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Michael Steele-Republican's First Black Party Chair: For Real, Or Another Cheap Trick? Between the Lines

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Last week, after six ballots, the Republican Party elected its first African American party chair in the history of the party, former Maryland Lt. Governor, Michael Steele. This new "lovefest" with black America is almost too much to handle. First, a black president - now a black Republican Party Chair. We just don't know what to do with ourselves and all this "new love." Is it really new love, or is it the set up for the "big payback"?

Well, we know the election of President Obama was essentially an act of desperation (masked as "Hope") for many independents and closet Republicans, given the alternative the nation was presented with (McCain-Palin). We also know President Obama is going to have a very short honeymoon with the American public. He has had no honeymoon with the Republicans as they began to attack him on his second day in office and have declared that they will re-establish their party identity on the back of his economic stimulus package.

It ain't like the Republicans are a part of this Obama "lovefest." Remember, the South (except for Florida), mostly Republican, went solid for McCain. We understand the underlying party sentiment. So, why the huge jump to a black party chair? Are the Republicans trying to court Blacks? Did they learn something from the Democrats? It's not like African Americans haven't had a black party chair before. We have.

People forget the late Commerce Secretary, Ron Brown, was responsible for rebuilding

a torn-down Democratic Party, demoralized after 12 years of Reaganism (eights year of Reagan and what looked like it was going to be eight years of Bush I). Brown took a party that couldn't win a national election if they were the only one in the race, capitalized on a Republican party split (Bush-Ross Perot,) and walked a small state hillbilly (a "Bubba" by his own admission) right up the middle to the door of the White House (Clinton in 1992).

The Brown chairship was long overdue because African Americans had been long-term stakeholders in the Democratic Party. However, that is not the case for the Republican Party, who likes to tout itself as "the party of Lincoln" (responsible for the abolishment of slavery and a dozen years of Reconstruction that produced the 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments). Even when it was Lincoln's "Radical Republicans," blacks weren't in the leadership. What we do know is, whenever there is a black out front in the "new" Republican Party (the party that embraced the Dixiecrats after they bolted from the Democratic Party, when the Democratic Party supported civil rights legislation in the 1960s), there's some trickaration in the game.

The Republican Party has used so-called new Black Conservatives to either roll back social welfare legislation (Clarence Thomas, or Ward Connerly) or roll out corrupt foreign policy "warhawk" positions (Colin Powell, Condolezza Rice). When Oklahoma House Rep. J.C. Watts had "pulled himself up by his own bootstraps" into a seniority posture to hold a house leadership position, he was soundly thwarted for no legitimate reason. It hurt his feelings so badly, he retired. He had "drunk the kool-aid" as chief ideologue, Rush Limbaugh, likes to say.

He, like Clarence Thomas and Colin Powell, had taken the "personal responsibility" pill, became "colorblind," and advanced the rhetoric - until he wanted access to the party's leadership. Then he found his party wasn't so colorblind. Colin woke up and endorsed Obama - Clarence is still colorblind, and doing plenty of damage in the process. So, what's really behind this sudden epiphany the Republicans have had that would suggest that Steele is the right man, at the right time, for this party? Okay, now...we're all supposed to be "Boo Boo, the fool," right? The Republicans have seen "the light" by electing this moderate ideologue to advance this reconstructing party's new agenda?

No, the Republicans are back to their old tricks. They don't know how to attack President Obama and not make it look "racial." It's like trying to have an alcoholic attack alcohol, it's just not going to work. This "same race" play was used to replace Thurgood Marshall with an ideologue, and effectively deconstructed affirmative action with a blackface spouting ideological demagoguery.

The Republicans have put Steele up to be the party's attack dog on Obama, and hope to attract some black folks in the process. How many of us want to see two brothas up there, fighting each other for parties that have historically cared little about African Americans? The Republicans know there's dirty work to be done for the party to reclaim any prominence in the White House or the Congress. They've tapped Michael Steele to help them get their country back. An old trick, with a new face. The race play of all race plays, a convenient opportunity for Steele.

Did the Republicans just happened to elect their first-ever black party chair at the same time the country just happened to elect its first black president? What a coincidence.

Or, was it a cheap trick to undermine the country's sincere change in direction on racial politics?


You make the call, but the timing couldn't be more suspect.


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