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America's Propaganda Wars: Cultural Popularity Versus Populist Vulgarly Between The Lines

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In a week that saw an unjustified protest against the President of the United States addressing school children, and a congressman's vulgar breach of protocol in a joint session of Congress on health care reform, we were offered a sharp view of the realities of creating an ideological divide in this nation. Such a divide is spurred by a fervent desire to undermine the popularity of America's first "pop culture" president. Aside from the ideological divide, a racial subtext and a popular backlash, the Republican Party has no real reason to support Barack Obama - other than the fact that he *is* President of the United States - the leader of our nation and *the* standard bearer of our democracy. Still that isn't enough for some people to respect Barack Obama or the Office of Presidency. The vulgarity of the protest around health care - seeking to "Hitler-ize" the President, claiming he is trying to "socialize" America. This is compounded by talk radio and partisan pundit pounding anti-Obama sentiment. The culmination of which was Joe Wilson's "you lie" outburst, demonstrating a higher level of disrespect of an America President than can be recalled in recent memory. This represents a new type of propaganda war, all in an effort to combat Obama's cultural popularity.

The popularity of President Barack Obama is far beyond anything America has seen

since Franklin D. Roosevelt. Obama is rock star popular, a cultural icon that youth and parents alike have up on their walls. Usually the only demand for the U.S. President's photo is reserved for government office buildings. For this President, it's teens, hip-hoppers and the fad driven. Anything with Obama's photo is worn, posted, painted or plastered wherever it can be seen. Like Andy Warhol paintings, psychedelic Obama renderings are a sign of the times. That's a problem for political ideologues use to creating popular thought and popularity for the mundane politician that young people never give the time of day. The American public, the one outside the ideological, anti-intellectual influence, is looking to President Obama to save the world. Literally. And President Obama has, in the opinion of many, tried to oblige them.

Instead of trying to help the President resolve the mess they were largely responsible for creating, the Republicans have taken an obstructionist posture to intercede and intercept any new ideas and proposed solutions that might come out of Obama's new approach to government. The American public is ready for change, and ready to give the President the time he needs to make the changes we need. However, the defeated party in the last election has decided to use this period of hope and optimism as an opportunity to retool an old message and refuel some old modalities. They claim it's for the good of the nation, but it is really for the purpose of mass distraction - a detraction from the perception that the "Obama effect" can do what the previous administration wasn't able to, regain the confidence of the country. Their opposition is to ideas they never tried, and to economic realities they never faced. Yet, their decision to play politics with the fate of the economy is somehow worth chipping away at Obama's popularity. It gets worse...

Just as President Obama seeks to cast a new image for government, beyond being the first black President, and to project a new aspect of respect for the Presidency that had lost some of its shine in the last administration, ideologues use the spotlight of Obama's huge popularity to try to embarrass the President in a vulgar attack of their opposition to his policy initiatives. Wilson's outburst took on a "massive resistance" kind of flavor. The kind that every black man faced back in the day when they tried to explain to a mob why he owned the property he owned, or why he was in the space he was in - not reserved for him. There was always one person in the mob who ignited the spark. "You lie" equates to "the Ni**ers lyin'" in another period, or "get em, boys" in yet another. Congressman Joe Wilson was the one holdin' the rope in a previous period. Only what was popular in a vulgar culture of America's past, didn't play out this time around. For as Wilson put out his "you lie" call, he forgot where he was, and who he was doing it to. He "hooted" and nobody else followed. Their animus for Obama wasn't greater than their respect for the office of the President of the United States, regardless of who holds the office or whether they liked his views. Still, we got to see where some people are in their perception of reality. The world they thought once was, is no longer to be. And thank God that is, in fact, the case. The new propaganda war hasn't led to the conflict of ideas that those in America's past had led to. Popular culture is trumping race and vulgar ideology for the time being.

Still, we stop to acknowledge that a populist resistance is still holding on...to prevent a culture shift the country so badly needs, to rebuke America's new propaganda wars.

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