

**Volume 11**

**Number 022**

**Democratic Convention of 1964 - IV**

**Lead: The decline of the Democratic Party in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century can be attributed in part to its decision to champion black civil rights. This offended many racist Southern whites who migrated into the Republican Party.**

**Intro. : *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.**

**Content: The Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party emerged from voter registration efforts in the summer of 1964. One of its goals was to present a competing delegation to the**

**Convention in Atlantic City in August. When the two groups arrived, the Party was in a quandary. Here was one group claiming the moral the high ground; some of its members, directly touched by the bloody Mississippi violence of that summer. The other group represented the vast majority of white Mississippians most of whom were opposed to black progress. Even party liberals, such as Senator Hubert Humphrey were conflicted.**

**If they seated the regular delegation they would be repudiating the long-term trend in the party toward supporting civil rights. If they seated the Freedom Democrats they would further alienate the majority of**

**white Southerners, already infuriated. The party leaders could not forget that there was an election ahead and many white Southerners were considering apostasy. They were flirting with changing to the Republican Party, which they correctly perceived would be less aggressive in its support for black civil rights.**

**The Party tried to compromise but both groups rejected their efforts. The Democrats went on to win in 1964, overwhelmingly, but whites walked into the open arms of the Republicans and in the words of essayist Joshua Zeitz, “never looked back.” Republicans cultivated that allegiance not through overt racism,**

**but through artfully devised code language, which convinced whites that the GOP was more sympathetic to their lingering skepticism over black progress.**

**At the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.**

## Resources

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