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The Monkey on the Tea Party's Back

Another day. Another outrageous example of how deeply the election of a Black American of mixed parentage has unhinged some conservative White Americans.

And further evidence, thanks to Marilyn Davenport, a Tea Party member who sits on the Republican Party central committee of Orange County, Ca., that the Tea Party continues to be the organizational refuge for some significant number of them.

Recently a local newspaper reported that Davenport, a long-time party committee member, had sent to some fellow committee members and others an e-mail depicting President Obama as belonging to a family of chimpanzees: his face was superimposed on a chimpanzee that was clearly meant to be the offspring of a male and female chimpanzee – also in the photo.

Underneath the doctored photo, Davenport, who is 74, had typed the words: “Now you know why – no birth certificate!”

Scott Baugh, the chairman of the committee, was one who received it. He e-mailed Davenport that it was “dripping with racism and is in very poor taste.” He and some other GOP officials in the county later said Davenport should resign or be ousted from her committee seat.

The ensuing scenario followed the script that's become a thoroughly familiar one since President Obama took office.

Davenport at first declared in an e-mail response to the committee that she had done nothing wrong

DEFENDERS ONLINE

Lee A. Daniels and Stacey Patton

and that it was all “much to do about nothing.”

“I'm sorry if my e-mail offended anyone,” she began, her tone of defiance obvious. “I simply found it amusing regarding the character of Obama and all the questions surrounding his origin of birth.”

The character of Obama? His origin of birth?

Davenport pressed on: “In no way did I consider the fact that he's half black when I sent out the

who took offense, followed by the I-have-Black-friends-so-I'm-not-a-racist declaration.

But, it was clear the controversy was not going to be dismissed so easily. Davenport's words summoned echoes of the racist assertions of late 19th and early 20th-century eugenicists like Charles Davenport (no relation) about the character, traits, and evolutionary origins of Black people. Charles Davenport was one who in the early 1900s warned that American society was in decline because of the presence of too many Blacks, people with disabilities and other people of color.

Former chairman of the

when he opposed installing grassy areas at a beach. His reason, according to the L.A. Times: “with grass we usually get Mexicans coming in there early in the morning and they claim it as theirs, and it becomes their personal, private grounds all day.”

It's important to note the similarity of the three incidents: they are all outlandish, and draw on a web of bigoted notions about Blacks and Mexicans that are the more effective because they don't have to be spelled out.

The weight of criticism — added to undoubtedly via back-channel routes by Republican Party officialdom trying to avoid another racial controversy welling up from its ranks — soon forced Marilyn Davenport to publicly recant. She said, “I wasn't wise in sending the email out. I shouldn't have done it. I really wasn't thinking when I did it. I had poor judgment.” She further said, “I am not a racist, but I do think I need to apologize again with different words.”

But, of course, though one may accept the sincerity of Davenport's apology, it's too late for a “retraction” of an incident and its immediate aftermath, which offer, not a window, but a glass house-look into the Tea Party's soul as the place where such expressions of bigotry are acceptable. The “monkey” Tea Partiers are apparently obsessed with asserting is President Obama is actually the outward manifestation of their own racial anxieties. The monkey they see is actually the one on their own backs.

It's important to note the similarity of the three incidents: they are all outlandish, and draw on a web of bigoted notions about Blacks and Mexicans

email. In fact, the thought never entered my mind until one or two other people tried to make this about race. We all know a double standard applies regarding this president. I received plenty of emails about George Bush that I didn't particularly like, yet there was no ‘cry’ in the media about them.”

She added for good measure that she has friends who are Black.

That marked the end of the first act of the drama: the dismissal of the wrong by combining the assertion that it was all a joke with a back-of-the-hand apology to those

California Republican Party Michael Schroeder weighed in quickly that the e-mail was Davenport's third strike, citing two previous incidents in which she had defended the racist actions of fellow Orange County conservatives.

The first was during President Obama's inauguration, when Los Alamitos Mayor Dean Grose forwarded an email depicting a watermelon patch on the White House lawn.

According to Schroeder, Davenport also defended Newport Councilman Richard Nichols

Social Trends: Marriage is so 20th Century!

I know I'm a lucky girl because I love my job (not everyone does you know). It gives me the privilege of keeping my finger on the pulse of consumer trends and purchasing behavior as my company, The Nielsen Company, measures what you watch and what you buy globally. I then have the pleasure of sharing that information with you because I so believe that knowledge is power. Recently, Nielsen released a comprehensive report, The New Digital American Family, which highlights that the new family unit is more ethnically diverse than at any point in history. And, while I will certainly be sharing with you all of the eye-opening findings of the study in future columns, today I am focused on the one finding that sent a chill down my spine: “marriage is on the wane.”

Two trends impact the outlook for marriage: age at first marriage and opting out of marriage altogether. The proposed factors delaying marriage are many: an extended period of adolescence, an economy with few available jobs and the highly publicized single lifestyle modeled by celebrities. But, it is co-habitation before marriage that appears to be the dominant, driving force of the decline in marriage.

Now if you're a woman, you've more than likely been warned by your mama, grandma or auntie that “there's no point in buying the

PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Cheryl Pearson-McNeil

cow when you can get the milk for free.” And, while most of us decried being compared to a cow, we certainly understood the message behind the old adage: they didn't want us shacking up, (mmm-hmm. You know that's what your mama and grandmama called it.) or living together

before marriage. I tried living with my then boyfriend before we got married, and I was so traumatized by the thought of my mother's disapproval that the live-in situation only lasted for three months (in retrospect the subsequent marriage didn't last that much longer, but that's another column) and that was in the 90's. In 1980, only 16 percent of adults lived together before marriage. By 2000, those couples choosing to shack-up jumped to 41 percent. Now, new census numbers expect to show that more than half — more than 50

percent — of all couples prefer to share a household without a marriage license. Wow. So much for taking mama and 'dem's advice. Am I the only one who was raised on pure guilt?! And, for those who do get married, the median age at first marriage for men rose by six years since the middle of the Baby Boomer years.

The second trend is to never marry. Almost three-fourths, or 72 percent, of Americans over age 18 were married in 1960, but only 52

what kind of nonsense mumble jumble is that?! But, truth be told maybe my marriage would have lasted longer had we had such a non-traditional arrangement). Statistically, both non-marriage and delayed marriage are equal opportunity realities encompassing all ethnic groups. And, statistics show that college educated adults have the highest marriage rates; while those with a high school education or less have the lowest rates.

So whether you thought marriage was in your plans or not, at least you know how you or even your adult children fare compared to the rest of America. I contend there really is something to be said about that “cow for free” adage; sometimes mama ain't always wrong, no matter what the unmarried numbers say. Perhaps if more parents guilted their kids into not living together outside of marriage we could impact these climbing numbers. You can rest assured that I absolutely plan to use the “guilt-method-of-parenting” on my son for as long as it works for me. Anyone out there willing to join me?

Cheryl Pearson-McNeil is the senior vice president of Public Affairs and Government Relations for The Nielsen Company. For more information and studies go to www.nielsenwire.com

Two trends impact the outlook for marriage: age at first marriage and opting out of marriage altogether

percent are today. Young Americans are delaying marriage and the rates are plummeting among all ethnic groups. To further confound the situation, sociologists are proposing a new way of thinking about marriage, summarized by the phrase “alone together.” This reflects more independent spouses who live separate lives with fewer shared activities than their married predecessors. (Can't you just hear your grandmother's uncensored response when you and your “boo” announce your “alone together” status: “Now