

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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Sept 6, 2012 - Issue 484

Re-Living a Moses Moment The Other Side of the Tracks By Perry Redd BC Columnist

The country witnessed a miracle short of the burning bush. The Republican National Convention (RNC) in Tampa was just another dry cheerleading event with the same old talking points and disenfranchising positions. Conservative Republicans received their awakening at just the right moment.

Addressing an "invisible" President Barack Obama sitting in an empty chair, Clint Eastwood, who played the iconic tough guy character "Dirty Harry" during his long career in Hollywood, fired up the party base when he said he cried when Obama was elected and cried even harder years later when millions were out of work.

We might recall that some years ago, during the 2000 election, the Conservatives were seeking a leading cry to unite their base and move them forward toward their objective of "taking their country back." It would mark a culmination of four decades of structural manipulation of laws and processes leading to yet another page-turning electoral coup. Reagan was the first. They latched onto an actor...Moses.

Now, Charlton Heston is known for heroic roles in films such as *The Ten Commandments*, *Ben-Hur* for which he won the Academy Award for Best Actor, *El Cid*, and *Planet of the Apes*. Why white traditionalists cling to the words of actors - people *playing* other people - is far beyond my pay grade. What's clear is that, for the conservative American, their nostalgic palate must be titillated. How that translates

into solid, feasible public policy is a question for psychologists and not political scientists.

I don't have the answer, but it is clear that Republicans are comfortable with placing their constitutional rights in the hands of purveyors of make-believe. That might explain why Republican policies are always at odds with mainstream America - and definitely, the progressive Left.

When Heston, then-president and mouthpiece for the NRA, stood before America and held a long-barrel rifle above his head and stated, "from my cold, dead hands," he fired the shot heard around the country. It ignited a call to Conservatives for them to respond to the fear of white males all across America. White men wanting more liberal gun rights heard the call from "Moses." The NRA has been the single most successful lobbying group on Capitol Hill ever since.

Heston started off as a champion for civil rights, but by the 1980s, Heston opposed affirmative action, supported gun rights and changed his political affiliation from Democrat to Republican. When asked why he changed political alliances, Heston infamously replied, "I didn't change. The Democratic party changed." He campaigned for Republicans and Republican Presidents Ronald Reagan, George H. W. Bush and George W. Bush.

Since when did fighting for the *equal* rights of all Americans change? What hasn't changed is Conservatives seeking gimmicks to win. Charlton Heston was widely known and popular, as is Clint Eastwood. Their names evoke fond and youthful memories of white, male saviors. That's what Republicans are searching for.

Heston died and Conservatives *need* a replacement - someone possessing a comparable gutsy tough-guy and patriarchal bravado. Enter Dirty Harry...

The RNC had left room for a "mystery guest" on its final day schedule and announced that Eastwood would fill that slot. Late in the afternoon, Eastwood walked the aisles on the convention floor for a brief rundown of the night's events. His ad-libbed speech later in the evening was decidedly political, biting satirical and more than a bit...rambling. It appears that in a patriarchal, male-dominated political party, old white men run the show - even if they're bitter, disheveled, and rambling ...and a show it was!

"What do you want me to tell Romney?" Eastwood asked the empty chair. "I can't tell him to do that to himself ... you're getting as bad as Biden ... of course we all know Biden is the intellect of the Democratic Party. Kind of a grin with a body behind it ..." Of course, Eastwood's gesture and remarks were vulgar and degrading toward the President and the Office, but the conservative base ate it up! Eastwood even made a throat-cutting gesture - literally - meant for President Obama (NOTE: Young, Black basketball players are fined for directing those same gestures toward their opponents).

Though not as eloquent as Heston, Eastwood was the answer to the Right's rally cry for an actor who personifies their values and mission to end Obama's reign and "re-take their country." Eastwood is this generation of Republican's Moses, and Eastwood's anti-climatic ramblings led them to their "Moses Moment."

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