



"Challenging People to Shape a Better Future Now"

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- RSS feeds

Hate on Social Media is Growing

The legion of web sites, bloggers, talk show jocks, and the occasional GOP official that has teed off on President Obama and at times Michelle Obama with assorted borderline racist digs, taunts, and depictions have been relentless. The offensive remarks quickly evoke a storm of outrage, and the offender gets rebuked. This happens because they are public figures, and their comments are publicly aired. They fly high on the public's radar scope.

But that's not the case with the growing barrage of racist assaults on Obama, and other minorities on social media sites. Baylor University researchers, for instance, recently tracked more than 20 Facebook page groups and users and found them jam packed with racist venom aimed at Obama, blacks and other minorities. The growing number of groups that churn hate on social media sites are secure in the knowledge that they won't be caught or called out on it.

The signal that Obama would trigger a titanic wave of race baiting and stereotyping danger in cyber space came the moment that he announced he would seek the presidency in February 2007. He had the dubious distinction of being the earliest presidential contender to be assigned Secret Service protection on the campaign trail. As the showdown with Republican presidential rival John McCain heated up in the general election in 2008, the flood of crank, crackpot, and screwball



THE LAST WORD

Earl Ofari Hutchinson

threats that promised murder and mayhem toward Obama continued to pour in. This prompted the Secret Service to tighten security and take even more elaborate measures to ensure his safety. As

let fly with the most grotesque, offensive, and rabid hate depictions of the president, blacks and other minorities. Thousands of respondents chime in with their own racial haranguing broadsides. They have defacto protection from Facebook, not because Facebook condones or even turns a blind eye to racism on its site and by its users. It has a very strict policy to snatch any group from the site that makes racial, gender, religious, sexual orientation attacks against individuals or groups. But Face-

bandanna on his head and a mouth full of gold teeth with the caption "Going for the African-American vote." The hate groups outwit the Facebook policy enforcers by avoiding use of the more blatant racial slurs and epithets. They use such neutral language as "Obama is a lousy president." They know that this will stir an avalanche of comments, many of which will be laced with racial slurs and propagate racial stereotypes.

The social media hate groups also are adept at using innocuous key words and race neutral titles to give the façade that their criticism of the White House has no hidden racial animus. Many innocent social media networkers stumble on the hate group pages and are appalled at what they see and read. But they are still exposed to the hate mongering and that insures a wider audience.

Hate groups have honed in on Facebook, Twitter, and other social media platforms to influence and even recruit others to their ranks. As the closely contested 2012 presidential election further heats up, more groups will skirt the social media censors and ratchet up their hate filled vitriol on their sites. They'll pawn it off as poking fun and satire at Obama, and minorities. And for the most part they'll get away with it.

Earl Ofari Hutchinson is an author and political analyst. He is a frequent political commentator on MSNBC and a weekly co-host of the Al Sharpton Show on American Urban Radio Network.

Hate groups have honed in on Facebook, Twitter, and other social media platforms to influence and even recruit others to their ranks

president, the threats against Obama have been non-stop.

But the first real tip that hate could also find a safe haven on social media sites was the infamous Facebook assassination poll in September, 2009. The target was Obama. Hundreds of respondents dignified the question that asked: "Should Obama be killed?" by answering. If the poll hadn't been quickly yanked, thousands more might have dignified the bizarre and murderous question with an answer.

In the nearly three years since then, dozens of hate groups have popped up on Facebook. They have several things in common. Their prime target is Obama. They

book bases its existence and success on being a virtually, free and open social media platform.

Facebook permits, even takes pride, in letting individuals and groups to poke fun, level ridicule, and toss jibes at any and everything under the guise of humor or satire at others. It's the old free speech canard. Facebook's extreme reluctance to inhibit the free expression of ideas and opinions no matter how many persons may be offended at the humor or satire provides virtual open license for groups and individuals to spew racial hate. For example, in one posting Obama is depicted in hip hop garb with a bucket of chicken. In another, a grinning Obama has a

Blacks, Latinos Support Financial Reform

Blacks and Latinos support financial reform more than any other group, according to a new poll released by Lake Research Partners. When consumers were asked if Wall Street caused the financial crisis, eight out of 10 African-Americans agreed. Sixty-five percent of Latinos agreed, compared to an overall rate of 64 percent.

The telephone poll, conducted in July by Lake Research Partners, was jointly commissioned by the Center for Responsible Living (CRL), AARP, and Americans for Financial Reform (AFR) and the National Council of La Raza.

Considering that communities of color have lost the most financial ground during the greatest recession since that of the 1930s, racial and ethnic differences in responding to the poll are not surprising.

In general, people of color tend to invest more in their personal residences than in stocks or bonds. Unfortunately, many times our communities are also the unfortunate targets of predatory lenders offering a range of high-cost products that often leave consumers in worse financial shape than before.

For example, in a recent guest commentary in *The Hill*, Congresswoman Maxine Waters [D-Calif.] said, "Many of us on Capitol Hill who feel strongly about the need for reform have been struggling with the sometimes-subtle, sometimes-overt, but always tenacious, attempts to



RESPONSIBLE LENDING

Charlene Crowell

undermine financial reform over the last two years. And because we're sensitive to making sure that the law we passed works in prac-

tionally affected Latino families and the economic security of the Latino community."

The 2010 Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform law was enacted in the wake of the economic meltdown to overhaul of the financial regulatory system. The law created the

Consumer Finance Protection Bureau, which consolidates the consumer finance protection authority previously scattered among seven different agencies

where consumers can report unfair practices and/or view complaints and

Protect military service members who have been deployed from mortgage and foreclosures.

In the aftermath of devastating financial losses, followed by a string of lawsuit settlements against many of the nation's largest banks to resolve charges of discriminatory lending practices and lack of maintenance of foreclosed homes, many people of color are not just hoping for – but expecting redress.

Mike Calhoun, CRL president said, "Everyday Americans know what's good for their pocketbooks, their families, and our economy – that's why a large, bipartisan majority is calling for financial reforms to take effect. Let's hope policymakers hear them loud and clear."

AARP Executive Vice President, Nancy LeMond, said, "During the financial crisis, too many older Americans lost their savings due to the failure of an outdated and compromised financial regulatory system. That's why most Americans say they want clear, accurate information so they can make the best financial decisions for their families, and a watchdog that will protect them from financial abuse.

Charlene Crowell is a communications manager with the Center for Responsible Lending.

Our communities are also the targets of predatory lenders offering a range of high-cost products that leave consumers in worse financial shape than before

tice, even some allies of financial reform are often too quick to believe the industry when they cry wolf about the unintended consequences of Dodd-Frank."

Similarly, Jose A. Garcia, policy fellow, Wealth-Building Policy Project, National Council of La Raza, stated: "Latino voters, regardless of party affiliation, overwhelmingly support consumer protections as a means to ending decades of costly and deceptive credit that has dispropo-

into a single entity whose mission is to protect consumers from deceptive practices by banks, credit card companies and other institutions.

Consumers of color polled favor a strong CFPB and also called for the Bureau to:

- Require clearer explanations of lending rates, terms and fees;
- Oversee non-bank lenders;
- Write tough rules matched by Bureau enforcement;
- Create a searchable database