

WHY LIKE MIKE?

Friday April 4, 2008

If you followed the 2008 presidential primaries, you no doubt remember Mike Huckabee, the Grand Old Party hopeful from North Little Rock, Arkansas who was one of the last Republican candidates to concede defeat and withdraw from the race. You probably recall his cheering supporters waving banners and wearing buttons that declared: “I Like Mike”. The former governor of Arkansas, Huckabee won 264 Republican pledge delegates and three unpledged ones before calling it quits at the end of the evening on March 4, 2008, following the Texas, Vermont, Rhode Island, and Ohio primaries, at which time Senator John McCain opened up an insurmountable lead in the Republican primary delegate race. By the time he threw in the towel, Huckabee had won eight states, finished second in eleven, and finished third in another eleven, showing the nation that, although considered a long-shot for the presidency, he did not have insignificant appeal. From his website—mikehuckabee.com—we knew the following about his campaign and his viewpoint:

“Mike Huckabee is out to show people the American dream is still alive.

The former Arkansas governor recently formed a 2008 presidential exploratory committee because he feels the country needs a reawakening and a leadership to address an array of issues, including how to improve the nation's infrastructure, education system, environmental policy and failing health care system.

In the past year, Huckabee visited nearly 30 states to campaign for Republican candidates and conservative causes — and to share his message of vertical politics that he says reflects American values and priorities. From 1996-2007, Huckabee served as the 44th Governor of Arkansas. When he left office on January 9, 2007, he set out on a nationwide tour to promote his fifth book, “From Hope to Higher Ground: 12 STOPS to Restoring America’s Greatness.” The book reveals his optimistic vision for what America can become with the right kind of leadership and a clear direction.”

Max Blumenthal showed us, however, a critical part of Huckabee’s essence, one that was not found anywhere on the former governor’s website: hate. On January 18, 2008, Blumenthal wrote an article at the huffingtonpost.com website and also for [The Nation](http://TheNation.com) titled “Mike Huckabee’s White Supremacist Links” where he said: “well before he was a nationally known political star, Huckabee nurtured a relationship with America’s largest white supremacist group, the Council of Conservative Citizens,” an organization widely understood as a white racist hate group whose sociopolitical roots included supporting a racially segregated educational system. The CofCC remains staunchly opposed to anything akin to “race mixing;” returning America to a skin-color-based separate-and-unequal land is their goal. Though not the first Republican politician to court and be courted by the

CofCC—Mississippi’s Trent Lott wooed them—Huckabee accepted invitations to speak at the hate group’s 1993 and 1994 national conventions in Memphis, Tennessee, and Little Rock, Arkansas, respectively, when he was the Lieutenant Governor of Arkansas. While the Arkansas state legislature prevented Huckabee from attending the 1993 conference in Memphis by passing an enforceable resolution forbidding him from leaving Arkansas until then-Governor Jim Guy Tucker returned from out of state, nonetheless Huckabee gave a “terrific” videotaped address to the CofCC that was “extremely well received by the audience” according to a CofCC newsletter (Volume 24, Number 3). To our knowledge that videotaped address, if a copy of it still exists, has not been made public. The following year, Huckabee withdrew his offer to speak at the hate group’s convention, because the CofCC would not remove from their speaker’s list Holocaust denier Kirk Lyons as the then-lieutenant governor had insisted. Lost on Huckabee, but not on the Arkansas state legislature, is the embarrassment of a publicly elected official speaking at a conference of white racists. (At least he drew the line at Holocaust denial). Since then, the relationship Huckabee has had with the CofCC has been ruptured and one-sided; Blumenthal summed it up aptly stating, “The CofCC has since rebuked Huckabee for his insufficiently intolerant political behavior. Unfortunately, Huckabee has never rebuked the CofCC. Instead he embraced the group, ignoring its well known legacy of promoting racism and only severing ties when his political ambitions were threatened by bad publicity [that is, co-speaking at a conference with an anti-Semite].” Let’s be clear here: the CofCC was and is overtly racist and Mike Huckabee had fourteen years worth of opportunity to denounce the group and its values. It’s telling that he hasn’t—even after his connection to the group was made public in the midst of his bid for the presidency.

Having had such a cozy affinity with a white racist hate group—which is to say, having such a cozy affinity for blatant racist ideology—the nation ought to be puzzled at how Mike Huckabee has since been (to quote from his website):

“recognized as a national leader, having been honored by several renowned publications and organizations for his numerous accomplishments. Governing Magazine named him as one of its ‘Public Officials of the Year’ for 2005, Time Magazine honored him as one of the five best governors in America, and later in the same year, Huckabee received the American Association of Retired Person’s Impact Award.”

Has hate really gone mainstream? Has its voice a firm foothold in American politics? To look at the growing number of active hate groups in the United States (888 active hate groups nationwide in 2007 according to the *Southern Poverty Law Center* which tracks them) and to reflect on how far Mike Huckabee’s presidential campaign went (remember, he finished second among the Republican candidates, winning 267 delegates, and he carried a quarter of the states in which he campaigned), there is some sad evidence that radical politics—hate-baiting politics often with racist overtones—is alive and thriving in 2008.

How well did Mike Huckabee fare with America’s white racists during his 2008 presidential bid? Given his past affiliation with a well known group of them, it’s a

question we think is worth asking and answering. However, even if you believe in the reliability of exit polls, “White Racist” isn’t an exit poll demographic, so we tried to answer the question taking a different approach. Similar to our analysis of the 2004 presidential race (see our *Got Out the Hate Vote?* report), we examined the Republican primary election results of communities with an active hate group to see just how well Mike Huckabee did.

Given that there are many types of hate groups, we did not think Huckabee would have done any better in those communities overall than he did in the state where the hate group communities (HGCs) are located. Certainly we would not have expected Mike Huckabee to garner much support in a HGC whose only active hate group was a Black Separatist one. On the other hand, we wondered if Huckabee’s appeal to white racists was apparent from primary results where he campaigned before dropping out of the presidential race—specifically, in those locations with an active white racist hate group.

We examined the primary election results of Huckabee in communities with an active hate group in 2007 as identified by the *Southern Poverty Law Center* (SPLC), an organization with which trendsinhate has no affiliation. Using the SPLC’s information as well as geographical information available at other internet websites, we located from which counties (or county equivalents) these SPLC-identified active hate groups operated in 2007. For purposes of our research we considered each of these counties a hate group community (HGC), which we believe are *communities of relative intolerance* compared with communities without an active hate group. The only exception to this was Virginia. Because they have independent cities as well as counties, and because we were able to obtain official primary results on both the independent city and county level, we considered a community a HGC in Virginia to be either an entire county (when the city or town where the hate group was pinpointed was not an independent city) or an independent city. As we have said elsewhere, we are not suggesting that many people who live in a HGC belong to an active hate group. Also, we are not suggesting that most persons who live in a HGC are hateful or intolerant. As we reported in our trend report titled *Got Out the Hate Vote?* HGCs are merely markers we believe are worth examining—*markers of relative micro-community intolerance*. Our assumptions are simple ones. If a community (usually a county) has an active hate group—like a currently operating chapter of the Ku Klux Klan—then chances are it is a location of greater relative intolerance than locations without hate groups, even nearby locations. We also assume that the more intolerant a community, the more likely that community as a whole will be attracted to political candidates and ideologies that espouse intolerance. We do not assume, however, that HGCs are the only places where intolerance exists. Intolerance and hatred are ubiquitous. They are states of individuals' minds. What we set out to do was this: examine the primary election results of *relatively intolerant* communities across America, focusing specifically on Mike Huckabee.

Our results, shown in the table on the following page, illustrates that there were 448 hate group communities in 2007 and 345 of those HGCs had available 2008 Republican presidential primary election data where Mike Huckabee campaigned. As we suspected,

Relative Success¹ in presidential primaries of 2008 Republican Presidential Candidate Mike Huckabee in communities with an active hate group (HGC)² in 2007

Type of Hate Group Community (HGC)	Favored Huckabee	Did not favor Huckabee	No Primary Election Data ³	% HGCs Favored Huckabee	Statistical Significance
All HGCs: N=448	179	166	103	52%	$\chi=0.49$, p=ns
Ku Klux Klan HGCs w/o a Black Separatist group: n=111	59	24	28	71%	$\chi=14.76$, p<.0005
Ku Klux Klan HGCs: n=121	61	31	29	66%	$\chi=9.78$, p<.005
Neo-Confederate HGCs w/o a Black Separatist group: n=75	43	26	6	62%	$\chi=4.19$, p<.05
Neo-Confederate HGCs: n=88	48	31	9	61%	$\chi=3.66$, p=ns
White Nationalist HGCs w/o a Black Separatist group: n=63	15	30	18	33%	$\chi=5.0$, p<.05
White Nationalist HGCs: n=92	22	48	22	31%	$\chi=9.66$, p<.005
Christian Identity HGCs w/o a Black Separatist group: n=31	15	7	9	68%	$\chi=2.91$, p=ns
Christian Identity HGCs: n=34	16	9	9	64%	$\chi=1.96$, p=ns
Black Separatist HGCs: n=64	13	39	12	25%	$\chi=13.0$, p<.0005

¹Relative success is defined as a candidate winning at least 0.5% more of a community’s vote compared to that candidate’s overall statewide percentage. For example, in Lowndes County, Georgia, Mike Huckabee got more votes than his rivals, winning 33% of that county’s vote. However, Huckabee got 34% of the vote statewide in Georgia. Therefore, Lowndes County was classified as a “Did not favor Huckabee” hate group community. On the other hand, in Dallas County, Texas, the place of ten active hate groups in 2008, Huckabee got 40% of the vote, and in Texas he received 37.8% of the state’s Republican primary votes cast. Therefore, Dallas County was classified as a “Favored Huckabee” community. Actual election results were used, not exit polling figures. The election results from 77% of all HGCs were included in our analyses. Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, and Wisconsin were all included in our analyses.

² *The Southern Poverty Law Center* reported the locations and types of active hate groups in 2007 at www.splcenter.org. Trendsinhate.com used that list to pinpoint to which community (typically a county) a hate group belonged. Of the 31 states included in our analyses, there were 650 hate groups (73% of all SPLC-identified active hate groups) from 345 different communities.

³Mike Huckabee dropped out of the presidential race on March 4, 2008. Therefore, primaries after this date were not tallied. Also, Kansas—a state Huckabee won—has a closed (secret) ballot primary and therefore no county information was available. County results were also not available for West Virginia, another state Huckabee won. Washington, DC, was also excluded because it is part of no state.

Huckabee did not fare any better overall in HGCs than he did in the states where those HGCs are located. Specifically, in 179 hate group communities, Huckabee won a higher percentage of the votes cast than he did overall in the states where those HGCs are located; however, he won a lower percentage in 166 HGCs, and this finding is statistically non-significant. Contrary to what we expected, he fared significantly *worse* in communities with an active White Nationalist hate group—such as Falls Church, Virginia, and Parishville, New York—than he did in the states where those groups are located. His relative lack of support in these communities was statistically significant even when excluding those White Nationalist HGCs that also had an active Black Separatist hate group. This is a particularly important finding, because the Council of Conservative Citizens is designated by the *Southern Poverty Law Center* as a White Nationalist type of hate group, and because the CofCC denounced Huckabee.

However, as we expected, Mike Huckabee fared better in communities with an active Ku Klux Klan group. Specifically, he posted relatively better numbers in 71% of Klan-active HGCs than he did in the states where the infamous groups were active. As just one example, in Ohio, Huckabee received 30.6% of the state's primary votes; however, in Wayne County, Ohio—the location of an active KKK group in 2007—Huckabee got 37% of the vote. The likelihood of this magnitude of relative success in this type of community occurring by chance is once every thousand years. His support in these KKK-active communities remained statistically significant even when including HGCs that also had an active Black Separatist hate group. This is somewhat startling, because it is reasonable to speculate that a black racist hate group in a community with a white racist one might have the effect of lessening Huckabee's appeal (it did, but not dramatically so as shown in the table on the previous page). Huckabee also performed significantly better in HGCs that had a Neo-Confederate type of hate group—but only when those communities did not have an active Black Separatist hate group. Also as expected, Mike Huckabee fared significantly less well in HGCs that had a Black Separatist hate group than he did in those states where those groups are located. One notable exception was Bowie County, Texas, the location of Texarkana, where he once lived and preached, and the location of an active Nation of Islam chapter in 2007 (he received 72% of the vote in Bowie County versus 37.8% statewide in Texas). An ordained Baptist minister, Huckabee did not, however, perform any better in hate group communities with a Christian Identity hate group than he did in those states where the Christian Identity hate groups are located, although he trended in that direction.

Our findings suggest that Mike Huckabee's known reputation for associating himself with a white racist hate group helped him in over 130 communities across America—communities with active white racist hate groups, such as the Ku Klux Klan and the League of the South. Our findings also suggest that the Council of Conservative Citizens' falling out with Mike Huckabee probably had some negative impact on his election numbers in communities with an active CofCC hate group, although to our amazement, just days after Max Blumenthal published Huckabee's connection to the CofCC the candidate garnered the endorsement of the *Coalition of African American Pastors*, who like Huckabee, are unashamedly homophobic. (Hate creates strange bed-fellows). That any presidential candidate had ties to a white racist hate group is disheartening. That any

presidential candidate who has refused to repudiate such an organization could finish second of all the Republican candidates in the 2008 presidential delegate race more than suggests that—at least in one political party—hate has a voice. We are left to wonder if what fuels Huckabee’s “optimistic vision for what America can become” is the hateful ideology of racist segregationists who no doubt tried to move him into the White House. As of the date of this report, Republican presidential nominee John McCain is said to have Huckabee on his list of potential vice presidential running mates. Huckabee is said not to be interested.

