

## FEATURE

# The Importance of Group Political Clout

Speech at UMN on October 26, 2005

By S. B. Woo

*It was given at the University of Minnesota, Mankato campus at the occasion of its celebration of Asian American Month. The entire speaker's fee, \$2000 plus expenses, was donated to 80-20.*

A swing bloc vote is the best way to induce both parties to compete to serve the rightful interests of Asian Americans.

Should Asian Americans build our own group political clout?

America is a great country and it has one of the world's best political systems. However, all political systems are managed by human beings, and human beings are full of frailties and contradictions. For example, we can be so noble as to die for people in other lands for an ideal. On the other hand, we can be so blind to the sufferings of others sitting, living and working next to us simply because they differ from us in some apparent ways: be they the color of our skin, race, national origin, gender, religion and/or sexual orientation. In fact, human beings can be so insensitive as to not only discriminate against others but also invent negative stereotyped images about them in order to justify their prejudice.

There are three major stereotyped negative images against the Asian Americans. First, we are "good work horses but are so hopelessly lacking in leadership skills to become race horses." Second, a lot of our compatriots think of us as "perpetual foreigners who are more loyal to our respective old countries than our chosen country, America" Third, Asian Americans are "too timid to be aggressive even when it is called for."

How are we to deal with these prejudices? There is nothing better than ORGANIZING OUR OWN GROUP

POLITICAL CLOUT. With that we can, first, speak up effectively to counter the unfair stereotypes, and second, take action to REMEDY the consequences of such negative stereotypes.

Let me now cite historic examples in America to show you why GROUP POLITICAL CLOUT is the best way in America to protect a small minority like the Asian Americans (AsAms) from exploitation.

At the beginning of our Republic, our forefathers proudly pronounced that "All men are created equal." However, for 87 more years, Blacks remained slaves. For 144 more years, white women could not vote. Indeed, even after the so called emancipation and suffrage, African Americans and white women didn't REALLY enjoy equal opportunity to attend colleges and get good jobs. It was not until they toiled, I mean toiled, to establish their OWN group political clout that they became equal citizens of America. African Americans went through the great Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s. They organized NAACP, the Black Congressional Caucus, and Jesse Jackson's Rainbow coalition. Women went thru the women's liberation movement, and organized N. O. W. , The National Organization of Women, and the Emily List and quite a few others. It was then and only then that they began to break glass ceilings and enjoy equal justice.

Think for a moment now, who were those white women who were not allowed to vote. Many of them were no less than the mothers, wives and sisters of the politicians in power at the time. Yet those political leaders not only denied

their mothers, wives and sisters the rights to vote but also spread negative stereotypes about them.

Some of you males may still believe in that negative stereotype: “Women are too soft in their hearts and heads to make political decisions.”

Today such negative images about women become laughable, given the magnificent examples of Sandra O’Conner, Hillary Clinton, Diane Feinstein and Barbara Boxer. Similarly, the negative images about AsAms will become laughable — I promise you — a decade or two from now, if only that we AsAms will wake up and organize our own Group political clout.

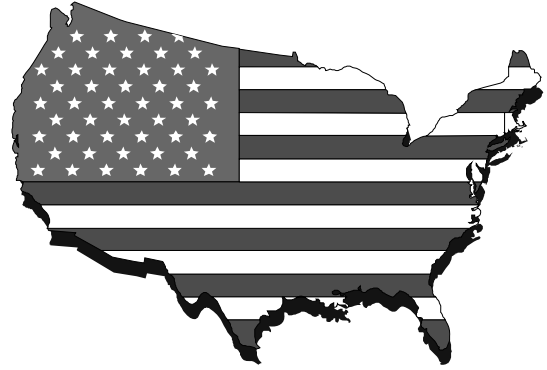
Let me cite more examples to show that we need Group Political Clout. Will white males, who are without the group political clout, be discriminated in America? Absolutely YES.

About 175 years ago, when the Irish first immigrated en masse to America, after the Great Potato Famine, discrimination against them was rampant. They were stereotyped as “either perpetually poor or forever drunk.” A newspaper ad about a job seeking applicants in Boston, where the Irish congregated at the time, blatantly stated: “No Irish Need Apply.”

However, the Irish soon learned that IN AMERICA, if people discriminated against you because they didn’t like you as an individual, the best recourse was to go to court. If people discriminated against you because you were a member of a powerless group, the best remedy would be to build your own group political clout.

So the Irish organized and began to vote as a bloc. That is, they voted as a united community to reward those politicians who cared for their rightful aspirations and punished those who didn’t. Soon good jobs opened to the Irish. Equal justice came too. Thereafter the Irish melted into the great melting pot of America.

The Polish and Italians who immigrated to America after the Irish met the same discrimination and used the same political recipe



to lift themselves to be equal citizens of America. A famous historian once said, “The history of America is the history of the immigrant underclass, using the political process, to lift themselves into the equal class.” In the mid-20th century, the Jewish Americans built their group political clout. Two decades ago, the gays built their own political clout. Today, the Hispanics are building their own political clout.

Should Asian-Ams wake up and build our own group political clout?

Why did I tell you that this and that group including Caucasian males and females have all suffered discrimination? It is because I want to show you that while your creed, national origin, gender, religion or sexual orientation may be the initial cause of your being discriminated; the persistence of that discrimination is DUE TO our own fault. We failed to organize our own group political clout (GPC).

So let me now use the 80-20 PAC to illustrate how we can organize our own GPC. 80-20 is a national, pan Asian political action committee dedicated to winning equal justice and opportunity for Asian Americans.

It advocates that we must be united to get our Group political clout. And the best demonstration of our GPC is through a swing bloc vote in presidential elections.

I’ve mentioned equal opportunity, political clout, and a swing bloc votes. Allow me to explain each to you.

**Equal opportunity** is for every man, woman and child to go as far and rise as high as their ambition and ability will take them. In other words, equal pay for equal work, equal opportunity to get salary increments and promotions, and equal opportunity to rise to the top.

What is political clout? It is much more than just electing a few AsAms to high political offices

**Political clout** is the ability to reward and punish any politician, I repeat, any politician. Reward the politicians who share our rightful concerns by getting them elected . Punish those who don't share our rightful concerns by un-electing them.

What is a bloc vote? Why is it so powerful? Here is an illustration. Two candidates run against each other in a political division, which for simplicity is assumed to have two constituent groups only. One group has 1 million votes (8%) and the other has 11 million votes (92%). Candidate A, a novice, courts the larger group, not being aware that the smaller constituent group has the internal political cohesion to deliver a bloc vote in the ratio of 8 to 2 while the larger group does not. When the ballots are open, candidate A wins the larger community by the ratio of 52/48. The margin of difference is 4%. Since the larger group has 11 million votes, 4% of 11 million votes provides a winning margin of 440,000 votes to candidate A. His or her opponent, candidate B, is a seasoned politician. She or he courts the smaller group and wins that community by a ratio of 80 to 20, which is the voting pattern of the Jewish Americans and African Americans.

The difference between 80% and 20% is 60%. 60% of 1 million votes is 600,000 votes. As a result, candidate B wins the election by (600,000 440,000) or 160,000 votes.

Astounding? Yes. But that is the power of a bloc vote. Why did I use those particular numbers in my illustration? It is because I was

using AsAms in CA as an example. Asian Americans represents 8% of CA's voters. And in a presidential election, the rest of CA may just vote about 52 to 48.

Why does 80-20 advocate a SWING bloc vote? That is, why does 80-20 advocate voting as a bloc for Democrats sometimes and for Republicans in other times? It is because a swing bloc vote is the best way to induce both parties to compete to serve the rightful interests of Asian Americans.

Is 80-20 being power hungry? Certainly not. However, it does advocate to get our share of the political clout to protect ourselves from exploitation. In organizing our own GPC, will we be Balkanizing America?

Absolutely not. We gather our own GPC so that we may melt as equal partners into America.

Let me point this out to you. Our fight is a fight to help make America "a more perfect Union," as our forefathers have ordained it. Our struggle is a struggle for the noblest of the American Dreams, the dream of equal opportunity for all Americans. WE are dedicating ourselves to fulfill one of the most solemn pledges of Americans, the pledge of allegiance to the Flag, which as you know ends with ". . . with liberty and justice for ALL".

I repeat ". . . with liberty and justice FOR ALL" This ends my speech. You've been a great audience. Thank you.

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*S. B. Woo is a retired physics professor and former Lt. Governor of Delaware. He was born in Shanghai, China, and came to the United States from Hong Kong at the age of 18.*

*He is the president of the **80-20 Initiative** that works on organizing Asian Pacific Americans (APAs) into a swing bloc vote in presidential elections, thereby inducing both*

*major political parties to compete serving the rightful interests of the APA community.*

*His past experiences include being the Founding President of the Faculty Bargaining Unit at the University of Delaware, its Chief Spokesman and Chief Negotiator; a Trustee of the University of Delaware; an Institute Fellow at the Institute of Politics, the Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University; and serving as the National President of the Organization of Chinese Americans (OCA).*

*He received his B. S., summa cum laude, in Mathematics and Physics from Georgetown College in Kentucky and his Ph. D. in Physics from Washington University in St. Louis in 1964.*

*To send an unmistakable signal of personal devotion that his mission in working to champion equality for all Asian Americans through 80-20 has no personal gain or interest whatsoever - S. B. has pledged never to run for a political office or accept a government appointment for the rest of his life.*