



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on November 6, 2012

Déjà Vu: Funny Business at Philadelphia Polling Places

The battleground state of Pennsylvania is proving to be a potentially volatile region, particularly in Philadelphia. Members of the New Black Panthers are once again [patrolling](#) Philadelphia polling places and resorting to voter intimidation similar to what was seen in Philadelphia in 2008. In other areas of Philadelphia, Republican election monitors are being turned away from polling places.



The *Washington Times* [reports](#) of the New Black Panthers, “A reporter for *Philadelphia Magazine* found a ‘uniformed member of the New Black Panther Party’ Tuesday morning at the entrance to a polling place in the 1200 block of Fairmount Avenue in Philadelphia.”

That reporter informed the New Black Panther that he would take his photograph but the Panther asked that his photograph not be taken. When asked why he was standing outside of the polling place, the man replied, “No comment.”

Later in the day, other members of the New Black Panthers appeared at a second polling place in Philadelphia.

The scene was similar to the one that took place four years ago during the last presidential election. In 2008, two members of the New Black Panther Party stood outside a Philadelphia polling center attired in military uniforms, bearing a nightstick and harassing white voters as they entered the polling center. The entire incident was captured on video, giving the prosecution a virtual open-and-shut case.

Following the release of the video, George W. Bush’s Department of Justice sued the men for violating the 1965 Voting Rights Act. The Obama administration followed suit and launched an investigation into the ordeal as well, and the Department of Justice won a default judgment against several of the New Black Panther members when they failed to appear at their hearing in April 2009.

Despite clear evidence of voter intimidation, justice was never served. One month after the Justice Department received a default judgment against the two men, the DOJ moved to dismiss the charges against one of the Black Panthers, citing insufficient evidence. For the Black Panther holding the nightstick in the video, the Justice Department pursued an injunction, which simply barred him from visiting a Philadelphia polling station for two years.

The entire case sparked controversy and caused some to question Attorney General Eric Holder’s discretion. The controversy was heightened when a former Justice Department attorney, J. Christian Adams, [accused](#) the Justice Department of playing race politics by failing to prosecute the new Black Panthers simply because they were minorities. Adams claimed that the DOJ was admittedly unwilling to prosecute cases in which the assailants were non-white. According to Adams, the DOJ bore “open hostility toward equal enforcement in a colorblind way” of the voting rights laws.

The Department of Justice’s handling of the 2008 voter intimidation case is currently being investigated by the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights.

Meanwhile, the Justice Department’s failure to prosecute the members of the New Black Panthers



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paved the way for a repeat encounter on Election Day 2012.

Jerry Jackson, one of the men charged in the 2008 case of voter intimidation, was back at the polling place in North Philadelphia early on Tuesday morning.

Jackson was joined by New Black Panther chairman Malik Zulu Shabazz in 2008. Back in September, Shabazz had [warned](#) that the New Black Panthers might monitor polling places again in 2012, but would not have billy clubs or night sticks this time around.

“I will say that as this election comes up in November, we will consider our options,” [Shabazz said](#) during his interview with WABC. “And we will consider the fact whether we will legally and lawfully go to the polls again to make sure there is no intimidation against our people, which was our intent in 2008.”

“We will be there. I mean, if we are there. If. We are not saying we will be there or not. But whatever we will do, it will be legal and lawful under the Constitution of the United States,” Shabazz told Aaron Klein Investigative Radio.

And while the New Black Panthers are not holding billy clubs or night sticks for this Election Day, they have again donned their military uniforms and are opening doors for voters as they enter the polling place, making their presence very hard to miss.

In preparation for potentially violent clashes, however, a group of retired Navy SEALs as well as other special ops service members said that they would counter any efforts of voter intimidation in major cities such as Philadelphia, Cleveland, Miami and Las Vegas. Fox News reports:

Former Navy Capt. Benjamin Brink told Philadelphia radio station IQ 106.9 FM more than a hundred former SEALs, Army Rangers, Delta Force operatives and Green Berets volunteered for the job. But he said his men will not provoke confrontation, but rather “watch for intimidation, videotape it, if possible, and report it to the proper authorities.”

Meanwhile, according to Fox News, New Black Panthers have been found at other polling sites as well:

There were also reports of New Black Panther Party members at polling sites in Cleveland, Ohio, where they have also maintained a presence at early voting sites. Critics complain that they are an intimidating presence and could discourage white voters, who may be more likely to vote Republican, from entering polling sites.

In addition to the potential for voter intimidation in Philadelphia, other areas of Philadelphia have reportedly been turning away Republican officials from polling places in Democratic sections of Philadelphia. A memo obtained by the [Washington Examiner](#) outlined the locations at which Republican election officials were being thrown out by the head judges of elections, who are elected Democrats, and being replaced by Democrats. Officials indicated that 75 election monitors have been turned away.

A Pennsylvania judge has ordered those Republican officials to be [reinstated](#), however, and the Philadelphia sheriff’s office states that deputies will be available to protect polling site inspectors.

“It certainly raises the question, what are Democrats doing in the polls that they are working so hard to shield folks from monitoring in this election?” state Republican chairman Rob Gleason said in a statement.

Photo: Philadelphia skyline



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