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The GOP's Whites-Only Gambit

Last Chance

Lee A. Daniels

The Republican Party, which has lost the last two presidential elections by appealing to the worst racial attitudes of White conservative voters, has come up with what it declares is a winning strategy for 2016: Appeal to the worst racial attitudes of White conservative and White Democratic-leaning voters.

The conservative echo chamber of political operatives and pundits has even produced a, to coin a phrase, white paper explaining how doubling down on its failed national strategy of 2008 and 2012 will work in 2016. More about that later.

One might consider that notion a modern version of the 1956 Southern Manifesto, the Congressional segregationists' call for "massive resistance" by White Southerners to the 1954 Supreme Court Brown school desegregation decision. Or an updating of GOP standard-bearer Richard Nixon's adoption in the late 1960s of a "Southern Strategy" of appealing to Whites made anxious by Blacks' civil rights victories.

Or, one could say it's just a continuation of the stance against Democratic presidents the GOP adopted during the Clinton presidency in the 1990s – in the words of former Republican congressman, Vin Weber: a maximum ideological polarization. That attitude is a far distance from the claims GOP leaders made in the weeks between President Obama's re-election victory last November and his re-inauguration in January.

Then, they promised they had learned the benefits of "outreach" to the groups that made up the winning Democratic coalition – particularly women, Blacks, Latinos and gays and lesbians. Why, the Republican National Committee (RNC) even produced in March a much ballyhooed report that called for the party to leave its "ideological cul-de-sac," confessing that the party had "lost the ability to be persuasive with, or welcoming to, those who do not agree with us on every issue."

> A winning strategy for 2016: Appeal to the worst racial attitudes of White conservative and White Democratic-leaning voters

And how was that critique received by the GOP party faithful? Well, Rush Limbaugh, the conservative talk-show maven whose tail still wags the Republican dog, immediately announced it showed the RNC had been "totally bamboozled," and GOP Congressional leaders comments' about it were tepid at best.

In fact, the GOP's actions and words beyond the RNC exercise underscored again that the party continues to be driven by a callous ideology that has prompted Republican legislators to double down on all the things which contributed to the failure of the Republican ticket in 2012: to enact more legislation restricting women's right to an abortion; to pass more so-called voter identification measures to suppress the Black vote; and to bellow their opposition to efforts to enact sensible immigration-reform measures.

Nothing exemplifies the GOP posture more dramatically and more crudely that Steve King, the Iowa Republican Congressman. King, whose specialty is making vicious jibes about women and people of color, last month denigrated the DREAM Act legislation that would establish an arduous, long path to citizenship for the children of undocumented immigrants. "Some of them are valedictorians – and their parents brought them in. It wasn't their fault," King said, then added, "… But for every one who's a valedictorian, there's another 100 out there who weigh 130 pounds – and they've got calves the size of cantaloupes because they've been hauling 75 pounds of marijuana across the desert."

Realizing they had a public relations disaster in the making, the GOP leadership disavowed King's comment. But the fact is King's anti-immigration stance and that of the GTOP itself are one and the same: Both are designed to appeal to Whites anxious by the growing population and electoral clout of Black Americans and Hispanic Americans.

The solution essentially proposed by Sean Trende, a conservative pundit, and seconded by several of his fellow conservatives, is to minimize trying to broaden the party's appeal to Blacks and Hispanics and concentrate on building the White conservative voter turnout.

Trende's argument, laid out in four lengthy articles from June 21 to July 6 on the blog, realclearpolitics.com, is well worth reading because it clearly reflects the political decisions the GOP leadership has already made to continue its past practice of just pretending to be interested in "outreach."

Black Americans would do well to pay special attention to Trende's June 25 article, which predicts a decline in both Black voter turnout and the actual number of Black votes going Democratic. The piece contains many assumptions about how Blacks will vote when Barack Obama is no longer at the head of the ticket that are wishful thinking – but that nevertheless, progressive Blacks and Whites need to consider.

Read the rest online at www.theskanner.com

Dropping the Leadership Baton for Youth

Bennett College

Julianne Malveaux

Research shows that this generation of young people, no matter of their race, are likely to do less well than their parents did. Shackled by a trillion dollars worth of student loans and a flat labor market, the New York-based Demos organization says the student loan burden prevents young people from buying homes and amassing wealth. While there are some racial gaps, many young people enter the labor market already behind the space their parents occupied.

As I spend time with young people, especially young African Americans, I understand their frustration. They want to know what the civil rights generation has done to pass the baton of activism and improvement to them. They want to know how they should move forward. While they are willing to participate in marches and civic action, they want to know what's next. And they want to know why their voices are not heard in Black leadership.

Those who are seasoned offer their history of activism as proof that they should lead. They forged the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and didn't ask their elders for permission. They pushed elders to move to a more active position and when elders would not meet them, they pushed themselves. There was no shame in their game. Whether militant or moderate, they embraced parts of the Black Panther Party political program, which begins with these words, "We want freedom, we want the power to determine our destiny." Too many of us, African Americans, young people, progressives, do not determine our destiny now. We flow with the wind.

> They want to know why their voices are not heard in Black leadership

Too many have dropped the baton, but continue to act as if they are clasping it. Too many mouth their interest in young leaders, but fail to bring them to the table. Too many who are 40 and 50 describe themselves as young, but if you tell the truth and shame the devil, these folks are solidly middle aged. So where are their protégées, those who will take, not snatch, the torch from them.

As I move around the country to speak, organize, motivate, I am stunned by events that focus on youth, but have only a few (and often no) young people present. Imagine if young people had the opportunity to have meaningful exchanges with their elders. Too often young people are segregated into a "youth" program when interaction with adults would be both motivating and stimulating to them. If we kick young people to the curb, we drop the baton that was handed to us. We baby boomers have a responsibility to both Generation X and Generation Y. We have shirked that responsibility.

I do not know how to describe Rev. Cecelia Bryant. I could call her mentor, role model, or friend. Or I could say that she is a great inspiration and, in a simple sentence, she has encapsulated the work that we must all to do move our community forward. You have to replicate yourself seven times, she said, and you have to ask those you replicated to replicate themselves seven times. In other words, there has to be an embrace, and a responsibility to embrace the next generation not only politically but also personally.

Who are the people who will come behind you? Who will incorporate your work into their own? Who will understand that you put your hand on them because somebody put their hand on you, and who will feel obligated to put their hand on others?

The civil rights generation made massive progress, but in many ways they dropped the ball. While they made it clear that there was work to be done, too many of them did not choose those who would do it. Too much energy and focus has been placed on one or two people, and we need cohorts of the next generation to work together.

My Baby Boom generation has dropped the ball as well. We have been beneficiaries of the Civil Rights Movement, but we have not passed our largess or our lessons on. The Baby Boom generation has been, in many ways, one of the most economically privileged generations of African American progress. So why do so many of us, who enjoy the legacy of this progress, fail to recognize the people and organizations that have brought us to this place.

Rev. Willie Barrow says that we are not as much divided as disconnected. When the baton has been dropped, what can we expect but a generational disconnection?

Read the rest online at www.theskanner.com