

Bill de Blasio: A Progressive Mayor for All New Yorkers Part II

Jerry Krase (September 24, 2013)



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[“Dizzy’s a finer diner”](#) [2] is in the heart of De Blasio country (Park Slope, Brooklyn). There, after his victory, I conducted my own hardly reliable survey asking somewhat puzzled and occasionally annoyed early morning patrons to name the last five Democratic Party mayoral candidates. None got even close. Despite Democratic Party registrants outnumbering Republicans by almost two to one, David Dinkins (1993) and Ruth Messinger (1997) lost to Rudy Giuliani. Then in embarrassing succession Mark Green (2001), Fernando Ferrer (2005), and Bill Thompson (2009) fell victim to Mike Bloomberg. The last election drew one of the lowest turnouts in NYC history (26% of registered voters). This does not bode well for Bill despite his recent endorsement by Centrists Bill and Hill Clinton, as well as Barack Obama.

Winning means getting people out to the polls to vote for you. Information motivates people to either go or stay away. With the exception of WBAI and Amy Goodman’s “Democracy Now!” on CUNYTV, Gotham’s mass media is owned and operated by the 1% and they are unlikely to trumpet the interests of the rest of us. Most election analysts miss the essence of democracy and many journalists seek attention rather than to better inform the public.

Even for the best newspaper writers Brooklyn continues to be terra incognita politica. Therefore, it is hard to expect sage commentary and coverage. For example, a recent article accentuated the historical negatives of Mayors from Brooklyn by noting, without naming, the attempted assassination of William J. Gaynor (1910) and the disgrace of William O’Dwyer (1952). Ignored were long-time Brooklyn resident Abe Beame and Brooklyn-born Rudy Giuliani, neither of whom also added much in the way of sheen to the Big Apple. Even without Rudy and Abe the message seemed to be a warning about Bill crossing The Bridge.

The worst of the bad news written about De Blasio is proffered almost daily by the New York Post, followed its ugly twin sister the Wall Street Journal, where rabid pundits assure readers that if he’s elected, NYC will look like a scene from your favorite post-apocalyptic movie. Mine are Will Smith in [I am Legion](#) [3] (2007) and Harry Belafonte in a more melancholy [The World, the flesh, and the Devil](#) [4] (1959). This reading from the right, explains the Koch and their other brothers money pouring into New York City to finance the Bill as Anti-Christ movement, and Mike’s unfounded fear that Bill’ll chase away the billionaires who want to re-Occupy Wall Street. Post-primary election commentary on De Blasio ranges from the hardly informed to mostly misinformed, paralleled by the totally irrelevant such as the New York Times equivocations of De Blasio, FDR, Karl Marx, and Bob Marley followed by The Sandanistas.

At least Bill’s son Dante’s afro has escaped notice for the time being, but is sure to emerge in another guise as November 5 nears. The Daily News finally took some time out from dwelling salaciously on Miley Cyrus’s twerks to investigate the permutations of De Blasio’s appellations, as though his monica choices were as politically motivated as his Manichean choices for spouse and offspring. I do agree, however that “Wilhelm” is not a good choice for a New York City mayoral aspirant. He also should avoid being seen eating halal middle-eastern street food as that might be seen by Fox News’ Bill O’Reilly as support for jihadists.

While the city’s mass media tries to discourage folks from supporting Bill, or just going to the polls, many potential voters rely on their neighborhood, union, ethnic, religious or other leaders to tell them what to do. Some people are taken to the polls or otherwise prodded and cajoled to participate in democracy. In all these cases “walking around money” has always made a difference. But, cash can discourage as well as encourage voting, as voter suppression takes many forms. Those who you might expect to be active De Blasio supporters can be made less so -- for a fee. It has been my experience that loyal political apparatchiks are easily be bought off, as patronage requires only incumbency. Over the decades I have known too many nominal Democrats who learned to



appreciate the philanthropy of Republicans.

Another way by which the 2 to 1 Democratic Party voter advantage melts away are officials and operatives who give little support beyond tepid endorsements of winning candidates before playing "Let's Make a Deal." Remember, despite public displays of solidarity, over the past 20 years the designee has not enjoyed the full support of the Party and, in my humble opinion, their campaigns have been undermined. Sometimes it's personal but Democratic Party leaders and their minions have been induced to either back the opposition or go through the motions of supporting their "own." As to fickle party allegiances, some ethnic voting blocs such as Orthodox Jews, Evangelical Christians, Irish Catholics, and Italian Americans who register as Democrats regularly vote for more conservative candidates in general elections. Note also that one of Bill Thompson's biggest fund raisers in this last primary run was Republic Party stalwart ex-US Senator Alphonse D'Amato. Even more ironically, many of the Black pastors who were behind Thompson this time, gave their whole-hearted support to Bloomberg when he ran against Thompson in 2009.

(<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/17/nyregion/for-thompson-a-disappointing-end-to-a-not-quite-compelling-quest.html?pagewanted=all> [5])

And just across the city lines, [Fred Dicker](#) [6] tells us that Democratic Party Governor Andrew Cuomo "...has secretly joined with former US Sen. Alfonse D'Amato and other top Republicans to stop Democrat Tom Suozzi from recapturing his old job as Nassau County executive, key Nassau Democrats angrily charge." So much for both party and ethnic honor among politicians.

Some things are non-ideologically simple. Like elsewhere in America, in New York City there has been an Upward Redistribution of Wealth, This state of the city has been facilitated by the actions of elected governments to reduce taxes on the wealthy, and services for the rest of us, while simultaneously subsidizing, with public money, the costly speculations of the least needy/most greedy. The ideological difference is whether this reality is seen as a positive or a negative.

Ironically, in order to win, even in a city of reasonably enlightened subjects, the Progressive candidate must be seen as less so. Progressive, once a positive tag for Republicans has become in the hands of publicists, a negative for Democrats. Both [Michael Powell](#) [7] (Times) and [Bill Siegel](#) [8] (News) find important similarities between the Progressive ideas of Bloomberg and De Blasio. Therefore, I suggest that Bill applaud all the Progressive things that Mike did for our fair city, because De Blasio's problem will be less the zeal of the Tea Party as the lack of it in the Democratic Party. Remember what I said, Republicans can't win without Democratic support, and making nice with lame duck/big buck billionaires is prudence personified. In this regard I suggest that the De Blasio family ride Citibikes to their next campaign event.

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[5] <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/17/nyregion/for-thompson-a-disappointing-end-to-a-not-quite-compelling-quest.html?pagewanted=all>

[6] <http://nypost.com/2013/09/23/gov-cuomos-odd-alliance-to-stop-democrat/>

[7] http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/17/nyregion/congruence-of-bloomberg-and-de-blasio.html?_r=0

[8] <http://www.nydailynews.com/opinion/bloomberg-de-blasio-worldview-article-1.1459103>

