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Freedom Rider  
Liberal Love for Right Wing Cory Booker  
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Do liberals love the Manhattan Institute? Do they favor the use of vouchers to take resources from public schools? Are they fans of the Wal-Mart Walton family? The answer to those questions is usually an unqualified no. Why then do liberals adore Cory Booker?

Cory Booker made a name for himself four years ago when he nearly defeated Sharpe James, five-term incumbent Mayor of Newark, New Jersey. That mayoral race was not the beginning of Booker's foray into public life.

Cory Booker first came to public attention with a speech at a Manhattan Institute luncheon in 2000. The Manhattan Institute is a leading right wing think tank boasting conservative pundits like William Kristol and Peggy Noonan among its Board members. It gets huge amounts of money to spread the conservative agenda and doesn't give the floor to anyone who isn't a disciple.

## The Black Commentator – Freedom Rider: Liberal Love for Right Wing Cory Booker

Booker's maiden speech was a stale hodgepodge of bad political theater. It began with a phony sounding story of Booker's grandmother dispensing sage advice as he left for Oxford. It ends with attacks on public education itself.



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“Public education is the use of public dollars to educate our children at the schools that are best equipped to do so – public schools, magnet schools, charter schools, Baptist schools, Jewish schools, or other innovations in education,” Booker told the assembled right-wingers. “That is where public dollars should go.”

Do Booker's liberal acolytes know that he favors public dollars for parochial schools?

While lamenting the lack of academic achievement in Newark, Booker called for “school choice,” a code for vouchers. He said nothing about school funding formulas in New Jersey and around the country that take public school funding from cities like Newark and give them to the suburbs.

Booker has also been loathe to talk about who funds the pro-voucher movement. His buddies aren't very popular in places like Newark or in the salons of the liberal glitterati.

Wal-Mart heir John Walton used his Walton Family Foundation to channel \$500,000 per year into the Newark pro-voucher movement. Booker is a board member of the Black Alliance for Educational Options (BAEO). That organization got off the ground in 1999 with \$900,000 from the Walton Family Foundation and \$2 million from the right wing Bradley Foundation. Who knew that liberals would support a Walton/Bradley supplicant? Booker knows they won't, so he tones down his connections to the right wing who put his name on the map.

Booker knows that liberal blogs like Huffington Post cater to very few conservatives and wouldn't let him write a single paragraph if he boasted of being in the thrall of Walton, Bradley, Noonan and Kristol. He has learned to tone down his connections to the right wing backing that put him on the map.

His supporters have done the same thing. If Booker had to pay for the positive media attention he has received it would have cost him millions in campaign dollars. As if he hadn't gotten enough of a free ride, a pro-Booker documentary about the 2002 campaign, “Street Fight,” was nominated for an Academy Award. Thank goodness mating penguins generated more media buzz and deprived Booker of more free advertising.

In 2002 and again this year the media portrayed Sharpe James as Boss Tweed reincarnated and Cory Booker as the set upon choir boy. Booker has the credentials that impress the liberal elite, the people who make large campaign contributions.

He is an Ivy Leaguer, a Rhodes scholar no less. “Street Fight” and other media portrayals promote the image of the goody two shoes set upon by the political machine. They know that telling the truth about Booker will leave him with no political appeal whatsoever. Marshall Curry, producer of “Street Fight,” came close to admitting as much.

## The Black Commentator – Freedom Rider: Liberal Love for Right Wing Cory Booker

Curry completely ignored the issue of vouchers in his film. His rationale for doing so is utter nonsense. “The issue of vouchers in Newark is much more complicated than it might appear. To have dropped it in superficially would have left a false impression, and to have untangled the complexities would have warranted a film in itself.” If Curry had given viewers information about Booker’s policy stances they would ask hard questions about him. Instead we got a lame story about whether well-educated black people are considered authentic by the masses.

The answer to that question is simple. It depends. If the Ivy Leaguer in question has an ideology in keeping with the views of most black people, he or she will get political support and votes. Booker lost despite universally positive press and elevation to demigod status because Newark residents didn’t buy what he sold.

If Booker weren’t a true believing conservative he would have defeated James in 2002. Booker’s skin color, educational achievement and suburban background wouldn’t hurt him one bit if he reflected the political views of Newark residents. Instead he created phony drama by moving into a housing project and claiming to chase away drug dealers.

Fortunately for Booker, Sharpe James’ foolishness has turned over the keys to City Hall. James seemingly ended weeks of speculation about whether he would run when he delivered his nominating petitions from his bicycle, while clad in a tank top.

Apparently James felt he didn’t look foolish enough. With only six weeks to go before Election Day, James then announced he would not run after all. Deputy Mayor Ronald Rice, a state senator, will take Booker on instead. Thanks to James’ indecision, Rice is at an insurmountable disadvantage compared to Booker. He does not have his level of name recognition, his overflowing campaign war chest, or the love of powerful opinion makers.

Unfortunately, the liberal love machine will probably beat the Newark political machine. Newark is about to become a guinea pig for right wing think tanks who will treat it worse than Katrina treated New Orleans. Thanks for nothing Sharpe James. You just may have made Cory Booker your successor.

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