

TEACHER GUIDE

2000 DOC. #7: Newsmagazine Photos and Articles

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In 2000 the Republican Party worked to persuade voters that it was more open to diverse voices than it had been in the past by inviting Latino and African American politicians to speak on behalf of George W. Bush. Bush visited the African American communities of Harlem and Watts to speak about “compassionate conservatism.” However, this was not enough to persuade most African American voters to abandon their traditional Democratic Party allegiances.

In the years prior to the 2000 election President Bill Clinton was extremely popular among African American voters with approval ratings nearly twice that of his support among white voters (Rosenberg 29). Al Gore was similarly successful in courting the African American vote in 2000, winning 90% of African American votes compared to 8% who voted for Bush.

The following documents show two examples of the ways in which both candidates sought to target voters of a particular racial group through photo opportunities in strategic meetings.

> **Project** the document, 2000 doc. #7a.

> **Explain** that this is part of a *Newsweek* article from January 2000.

QUESTION What messages about Al Gore are communicated by the headlines and photo?

SUGGESTED ANSWER Al Gore needs Bill Clinton to help him secure African American votes.

EVIDENCE headline, “Gore has to have a big African American majority to beat Bradley and he needs Clinton to turn out the vote”

SUGGESTED ANSWER Gore is reaching out to African American women.

EVIDENCE photo of Gore smiling and hugging African American women

> **Project** the document, 2000 doc. #7b.

> **Explain** that this is part of a *Newsweek* article from October 2000, one month before the election.

2000 DOC. #7a



Newsweek Gore with African American Women

PowerPoint Slide

QUESTION What messages about George W. Bush are communicated by the headlines and photo?

SUGGESTED ANSWER Bush's handling of easy questions on talk shows like *Oprah* will help to prepare him for the more difficult debates.

EVIDENCE "softballs on happy-talk TV shows" suggests easy questions on entertainment programs; "sliders" suggests the hard questions asked of both Bush and Gore during the debates

QUESTION What does the photo of Bush kissing Oprah seem to say about Bush?

SUGGESTED ANSWER Some students may perceive that Bush is "kissing up" to Oprah while others may see this as an illustration that Bush is not prejudiced.

SEE NOTE →

QUESTION Why might George W. Bush reach out to African American voters if so few of them vote Republican?

SUGGESTED ANSWER There are many possible reasons for Bush to reach out to African Americans. He may recognize that the nation is becoming more ethnically diverse and want to broaden the appeal of the Republican Party. Perhaps he just wants to appear as though he values diversity so that he does not alienate some white voters. Bush may value diversity for its own sake. He may see the need to win some African American votes in a close election.

QUESTION Why might the candidates choose to appear on programs like *Oprah* or seek out photo opportunities with magazines like *Newsweek*?

SUGGESTED ANSWER *Oprah* and *Newsweek* have large audiences and give a candidate wide national exposure, particularly to undecided voters who may not listen to news regularly or watch the debates.

FURTHER QUESTIONS

Can you think of other examples of candidates' efforts to appeal to a particular group of voters through public appearances?

Is a candid photograph somehow more honest than a staged photo-op? Why or why not?

2000 DOC. #7b

BETWEEN THE LINES

THE LESSONS OF OPRAHLAND

The softballs on the happy-talk TV shows can be a foundation for the sliders in the debates

By JONATHAN ALTER



Closing the Winfrey gap: Bush denied any thought of reaching his father's 1992 depth even in the tinniest part of himself

It HAS COME TO THIS: THE WASHINGTON Post's David Broder, dean of political reporters, last week laid the road to cover ... Regis Philbin. Never mind that candidates have been appearing on funny TV shows at least since Richard Nixon said "Sock it to me!" on "Laugh-In" in 1968. Something profound has changed in the way we elect a president. From Mayor Daley to "The Daily Show" in a generation.

Soon other Jon Lahres will ask the candidates something that actually relates to the job of running the country. But before I offer up a few cues and sliders for Lettermen to throw at George W. Bush and Al Gore, a kind word for the softball questions and general patter heard in the battleground entertainment states where this race is now being fought. With a little imagination, voters can actually use the TV cotton candy as a foundation for evaluating the candidate answers to more substantial questions.

Such contentions can throw Gore off balance. If good on TV, you can almost see him pulling the covers back. He calibrates and modulates endlessly.

When David Letterman's him about global warming, Letterman was acting like "was obviously smart enough serious; he knows how to run self. Onstage, he's now non-speed to a three- or four-sp bicycle, learning how to ch better than he once did. But derstood that "Letterman" for proselytizing, we know Al Gore would have profre night had there been no e millions of people about the bies technology or the beat ing detailed in his 1992 bes "Earth in the Balance," with

Such contentions can throw Gore off balance. If good on TV, you can almost see him pulling the covers back. He calibrates and modulates endlessly.

Newsweek Bush with Oprah

PowerPoint Slide

NOTE

This could be used as an opportunity to discuss how different people can interpret the same media message differently.

CONNECTIONS

(see thematic listing)

Media Bias

Race

Reaching Voters (talk show)

Target Audience (African Americans)

- Consider the photo from 1896 (doc. #2) of an Italian American band that visited with William McKinley during his "front porch" campaign and the 1972 (doc. #1) poster, "Together with McGovern." Compare these with the 2000 campaign photos. How do the candidates attempt to demonstrate connection with specific voter groups via visual images?