



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James Sanders Jr.

Sanders Hosts Panel Discussion on Why Bernie Sanders Failed to Win Over Black Voters in the 2016 Democratic Primary

[James Sanders Jr.](#)

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Senator James Sanders Jr. (D-Rochdale Village) hosted a “Bernie & the Blacks” post-primary discussion on Saturday, April 30, at the Black Spectrum Theatre in Jamaica, to discuss why Senator Bernie Sanders under performed among black voters in New York. Panelists included the senator, who is a Bernie Sanders delegate; Donnie Whitehead, a community activist and Bernie Sanders supporter; and Joel James, a college student.

Moderator A.U. Hogan, associate director of StudentsFirstNY and president of the Baisley Houses, asked a series of thought provoking questions seeking to determine why black voters did not “Feel the Bern.” For example, although Bernie Sanders’ economic message was inherently related to civil rights, should he have made a more direct appeal to black voters?

Senator James Sanders Jr. thought so. “Bernie is from the school that believes classism created racism, and therefore classism is the real problem to solve,” the senator explained. “While there may be truth to that idea, racism is a beast in itself, and Bernie should have done more to address it.”

Other suggested reasons why Bernie Sanders fell short included black voters having a longstanding loyalty to the Clintons. Also, if elected, former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton could be viewed as continuing President Obama’s legacy and would be another historic step for our country by following the election of the first black president with the election of the first female president.

When asked if Obama should have done more to appear neutral, Whitehead responded, “The president was not neutral,” adding that Obama strongly implied Hillary Clinton was his preferred candidate.

Members of the audience chimed in, adding their own theories and asking what could be done to achieve desirable outcomes in the future.

Hillary Clinton defeated Bernie Sanders by a margin of 58% to 42% in the April 19 New York Democratic presidential primary. Among black voters, it was around 75% to 25% in favor of Clinton.