

# 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.

[www.BlackCommentator.com](http://www.BlackCommentator.com)

**Dec 13, 2012 - Issue 498**

## **Next Black Senator: Tim Scott, Republican Nafsi ya Jamii By Wilson Riles BC Columnist**

There have only been six blacks in the U.S. Senate in the history of the country. This is not surprising because the Senate was always intended to be an *exclusive* "club." There were three Democrats from Illinois (Carol Mosely Braun [1993 and the only woman], Barack Obama [2005], and Roland Burris [2009]), one Republican from Massachusetts (Edward Brooke III [1967]), and two Republicans from Mississippi (Hiram Rhodes Revels [1870] and Blanche Kelso Bruce [1875]). With the resignation of Tea Party favorite Jim DeMint, South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley will choose a replacement and bets are that she will choose her State legislative and Tea Party colleague, Republican Congressman Tim Scott. I think DeMint is smiling broadly.

Tara Wall, an African-American who was a senior media adviser to 2012 Republican presidential nominee Mitt Romney, said "It would be a significant nod to conservatism and inclusion...Scott is a very personable, well-respected, highly committed congressman who has been tireless in his advocacy of faith, economic freedom and entrepreneurship. He'd make a fantastic senator." The Tea Party faction in the Republican Party **got** the election message about the power of demographics and so-called "identity politics." Tim Scott is intended to be the "tip of their spear" in a new Republican strategy to appear inclusive. They know from his history (small government advocacy, anti-labor, pro business, and fundamentalist values oriented) that he is in total sync with their conservative message. They may worry a bit that the 45-year-old black man is not married but the first bill he

authored as a Congressman would have defunded and de-authorized the President's health care reform package.

Scott's Congressional District reaches from the Sea Islands south of Charleston, through the city where the Civil War began and north along the coast to the Myrtle Beach area. In 2010, with massive fundraising and the endorsements of **tea party** groups, **Sarah Palin, Jim DeMint, Eric Cantor, Mike Huckabee**, and the anti-tax **National Club for Growth**, the black conservative businessman bested six candidates and defeated in a runoff Strom Thurmond's son, fellow Charleston County Councilman Paul Thurmond. Scott became the first African-American Republican elected to Congress from South Carolina in 114 years. As a Senator, he will become a conservative Republican superstar.

Another black Congressman from South Carolina, Jim Clyburn, 70, was Chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus in 1999. Clyburn invited Scott to join, saying, "What I would say to Tim is come join the caucus...Let us have the benefit of your input. Maybe we can learn something from you and maybe you can learn something from us." Scott chose not to join the nearly all-Democrat group, despite Clyburn's invitation. "I am not a race-centric person," he said. **He thinks of himself as a Republican who happens to be black.**

Isn't it interesting how so many black folks who get to where they are because of race, push race away once they arrive! U.S. culture channels us into believing that our successes are due to our individual characteristics but that our failures are due to discrimination imposed on us from outside ourselves. **Know** that it is **not just blacks** who exhibit this ego protection; rich, powerful people exhibit exactly the same false thinking. **Of course** our successes and our failures are due to both our individual character *and* how we are treated - at the same time. The *real* paradigm is both-and and *not* either-or.

Clyburn and Scott are products of different times. Scott has distant memories of direct segregation and discrimination; for Clyburn those memories are seared on his brain and he is reminded of that history everyday when he is confronted with existent racial differences. Scott "sees the key in individual wealth, through lower taxes and strong business policy." **Scott thinks that if he can "make it" in the U.S., anybody can make it who tries.** Therefore, if you do not make it, it is because you did not try. He has drunk the capitalist conservative "cool aid." Clyburn believes prosperity first takes strategic government investment - after all, it was government that disinvested in "**some**"

folks and facilitated their damage. Scott believes that "as government spending goes up, American freedom goes down." But this, also, is NOT **either-or**.

As African Americans continue to climb tortuously out of the pit of racism in the U.S., one thing has been repeatedly brought home to us that we dare not forget: Firsts, who break some color-line, or Seconds or - as in this case - Sevenths are **almost always disappointing**. Some of us get very excited when a person we can identify with achieves a position where few of us have been before. We jump to many assumptions about the harmony of experience between that achiever and us and we often have a false understanding about what an individual can do to make things better for the rest of us. This is W. E. B. DeBois' flawed theory of the "talented tenth." (DeBois later corrected himself.) We forget that no one achieves without the participation of many others and that no one would *even get close* to positions of real power until it is perfectly clear that that person will not threaten the basic status quo. The "system" **at the top** has learned well how to protect itself! The **fundamental change that is needed** will not come from the top; it never has and it never will. (However, that is not a reason not to challenge the top; it is a reason to do it with understandings of that strategy's limitations.)

Know that DeMint and the Tea Party Republicans will **also** be disappointed. They have a false understanding of "identity politics" in the black community. It will take more than skin color to cause blacks in this country to accept Tea Party anti-government, blame-the-victim, racist rhetoric. Tim Scott standing with DeMint, Sarah Palin, Eric Cantor, and the Club for Growth will more than cancel the blackness that he himself pushes away. Scott cannot make their racism more palatable or open black ears to their false solutions; blacks heard clearly the racist Tea Party the first time. It is Tim Scott, with his ego still flying from his meteoric rise, who will be rudely awakened when his genteel self is dropped because he cannot hide the despicable truth of his political affiliations. And the demographics of this country will march on without the toxicity of conservative Republicans.

The military in their counterinsurgency work talk about the Center of Gravity in a community. It is "the source of power that provides moral or physical strength, freedom of action, or will to act." The **Center of Political Gravity** or the political barycenter of oppressed communities is imbedded significantly deeper than it is in privileged communities. The western social psychological community is much more regimented and tends to completely acquiesce to leadership from the top. It is

undoubtedly related to authoritarian daddy-structures and habits. In the black community, where too many daddies have been absent, the locus of political action is wrapped in the sensibilities of mothers who tend to focus on the whole family group and make consultative decisions with the group in mind. **Tim lost this black community sensibility when he allowed a white man, John Moniz of Chick-fil-A, to mentor him and become a substitute daddy.** Folks like Scott and other Firsts - or Seconds, Thirds, or Sevenths - are not long followed when they exhibit, as he has, white, conservative Republican, individualistic, non-consultative-I-know-what's-best-for-you, capitalistic sensibilities.

*[Note: Nafsi ya Jamii is the Swahili phrase that translates in English to "The Soul Community"]*

**BlackCommentator.com** Columnist, *Wilson Riles*, is a former Oakland, CA City Council Member. Click [here](#) to contact Mr. Riles.



Copyright © 2002-2012  
www.BlackCommentator.com  
All Rights Reserved