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BLACK GOVERNORS AND GUBERNATORIAL CANDIDATES: 1868-1972

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Presently, there are no Black governors or Black lieutenant governors in America. In fact, Black longevity in these positions in the past has been short lived or very limited. And the opportunity for Blacks to obtain these positions in America has occurred only rarely in the past. Blacks in the governors' offices¹ have always been the *exception* rather than the rule in American political life. Those Blacks that did become governors did so by the rule of succession or on the basis of a technicality rather than by the sheer political muscle of the Black electorate. On the other hand, however, Black lieutenant governors did emerge by sheer strength of Black political muscle, but in the past and present the lieutenant governor's role had little or no meaningful political power.

But despite the fact that there has been only a few Black governors and lieutenant governors, numerous Blacks have sought the office via regular political entities — i.e., the regular political parties, minor parties, independent political movements and Black political parties.² In short, the difficulty in being elected to the governor's office has not stifled the Black man's efforts to try to get elected in spite of the fact that there have been no Black governors or lieutenant governors, technically speaking, since the 1970's. Black political hopefuls have continuously sought to occupy one of the two positions in the governor's office. Even with defeat after defeat in the last 100 years, Black politicians continue to try to become governors or lieutenant governors.

Black Governors and Lieutenant Governors:

The Past

Although Blacks first cast their ballots for candidates for the governor's office in South Carolina during the 1701 and 1703 elections,³ they didn't get the opportunity to vote for

¹The term governor's office is used in this analysis to refer to positions of governor and lieutenant governor.

²On this point see H. Walton, Jr., *The Negro in Third Party Politics (Philadelphia: Dorrance, 1969)*, and H. Walton, Jr., *Black Political Parties: A Historical and Political Analysis*, (New York: Free Press, 1972), Chapter 6.

³Emil Olbrich, *The Development of Sentiment on Negro Suffrage to 1860* (Connecticut: Negro University Press, 1969), p. 7.

Black candidates for the governor's office until more than one-hundred-sixty-five (165) years later — during the Reconstruction era. It was after the Civil War and the passage of the Reconstruction Acts in March, 1867, that reorganized the South into military districts and gave the loyal inhabitants (those that had not participated in the act of rebellion) the right to hold their own constitutional conventions. When those constitutional conventions were held in each state during 1867 to 1868, new constitutions were drawn up that gave Blacks the right to vote in each state.⁴

After the new constitutions were ratified, elections took place in each southern state for the state legislature, governor's office and all other sundry political offices. And it was during these elections in 1867 and 1868 that Black political hopefuls aimed at the governor's office.

The reason Black political aspirations were so high was the fact that Blacks were generally a dominant power in the Republican party ranks. Since the political coalition during this period was made up of Scalawags, Carpetbaggers and Blacks, the last was always the largest group of voters. And to appease the Black leaders, white Republican party organizers and leaders sponsored Blacks for several top posts to help keep the Black electorate intact or unified in their support of the Republican Party.⁵

The situation vividly expressed itself in Louisiana in 1868. At the party convention that year two Blacks, P.B.S. Pinchback and F. E. Dumas, sought the party's nomination for Governor. Pinchback withdrew but Dumas held out for two ballotings before losing to a white aspirant, Henry Clay Warmoth, by one vote on the second ballot.⁶ "As a consolation," however, Oscar J. Dunn, a former slave, was nominated for lieutenant governor. He was subsequently elected and served in the post from 1868 to 1871 when he died.

Elsewhere, during 1868, Francis L. Cardozo of South Carolina refused the Republican Party nomination for lieutenant governor due to pressure from national Republican leaders in Washington, D. C. who felt that it was too early for Blacks to assert themselves or seek such a high post.⁷

In 1870, American political observers saw two Blacks elected lieutenant governor. Alonzo Jacob Ransier was elected to the post in South Carolina, while in Louisiana, P.B.S.

⁴ All of the Southern states had disfranchised free Blacks by 1836. Before then in some states free Blacks could vote. *Ibid.*, pp. 21-70. See also S. D. Weeks, "The History of Negro Suffrage in the South," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 9, (December, 1894), pp. 673-703.

⁵ See H. Walton, Jr., *The Politics of the Black and Tan Republicans*, (forthcoming book).

⁶ Lerone Bennett, Jr., *Black Power U.S.A.*, (Chicago: Johnson Publishing Co., 1967), p. 125-126.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 126.

Pinchback took the job. Ransier served from 1870-1872 after which he was elected to the U.S. Congress in 1873.

By 1872 to 1873 three Blacks had been elected to the lieutenant governor's office. C. C. Antoine got the post in Louisiana, and held it from 1872 to 1876. Richard H. Cleaves, was elected to the post in South Carolina from 1872 to 1877. The election of Cleaves, the lieutenant gubernatorial candidate in South Carolina, is even more illuminating. Although elected to the lieutenant governor's post three times, he received stiff opposition from other Black hopefuls. For instance, in 1872, a sizeable number of Blacks bolted the Regular Republican Party, coalesced with numerous whites and formed the Reform Party (Lily-white Republican Party) and opposed the Regular Party in the 1872 state election. To successfully challenge the Regular Party the Reform Republicans ran a Black for lieutenant governor opposing Cleaves. This Black man, James H. Hayne, was defeated by Cleaves by more than 33,000 votes.⁸

In 1874, a new Republican organization, the Independent Republican Party, which was made up of the old Reform Party members, ran another Black man, Martin R. Delany (known as the father of Black Nationalism because he was the first Black man to advocate a Back to Africa Movement)⁹ for lieutenant governor against R. H. Cleaves, The Regular Republican Party Black candidate for that position. And in the election Cleaves won, receiving 80,403 votes to Delany's 68,818.¹⁰

However, in 1876 Cleaves was opposed not by a Black man but a white Democrat, W. D. Simpson. In the first election Cleaves beat Simpson 86,620 to 82,521. But due to irregularities and fraud during the election the results were thrown out and a new election was held. On December 14, 1876, when the second set of results were in Simpson had defeated Cleaves by a vote of 91,689 to 19,150. The Republicans at first rejected the results, but the political deal made by Republican R. B. Hayes in 1877 to get the Presidency included permitting the Democrats in South Carolina to remain in power. Thus, Cleaves was out of office for good.

In terms of other states, Alexander K. Davis held the lieutenant governor's post in Mississippi from 1873 to 1876. However, when the curtain dropped in 1877, Black lieutenant governors had become a part of history. For each year thereafter Blacks have not been able to get reelected to that post. Black lieutenant governors at this writing are a thing of the past.

If there have been six Black lieutenant governors, there have

⁸A. A. Taylor, "The Negro in South Carolina During the Reconstruction," *Journal of Negro History*, (October, 1924), pp. 462-467.

⁹Howard Brotz (ed.), *Negro Social and Political Thought 1850-1920*, (New York: Basic Books, 1966), pp. 2-4, 37-100.

¹⁰Taylor, *op. cit.*, p. 468.

been only two Black governors within the territorial limits of the United States.¹¹

The first Black man to become governor in the United States was P. B. S. Pinchback in Louisiana in 1872. Pinchback, who was the lieutenant governor, succeeded to the governorship on December 9, 1872 when the present white governor, Henry Clay Warmoth was impeached by the House of Representatives for trying to dictate his successor and the 1872 election outcome. Pinchback served as governor, according to one source, thirty-six days,¹² another source forty-three days, until the inauguration of Republican Governor W. P. Kellogg on January 13, 1872.¹³ Upon leaving his office, Pinchback was elected to the United States Senate but was refused his seat because of claimed election irregularities which were never substantiated.

Technically speaking, the next Black man to become a governor was Jim Noble of Oklahoma. According to the Oklahoma Constitution, which states that "the capital is where the state seal is and that the person who has the seal is governor,"¹⁴ Jim Noble became governor in 1910 for a day. Describing the situation, Professor Waldo Phillips writes that "in 1910 the state (Oklahoma) voted to move the capital from Guthrie to Oklahoma City. Much hostility had developed among the people in Guthrie because they did not want the capital moved. Friction increased to the extent that the national guards had been placed around the building. This was done because whispers had spread that interested parties had planned to steal the seal and take it to Oklahoma City.

Due to the fact that all persons entering and leaving the capital building in Guthrie were searched with the exception of Jim Noble, the Black Messenger for the state, Governor Haskell and Secretary of State W. B. Anthony decided to entrust it to Jim. The two state officials called Jim and gave him the seal for its transmittal. "Jim, you have complete freedom in and out of the building. This is the state seal. Take it to Oklahoma City and we will be waiting for you. Don't ride the bus, train or in cars of your friends. Walk, run, hitchhike, or hobo. Remember Jim you are governor of the state of Oklahoma and the future of your state depends on you."¹⁵

Thus, for the time it took Jim Noble to travel the forty miles to Oklahoma City (about a day) he was technically the

¹¹ Virgin Islands, one of America's territories, has a Black governor but he has been appointed by the President. *Ebony*, (November, 1970), p. 35.

¹² Bennett, *op. cit.*, p. 264.

¹³ See Table I.

¹⁴ Waldo B. Phillips, "Jim Noble: Oklahoma's Negor Governor," *Phylon* (Spring, 1959), p. 92.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

TABLE I
Black Governors and Lieutenant Governors
in the United States

Names	States	Positions	Year
P. B. S. Pinchback	Louisiana	Governor	1872-1873
Jim Noble	Oklahoma	Governor	1910
Oscar J. Dunn	Louisiana	Lieutenant Governor	1868-1870
P. B. S. Pinchback	Louisiana	Lieutenant Governor	1871-1872
Alonzo J. Ransier	South Carolina	Lieutenant Governor	1870-1872
C. C. Antoine	Louisiana	Lieutenant Governor	1872-1876
Richard L. Cleaves	South Carolina	Lieutenant Governor	1872-1877
Alexander K. Davis	Mississippi	Lieutenant Governor	1873-1876

governor of the state. And his main task was the protection of the state seal.

Two Black governors (or technically only one Black governor depending on how one views the facts) and six Black lieutenant governors are the sum total of Blacks who have held the top positions of power in state government, North and South. And these individuals were only in the political arena during the 1870's — i.e., Black Reconstruction. Since then no other Black, except maybe Jim Noble, has been able to hold power in the governor's office. But even though Blacks have not been governors or lieutenant governors since the 1870's they have never given up hope of returning to that office. (See Table II).

For instance, Dr. J. D. Harris was an unsuccessful regular Black Republican candidate for lieutenant governor in Virginia all during the Reconstructionist Era.¹⁶ In 1884, D. A. Straker became the Black candidate for lieutenant governor on the Republican ticket in South Carolina.¹⁷ Although he campaigned for the office he received no votes.

Due to declining and decreasing Republican backing after Reconstruction, Blacks looked to new political parties or began to form their own to field their candidates. In Ohio, during 1897, Blacks formed their own political party, the Negro Protective Party, and supported their own Black gubernatorial candidate, S. J. Lewis. According to one source, he received 5,000 votes for the office,¹⁸ while another attributes only 181

¹⁶ Bennett, *op. cit.*, p. 296.

¹⁷ James Welch Patton, "The Republican Party in South Carolina, 1876-1895," in F. M. Green (ed.), *Essays in Southern History*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1949), p. 93.

¹⁸ H. Aptheker (ed.), *A Documentary History of the Negro People in the United States*, (New York: Citadel Press, 1969), p. 852.

Some Black Candidates Who Have Run for the Governor and Lieutenant Governor Office

No.	Names	States	Position Sought	Year	Party Affiliation	Votes
1.	J. D. Harris	Virginia	<i>Lt. Gov.</i>	1870	Republican	N.A.
2.	Richard H. Cleaves	South Carolina	X	1872	Republican	N.A.
3.	James Hayne	South Carolina	X	1872	Reform Rep.	N.A.
4.	Richard H. Cleaves	South Carolina	X	1874	Republican	80,403
5.	Martin R. Delany	South Carolina	X	1874	Ind. Republican	68,818
6.	Richard H. Cleaves	South Carolina	X	1876	Republican	91,150
7.	James K. P. Lucas	Alabama	X	1878	Black & Tan	150
8.	Richard Allen	Texas	X	1878	Lily White	N.A.
9.	D. A. Struber	South Carolina	X	1884	Republican	0
10.	Q. William Harvey	Alabama	X	1888	Black & Tan	N.A.
11.	S. J. Lewis	Ohio	X	1897	Negro Protective Party	5,000
12.	A. J. Warner	Alabama	X	1898	Black & Tan	422
13.	Ad Wimb	Alabama	X	1902	Black & Tan	1
14.	J. H. Blount	Arkansas	X	1920	Black & Tan	15,677
15.	J. F. Mitchell	Virginia	X	1921	Black & Tan	5,230
16.	Theodore Nash	Virginia	X	1921	Black & Tan	5,230
17.	Frank Crosswaith	New York	X	1932	Socialist Party	N.A.
18.	Aaron Henry	Mississippi	X	1963	Independent	90,333
19.	Albert Cleage	Michigan	X	1963	Freedom Now Party	4,767
20.	Reginald Hawkins	North Carolina	X	1968	Independent	11,000
21.	Arthur Fletcher	Washington	X	1968	Republican	49% G/E
22.	Thomas Broadwater	South Carolina	X	1970	United Citizens'	1,153
23.	Julius McTarr	South Carolina	X	1970	United Citizens'	1,153
24.	John Cashin	Alabama	X	1970	NDPA	106,000
25.	Isaiah Hayes, III	Alabama	X	1970	NDPA	106,000
26.	C. B. King	Georgia	X	1970	Independent	230
27.	D. F. Glover	Georgia	X	1970	Independent	2
28.	Clennon King	Georgia	X	1970	Independent	158
29.	Basil A. Paterson	New York	X	1970	Democrat	1,421,426
30.	Rev. R. J. Hampton	Arkansas	X	1970	Independent (Prim)	611
31.	Charles Evers	Mississippi	X	1971	Independent	150,000
32.	Samuel Bell, Sr.	Louisiana	X	1971	Independent	72,486
33.	Harold L. Bethune, II	Louisiana	X	1971	Independent	3,032
34.	Frederick D. Perkins	Louisiana	X	1971	Independent	70,038
35.	Ellis F. Hull	Louisiana	X	1971	Independent	24,470
36.	Reginald Hawkins	North Carolina	X	1972	Independent (Prim)	64,924
37.	Ishmael Flory	Illinois	X	1972	Communist	N.A.