

The BLACK C o m m e n t a t o r

An independent weekly internet magazine
dedicated to the movement for economic justice,
social justice and peace - Providing commentary,
analysis and investigations on issues affecting
African Americans and the African world.

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February 12, 2009 - Issue 311

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Enough of This Bipartisanship Nonsense

Color of Law

By David A. Love, JD

BlackCommentator.com Editorial Board

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I started to laugh when I heard that Michael Steele was selected as the first African American to chair the Republican National Committee. I don't think much of the "new" Republican Party, but then again, that doesn't prevent me from writing about it.

But don't get me wrong, I think that the former Maryland lieutenant governor was the best person available for the job. Then again, given the paucity of talent in that once venerable GOP, once the party of Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass, now the party of Rush Limbaugh, Sarah Palin and Joe the Plumber, it isn't as if the bar was set so high in the first place. Among the contestants for RNC chair was a man who quit an all-White country club to run for the position, and another who distributed CD copies of the songs "Barack the Magic Negro" and "The Star Spanglish Banner." And the other Black candidate stole the 2004 presidential election in Ohio for Bush.

For a party which has earned a reputation as a White Southern racist party - due in no small measure to the fact that it is primarily a White Southern racist party - the Steele pick was an attempt to put a new face on an old story. This cynical form of window dressing was a response to the election of the country's first Black president, and an acknowledgement that shifting national demographics do not bode well for a party whose core supporters are limited to a sideshow of hicks, jingoists, bigots and homophobes, religious zealots, oligarchs and the chronically greedy. The Steele pick was more of a signal to the White Obama moderates and independents that the GOP is a safe place for them once again. This sales pitch will likely fail. And as for people of color, Don Cheadle said it best in the movie *Rosewood*: "We ain't goin' nowhere."

After all, a front man of color does not translate into a new policy and direction. Ronald McDonald is the face of McDonald's, but no one ever thought he was actually running the company. And it can hardly be said that Clarence Thomas, Condoleezza Rice, Alberto Gonzales or J.C. Watts did anything to make the GOP a better, more hospitable place. To the contrary, they decided to go along to get along, helping to shepherd the same misguided ideas and heartless, if not criminal, policies. After he became RNC chair, Steele declared that [the GOP does not have a message problem](#), that there will be no change in the party's stance towards immigration, and that the Republicans should look back to the Contract With America for inspiration. Steele claimed that government jobs aren't real jobs, and the only real jobs are private sector jobs. He even suggested that people such as Sarah Palin are the future of the party.

What is most telling about this back-to-the-future Republican Party is their lockstep march against an economic stimulus package. Steele said the stimulus "is just a wish list from a lot of people who have been on the sidelines for years ... to get a little bling, bling." The GOP believes it has found its new calling, in the form of its stalwart opposition to any economic recovery package that consists of anything less than 100 percent tax cuts. They stand by the failed policy of tax cuts and trickle-on economics that have ruined the country for the past eight years, because it is all they have left. I will give them some credit, however - they stand committed to their ideals, even if those ideals originated in the test tube of some mad neocon's scientific experiment, or in the alimentary canal of the party's prized mascot.

The unanimous rejection by the House Republicans of the Obama stimulus package is proof that the current incarnation of the GOP cares far more about positioning itself for the 2010 election than in saving the nation from the next Great Depression. For these individuals, politics takes precedence over anything else. They are banking on Obama's failure and the complete destruction of the economy, and then they will provide the cleanup crew. If they didn't care about the state of the nation as they ran it into the ground under their watch, why should they care now?

Bipartisanship is a means, not an end unto itself. President Obama knew this when he extended an olive branch to his adversaries. By not taking the olive branch, they took his bait. He didn't need their votes, and they fell into his trap. They failed to gauge the level of discontent and hopelessness in the land, and by failing to support measures that a majority of the public demands.

In the opinion of this humble political observer, you should expect the GOP to do more of the same. In all honesty, no one really expected conservatives to reject their ill-advised supply-side beliefs and join the Keynesian bandwagon. Ideology forbids them from signing onto the new New Deal that we ultimately will require to make people whole, to save the nation from the effects of unmuzzled, runaway capitalism.

True to their Southern orientation, the Republicans are an anti-labor, anti-union party. They oppose salary caps for CEOs who are receiving federal bailout money. They will oppose future economic relief programs and infrastructure investment, even though their constituencies desperately need it. They will oppose the [Employee Free Choice Act](#), which will make it easier for workers to organize. They will oppose the nomination of the staunchly pro-union Rep. Hilda Solis for Secretary of Labor. They will oppose new regulations for Wall Street and the environment, and they will oppose the greening of the economy. And thankfully they will continue to marginalize themselves and cement their status as a regional backwater party.

The GOP hopes that come 2010, the economic recovery fails, along with the President

and his party. However, the more likely outcome is that with all of the [retiring Republican senators next year](#), the Democrats are poised to win a filibuster-proof supermajority in the Senate. At that point, all Obama would have to do is channel his inner F.D.R. and, with the help of Congress, [stack the Supreme Court](#) with progressive judges who reflect the will of the people. It's just a thought.

Bipartisanship sounded like a good idea, but in times of crisis you need willing parties to come to the table. In this case, the other side has nothing to contribute, and since they lost the last election under the weight of their failed economic and foreign policies, it is time to cast them aside. They unwittingly allowed Obama to make their bed for them, and now they must sleep in it. GOP, we got this, we will do it without you.

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The BlackCommentator Readers' Corner Blog


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