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Is the "Great Debate" Really the Great Set-Up? The Expectations of Obama to Please *Everybody* Between The Lines

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The first Presidential Debate took place this week (after deadline). But the "hype" started two weeks ago. Hopefully, the debate lived up to the hype (analysis next week), but the "set up" is worth some space because of the diverse motives that are served here. It is true that one debate does not make a campaign...unless it comes to Obama. President Obama has been in this position before, running a near perfect campaign against a weak Republican opponent, and a media waiting to pounce at his first falter, thus giving his opponent the opening he needs to upset him. Only this time around, the expectations seem to be even more unreasonable, given the environment and the realities of the nation's economic and social indicators.

Only so much is going to be able to be done *regardless* of who is President. The debate is simply a subterfuge to position supporters and detractors as to whether the President addressed the issues they care about. The detractors won't support him no matter how well he does, and those who claim to support him do so based on a "conditional reality," setting the President up to chase red herrings that legislated with *this* Congress and can't win him the election.

Everybody has their issues, but everybody doesn't draw context in the same political reality. President Obama knows he won't be able to please everybody, and governing from the center (as a moderate) allows for the best engagement for pragmatic politics. Only Congress, and segments of the public, is not pragmatic anymore. Congress is

literally useless as it tries to government from the fringes. The right wing can't even reach the middle anymore. Segments of the public, are calling for solutions to historical problems, which can be resolved if the government is functioning, and if the policy environment (Congress) is conducive to addressing these problems, which it is not.

Yeah...I'm talking about *both* poverty and immigration reform...and tax reform...and budget reform...and Middle East reform...and entitlement reform...and education reform...

Okay, you can see where this can go...how unreasonable it becomes once the "piling on" begins. One hundred years of outdated institutional systems and ignored social realities dropped in the President's lap with smart-mouthed remarks, "You said you were gonna' change sh*t, change this!!! Where's the change?" How come things haven't changed?" To quote Mitt Romney's wife when he was queried about his lack of accountability on his 47% comments:

"STOP IT. This is hard."

The impracticality of doing many of these things is only met by realities of policy practicum and the subversiveness of the motives of those doing the talking. If they really wanted those things to change, the conversation would have been more rational and placed at the feet of Congress. There are realities to a society in decline (which America refuses to admit), the real-est of which is that everybody has to work to save the society - not work against each other.

Policy change has to be incremental and political will has to be present and affirming. Neither existed for this President, and to expect he would have solved all these problems in his first two years, when he had a Democratic controlled Congress, is simply impractical. Remember how volatile and nasty this country got on the health care reform debate - people being spat upon and called the names we said we were past in our "post-racial" period? And health care reform helped as many whites as people of color.

Poverty and immigration are *highly* racialized policy initiatives that would have torn the country apart and assured Obama's defeat. Race is the third rail of American society, and plenty of people, even in our community, are trying to get the President to step on the rail - because they know what the outcome would be. Do you think the President wouldn't have addressed poverty if he thought he could get it through Congress? That was also the case for immigration reform

and tax reform. People can't be simple in their understanding of how government really works. Congress has to do its part, and President Obama has governed with the lowest rated Congress in American history.

You can't be genuine about winning if both sides don't try in earnest. The Olympics in London suspended athletes this summer who did not compete in earnest, for undermining the integrity of the games. Who do the American people suspend for undermining the integrity of the government to govern? The conversation can't be elementary, nor can the rationale for critique be sandbox. How can you critique Obama and not mention Congress' obstructionism or the subtleties of racism that disrespect this President - like no other in American history? You can't, unless the critique is a set-up for the failure of this President.

The attempt to take advantage of Obama's populist message that drove his election (along with eight years of anti-intellectualism fatigue), gave people - who would have never been heard in previous administrations - an opportunity to be heard. And I don't recall all these "demands" being made of either Bush or Clinton. A plane full of black people went to Africa with President Clinton and "hoped" he apologized for slavery. He didn't...and nobody said SH#T!!! He also signed welfare reform that created much of the poverty (and homelessness) we see today. Still silence. But they wanna' be "big, bad and bold" with the black President.

Really???

The expectations placed at Obama's feet in the face of financial collapse, in the worst economy since the Great Depression, were false and disingenuous because those that placed them there knew they couldn't be addressed in the scheme of the current environments - both financial and political. People talk about the Great Depression without drawing proper context to the time or political circumstances. Herbert Hoover was FDR's George W. Bush. People forget it took 10 years (from 1930 to 1940) and three terms for Roosevelt to turn the nation around.

If this period is similar to then, why would the expectation for this President be any different than what history has taught us and what President Clinton reminded us at the recent Democratic Convention, that "nobody, not even *him*, could've turned this economy around in four years." That's the political reality. Mitt Romney can't offer specifics to his plans because he has none.

Romney doesn't know what he's dealing with, anymore than Bush II knew, and though he's mentioning "poverty" (because it was handed to Republicans by detraction), he's never dealt with poverty in his life – neither living it nor governing it. Though he wears spray tans and panders to Latinos, he's never dealt with immigration reform in his life - preferring them to "self-deport" (go back on their own), which is *non-sense*...and is a nonstarter in policy practicum.

Regardless of how President Obama or Mitt Romney did during the debate, we know the anti-taxation movement can't continue and Congress, regardless of who is President and what party holds House and Senate majorities, must engage in rational, practical policymaking.

Otherwise, it's a set-up.

Obama can't be all things to all people, nor should he try to be - but he does need a partner in government to do this dance - to come to the middle of the dance floor, which the Republicans haven't done. Hopefully, that's what these debates are about...

Fixing a broken government and fixing unreasonable expectations?

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