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### Black Power: The Role of Black Voters in Truman's 1948 Presidential Bid

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# BLACK POWER: THE ROLE OF BLACK VOTERS IN TRUMAN'S 1948 PRESIDENTIAL BID

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By 1944 the African American votes in key northern states could decide a close presidential election. In 1948, it did. America's long history over voter suppression and voter mobilization can be well explained by a study of Truman's presidential campaign leading up to 1948. Attempting to manage an extremely course political landscape, Truman (with advisor Clark Clifford) developed a strategy that would, with luck and much skill, allow him to defy the odds and defeat Republican nominee Thomas E. Dewey. In doing so, Truman had to court Black voters, a key component to the new Democratic coalition of African Americans, laborers, farmers and Liberals. Scholarship has discussed Truman's relationship with African Americans in the past, but generally within the context of problems outside his campaign for election, such as desegregation of the United States Military or his Committee on Civil Rights. The research and study of his campaign (including actions as President leading up to the election) will be the subject of this thesis, and will attempt to analyze the degree to which Truman intentionally perused African-American voters, and how. Ultimately, this paper will conclude that Truman was very intentional in his treatment of African Americans, and was very aware of his need to accommodate them in order to accomplish his goals. In his successful pursuit of this demographic, Truman helped to shape the future of the Democratic party as well as access to vote, an issue that maintains relevance to this day.