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The Republicans' Racial Politics

Newt Gingrich is playing racial politics and he is playing to win. First he says that black children should get jobs as janitors (why not suggest they get the same consulting contract he did at Freddie Mac – I'm with Mitt Romney here, what did Gingrich tell Freddie Mac that was worth more than a million dollars). Then he says that he wants to tell the NAACP that we should demand jobs, not food stamps. He so bristles at Fox commentator Juan Williams that he gets a standing O in South Carolina. And he has repeatedly described President Barack Obama as a “food stamp” President. It's race baiting, pure and simple, and few have called him on it.

The true food stamp story goes something like this. In 2006 just 26.5 million Americans received food stamps. By 2011 the number had spiked to more than 45 million people. This has been the result of the Great Recession that has left at least 13 million people officially unemployed for an average of 40 weeks. Those are the official numbers, but they may be twice as high when we consider the people who have part time work and want full time work and those who have dropped out of the labor market because it costs too much to look for work. President Obama is not a food stamps president; he is a president who inherited an economic crisis. Newt is being extremely disingenuous and extraordinarily racist in his food stamps rap.

While about 14 percent of all of us – one in seven – gets food



BENNETT COLLEGE

Julianne Malveaux

stamps, in some states the number is as high as one in five. In South Carolina, for example, poverty is greater than it is in the nation and 18.2 percent of South Carolinians get food stamps. The number in

Newt is being extremely disingenuous and extraordinarily racist in his food stamps rap

Maine is 18.6 percent, in Louisiana 19.2 percent, in Michigan 19.7 percent, in Oregon 20.1 percent, and in Mississippi 20.7

need much fuel to turn to fire. He got a standing O by pandering to racial stereotypes. And that pandering may well have propelled him into victory.

Newt has managed to paint food stamps as a black program, partly by describing our president as a “food stamps” president, and partly by putting food stamps in context with the NAACP. But Mr. Gingrich, often touted for his intelligence, must be bright enough to know that most food stamp recipients are not African American. Indeed, according to the Associated Press, 49 percent of

ends meet. People who always struggled are now strangling. More than 2 million families have doubled up in the past year because they needed a family lifeline to save their lives and their worlds. More than 40 percent of African American children live in poverty. Newt Gingrich would blame the poor for their situation, but the economy that President Obama inherited is an economy that has thrust people into despair. Food stamps are a lifeline for many. How dare candidate Gingrich attack President Obama for providing relief to 45 million Americans!

Most food stamp recipients are people who used to work, and they would, frankly, rather be working than receiving assistance. But they have downsized their lifestyles, their dreams, and their expectations. They are waiting for the job market to roar back. Half of the 45 million are white, and some of them stood to applaud Gingrich. Do they really think that a man who disdains the poor will provide them with a lifeline? Do they really believe that a man who is selling wolf tickets to the NAACP is really concerned with the well being of the least and the left out. The poverty that too many Americans experience is repugnant. The extent to which politicians trivialize such poverty is character revealing. Who will put American back to work? Who will alleviate poverty?

Julianne Malveaux is President of Bennett College in Greensboro, North Carolina

Indeed, according to the Associated Press, 49 percent of food stamp recipients are white

percent. Given the racial dynamics in South Carolina, did Newt decide to show out in a state where there is more poverty than elsewhere, and when the racial resentments (remember I said Confederate flag waving) don't

stamp recipients, but they chose to bond with Newt's racially coded messages instead of their own economic reality.

Poverty has a different face than it has ever had before. People who used to have big jobs and fancy cars are now struggling to make

Gingrich Bullies the Media, Avoids Issues

Whether it was John King of CNN or Fox News' Juan Williams, moderators of recent Republican presidential debates have allowed Newt Gingrich to bully them and avoid answering their questions. I don't necessarily blame Gingrich, I blame the journalists who fail to hold him accountable.

King timidly asked Gingrich in the last South Carolina debate if he wanted to comment on an interview with one of his ex-wives in which she charged that Gingrich had proposed having an open marriage that would have allowed him to simultaneously continue his marriage and his relationship with his then-mistress, who is now his third wife.

In a carefully orchestrated attack on what he calls the “elite media,” Gingrich lectured King: “...To make an ex-wife and make it two days before the primary, a significant question in a presidential campaign, is as close to despicable as anything I can imagine.”

In an effort to not appear confrontational, King took the tongue lashing, with only a feeble attempt to point out that the interview was conducted by another network. That, in turn, was met by Gingrich saying, “You chose to start the debate with it. Don't try to blame it on somebody else.”

Blaming the media for his infidelity is exactly what Gingrich did. What's despicable is Gin-

THE CURRY REPORT

George E. Curry



grich's behavior, not the questions he was asked.

Let's review Gingrich's record by starting with his birth.

According to a story by Stephen

days when he hit her.”

Gingrich was adopted by his mother's second husband, Bob Gingrich.

“As a high school student – precocious, lonely, overweight – Newt secretly romanced his geometry teacher, a buxom, matronly woman named Jackie Battley,” the Salon article stated. “The furtive romance with his 24-year-old teacher included nighttime sessions in the back of a car in remote areas of Fort Benning, Ga.”

Referring to that first marriage, an article by Ariel Levy in the

Blaming the media for his infidelity is exactly what Gingrich did

Talbot published in the Aug. 28, 1998 issue of Salon: “Newt himself is the product of a weekend marriage. His 16-year-old mother,

New Yorker magazine (Jan. 23, 2012) observed: “As a student at Baker High School in Columbus, Ga., Gingrich fell in love with his

Marianne said she was shocked that her then-husband's affair was conducted 'in my bedroom in our apartment in Washington.'

Kit, married hard-drinking, brawling Big Newt McPherson, whom she met at a roller rink. But she quit the marriage after just three

geometry teacher, Jacqueline Battley. She taught him to drive. ‘He was her little boy,’ Gingrich's mother has said. They were mar-

ried in 1962, after his freshman year at Emory, when Gingrich was nineteen and Battley was twenty-six.”

The New Yorker article recounted, “He [Gingrich] ran for Congress twice and lost before his successful 1978 campaign, which he organized around the slogan ‘Let Our Family Represent Your Family.’ After he was elected, he moved the family to Fairfax, Va. One year later, he met Marianne Ginther at a political fund-raiser in Ohio, and within weeks, she told the journalist John Richardson, he asked her to marry him. It was ‘way too early, and he wasn't divorced yet,’ she said. ‘I should have known there was a problem.’”

The story continued, “Before the campaign, Jacqueline had been treated for uterine cancer. ‘He walked out in the spring of 1980,’ she told the Washington Post. “That September, she was taken to the hospital to have a tumor removed. ‘I went into the hospital for my third surgery,’ she said. ‘The two girls came to see me, and said, Daddy is downstairs and could he come up? When he got there, he wanted to discuss the terms of the divorce while I was recovering from the surgery.’”

According to the Salon article, “Six months after divorcing Jackie, Gingrich married a younger woman, Marianne, with whom he had been having an affair.”