals aimed at black voters and support promising black candidates like Stacey Abrams, who's running for governor of Georgia in 2018.

The Alabama election results provide a great opportunity for the Democratic Party to make a stronger effort to reach out to black voters. We are just like white voters in that we like to be courted and told that our participation matters. If Democrats want to win more elections, they have to integrate black voters into the heart and soul of the party.

Kashana Cauley (@kashanacauley) is a television and freelance writer and a contributing opinion writer.