Memphis Rejects Race Politics

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The Race Card Is a Losing Hand

Memphis voters overwhelmingly rejected the tactics of black attorney Nikki Tinker in yesterday's Democratic primary for Congress in Tennessee. Her campaign had run an ad featuring Democratic Rep. Steve Cohen, who is white and Jewish, next to a picture of a hooded Klansman while an announcer criticized him for voting against removing a statue of a Confederate general from a local park. A later ad attacked Mr. Cohen for "praying in our churches" while opposing mandatory school prayer.

The raw appeals backfired as Mr. Cohen won a stunning 79% of the vote, to Ms. Tinker's 19%. Indeed, Ms. Tinker pulled off the feat of receiving fewer votes than she got in 2006, when she was part of a nine-candidate slate fighting for the then-vacant Congressional seat. Mr. Cohen narrowly won that primary in the majority-black district as the only white candidate, winning 31% of the vote to Ms. Tinker's 25%.

"It says that we have come a long, long way and that the people who were counting on racial voting to prevail are thinking of a Memphis that doesn't exist anymore," Mr. Cohen told Politico.com last night. "The people of Memphis are more sophisticated voters that deal with issues and someone's record and not simply race."