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## *Black Butterfly* **Kendrick Lamar**



WASHINGTON INSIDER

# Independents' Day

AS PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGNS GET UNDERWAY, THE QUESTION REMAINS: IS A TWO-PARTY POLITICAL SYSTEM THE BEST OPTION FOR BLACK AMERICA?

By OMAR ALI As told to MATT E. STEVENS

With the announcement that Hillary Clinton will be running for president in 2016, African-Americans are faced with another familiar choice in a familiar party that may not suit their needs. Although the prospect of voting for the first female commander-in-chief is exciting for many, the fact is that African-Americans remain in an abusive and repetitive relationship with the Democratic

either Republican or Democratic ideology but instead focus on the electoral process. A January 2015 Gallup poll shows that 43 percent of Americans self-identify as politically independent, as do 26 percent of African-Americans, according to a Pew Research Center poll three months later.

In 1988, Lenora Fulani, Ph.D., a psychologist from New York, became the first woman and the first Black American candidate on the presidential ballot in all

is changing. Today, people can learn more about our efforts through IndependentVoting.org, an organization that coordinates and supports the growth of the independent movement in America. More than 400 activist leaders came together this year at the National Conference of Independents to talk about issues related to our cause.

One procedural change that would best benefit our country would be for all states to hold open primaries. The major parties know that elections are won by controlling the electoral process, and the Democrat and Republican parties are nervous—if not downright scared—about the push to have open primaries, which would allow voters to cross party lines on primary election day (on which the first, critical round of voting before the general elections take place) and cast their ballots for the Democrat, Republican, Green or unaffiliated independent candidate that meets their

needs. New voting coalitions are required to move things forward, but if the major parties succeed in keeping some states' primaries closed, there will be no meaningful alliance of Black and independent voters for any candidate in 2016.

Overhauling the process is the key democracy issue of the 21st century, and that's something that the major parties don't want to discuss. Democratic and Republican parties are private organizations that benefit the most from a primary process that supports their continued control. Keep in mind that primary candidates are eligible for partial public funding if they can raise at least \$5,000 in 20 states.

There is a movement in the making of independents right now. And remember, this is not the mere emergence of

another party option. Many of us want to move away from this partisan idea for both candidates and government. The Democrats and Republicans have kept the gates locked for years. It's time for us to kick them wide open.

*Omar Ali, Ph.D., is an associate professor of Comparative African Diaspora History and newly appointed interim dean of the Lloyd International Honors College at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.*

Party—actually, the two-party political system in general. The reason is simple: The Black community continues to vote, simply because of party allegiance, for officials who do not create an environment in which innovative policymaking can happen. This won't change until a more open political process is offered. And it is my belief that in 2016, independents of color will seek to move beyond the old liberal coalition.

Frankly, we need new alliances that do not simply organize themselves around

50 states, representing the New Alliance Party. She had to gather about 30 times the number of signatures required of the Democratic and Republican candidates, and although she was able to do that, her entire campaign was undermined by structural limitations. When asked what was more difficult when running for president, being a woman or being African-American, she said neither of them; for her, it was running as an independent.

Slowly but surely, the political landscape

