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## Luis Suarez: Racism in Soccer

A few hours ago, today Saturday February 11, 2012, I turned on ESPN2 to watch a much-anticipated return to a legendary, familiar clash; a gritty soccer rivalry: the colorful, passionate, winning institutional clubs of Manchester United and Liverpool playing in the UK Football Association league.

But, as the very polite, opening acts of friendliness and sportsmanship were unfolding, the Uruguyan-born ill-mannered Liverpool striker Luis Suarez, 24, shocked all reasonable people as he refused to shake the hands of Black Frenchman and captain of Manchester United, Patrice Evra. It immediately turned into the Suarez show of silliness on global tv channels.

For those who have forgotten, late in 2011, Suarez was found guilty of repeatedly using a racist, derogatory insult against Blacks (especially in Europe) which he (Suarez) directed at Evra.

Despite several denials he made, he admitted to the Football Association that he made the hostile comments during a match between Liverpool and Manchester United in October, 2011.

“I admitted to the commission that I said a word in Spanish once, and only once. I never, ever used this word in a derogatory way and if it offends anyone then I want to

apologise for that.”

He promised not to use the words again: “I told the panel members that I will not use it again on a football pitch in England.”

First, Suarez’s latest, un-sportsman refusal to shake a competitor’s hand at the professional, international football

ball reputation. “Suarez is a disgrace to Liverpool Football Club. He should not be allowed to play for Liverpool again” - said Sir Alex Ferguson (Manchester United manager) in his reaction to the refusal to shake hands.

Fourth, Suarez’s misconduct will continue to raise the temperature of the usually kinetic and

Fifth, I think it will be proper and responsible to hand this uncouth fellow and race-baiter Suarez a hefty fine and a long, signal suspension from Liverpool and the UK league. Suarez and irresponsible soccer players like him are not bigger than the UK league or any league, for that matter.

Of course, I agree with Sir Ferguson that Suarez is a disgrace; and I’ll just add: Suarez has made himself a very petty, small-minded and polarizing footnote to soccer and its billion fans. Mr. Suarez should, therefore, face consequences for his mean-spirited, crass and derogatory acts of impetuosity.

*Chido Nwangwu is founder and publisher of USAfrica multimedia networks*

His latest action is another slap, a dirty slap on the face of the British/UK football reputation

league on Saturday February 11, 2012, shows his rank pettiness and childishness. Anyway, his misconduct may be worse, because children are more collaborative and generally forget disagreements to continue playing with each other. But no; not the migrant Suarez.

Second, I think his mean spirit reflects Mr. Suarez’s foolish lack of respect for the teeming soccer fans in Britain, the American owners of the Liverpool club he plays for and the sports universe.

Third, I believe that his latest action is another slap, a dirty slap on the face of the British/UK foot-

giddy British soccer fans (fanatics) and race relation across many sports groups in the world.

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## Black Americans and Mitt Romney

Former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney’s recent statement, “I’m not concerned about the very poor.... We have a safety net.... If it needs repair, I’ll fix it” has caused once again considerable debate about poverty in America. But for millions of impoverished Black Americans the focus should be on encouraging education, self-empowerment and economic development as a means of getting out of poverty rather than waiting on some non-caring presidential candidate to patch a gaping hole in the so-called poverty-prevention safety net.

In a democracy all citizens should have the right to run for President. Of course qualifications and experience are factors that voters should weigh when making a decision about who to vote for and to support. For over 45 million Black Americans, the 2012 elections are extremely important. We cannot afford to sit on the sidelines and to take the November 2012 elections for granted. I keep emphasizing that it is counterproductive for Black people in the United States to be cynical or non-involved in the national political debate concerning the issues that affect the quality of life in the Black community across the nation.

Mitt Romney’s confession did more than expose his seemingly insensitivity toward the poor. It revealed Romney’s comfort with a certain percentage of the population that will according to his logic always remain in poverty in need of a safety net. Romney rhetori-

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Benjamin F. Chavis Jr.



cally joined the likes of Fox News commentator Bill O’Rielly who condescendingly reminded a national television audience that in the Bible it says, “The poor will always be with us.” African

reads like this: Gingrich, Santorum, and Paul, all have asked for and gotten endorsements and support from African-Americans. There is no record or evidence that the supposed more moderate Romney has asked for or gotten any black support or even taken a photo-op with some dutiful blacks. The question that will loom even larger as Romney closes in on the GOP nomination is. Where are Romney’s blacks?”

Romney’s comments on poverty, therefore, were not a mere slip of a

Romney. The point here is, however, that for the vast majority of Black people in America and throughout the African world, the candidacy of Romney for President raises serious implications about his stated sense of inclusion and of ‘caring’ and empathy for poor people in general and for poor Black people specifically.

Regardless of who emerges as the Republican nominee, Black Americans have to take a proactive responsibility to ensure the largest voter turnout in American history come this November. To all of the “playa haters” some of whom are White and Black who are trying to seduce Black people into the self-destructive lethargy of not voting, copping out, and non-civic engagement: “We will not be put asleep. We will remain wide awake. We are going to mobilize voter participation in record numbers in the face of voter repression in more than 30 states across the nation.”

Please do not underestimate the power and the importance of every vote this year. We have to join with others who share our interests for a better future for ourselves and for all people. The worst form of oppression is self-destruction and the fear of liberation. Mitt Romney has made clear where he stands. Where do you stand? How will you vote?

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Americans do not always have to be poor! Again, what Romney said or what O’Rielly said should not come as a shock. Those statements just remind us that if we do not get ourselves up out of poverty, there will be no others that we should depend on to change the situation of poverty that too many continue to face in our communities.

Noted scholar and author Earl Ofari Hutchinson raised an appropriate question with respect to the absence of Black Americans who have some noticeable role in the Romney presidential campaign staff or support. Hutchinson observed, “The scorecard then

politicians tongue during the heat of a tense campaign. He is not in touch with the reality that most Americans have to endure in 2012. And in particular, Romney is so far out of the loop of reality when it comes to Black Americans’ state of existence, that it is cause for serious concern. The fact is for Black children and youth the poverty rate is nearly 40% as a direct of the systematic underdevelopment of the African American community during the last 50 years. Too many African Americans live in poverty today at a rate greater than one out of every four persons. Of course our economic and social predicament is not the result of statements by Mitt