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‘Gifted Hands,’ Foot in Mouth

Dr. Ben Carson became the darling of conservatives earlier this year by stridently attacking the Affordable Care Act with President Obama sitting just a few feet away. Carson, who was serving as the keynote speaker at the National Prayer Breakfast at the White House, said, “Here’s my solution: When a person is born, give him a birth certificate, an electronic medical record, and a health savings account to which money can be contributed – pretax – from the time you’re born ’til the time you die. When you die, you can pass it on to your family members, so that when you’re 85 years old and you got six diseases, you’re not trying to spend up everything. You’re happy to pass it on and there’s nobody talking about death panels.”

Predictably, the Right wing rushed to embrace him. Rush Limbaugh, Sean Hannity and the crew at Fox News were ecstatic that a prominent Black neurosurgeon shared their world view. Jonah Goldberg, a columnist for the Right-wing National Review, compared Carson to racial apologist Booker T. Washington. David Graham, writing in *The Atlantic*, called him Herman Cain without the “personal skeletons.” And the conservative Wall Street Journal ran an op-ed under the headline, “Ben Carson for President.”

Professionally, Carson is no dumb man. He earned his undergraduate degree from Yale



THE CURRY REPORT
George E. Curry

University and his M.D. from the University of Michigan. At the age of 33, he became director of pediatric neurosurgery at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, the youngest major division director in the school’s history. In 1987, he led a 70-member

book, starring Cuba Gooding, Jr. as Ben Carson. In 2008, George W. Bush presented Carson with the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Carson has made several controversial remarks after his appearance at the White House. In March, he said on Fox TV: “Marriage is between a man and a woman. No group, be they gays, be they NAMBLA [North American Man/Boy Love Association], be they people who believe in bestiality, it doesn’t matter what they are. They don’t get to change the definition.”

Under pressure, Carson withdrew as commencement speaker

was about control.”

First, the Affordable Care Act does what its proper title implies – it makes health care affordable to millions of people, including the uninsured. If making insurance more affordable, not allowing insurance companies to reject people with pre-existing conditions and allowing children to remain on their parents’ insurance policies until they are 26 years old isn’t about healthcare, the esteemed neurosurgeon doesn’t know the definition of healthcare.

Second, any idiot knows that having access to healthcare is not worse than slavery.

Enslaved Africans had no rights, as the Supreme Court ruled in its 1857 Dred Scott decision, “which the white man was bound to respect.” They were brutalized, degraded, whipped, killed, and raped at the whim of the slave master. Marriage was not recognized and the slave codes in various states made it illegal to teach Blacks to read or write.

The Affordable Health Care Act is worse than that?

It’s a ridiculous comparison. At the rate he is going, Carson’s photograph will be slapped on boxes of rice. Dr. Ben will be more appropriately known as Uncle Ben.

George E. Curry, former editor-in-chief of Emerge magazine, is editor-in-chief of the National Newspaper Publishers Association News Service

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surgical team that separated twins who had been joined at the back of the head. After the successful 22-hour surgery, Carson gained national recognition. His autobiography, *Gifted Hands: The Ben Carson Story*, was published in 1992. The book recounts how his mother, Sonya, reared him and his older brother, Curtis, after she and her husband, Robert, divorced when Ben was 8 years old. In 2009, TNT released a television movie with the same title as his

for the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine. He also apologized for “not the best choice of words,” called his critics racist, and then apologized again.

Of all of his outrageous comments, his latest one ranks among the most egregious.

Speaking at a Voter Values Summit, Carson said, “I have to tell you that Obamacare is, really, I think, the worst thing that’s happened to this nation since slavery. It was never about healthcare, it

Don’t Play Politics with the Debt Limit

“In the event that a debt limit impasse were to lead to a default, it could have a catastrophic effect on not just financial markets but also on job creation, consumer spending and economic growth—with many private-sector analysts believing that it would lead to events of the magnitude of late 2008 or worse, and the result then was a recession more severe than any seen since the Great Depression.”

— U.S. Treasury

On September 21, one week before the first government shutdown in 17 years, President Obama addressed the 43rd annual Congressional Black Caucus Legislative Conference in Washington. He told the 43 members of the Caucus and thousands of its supporters the same thing he has been telling the nation ever since, “We will not negotiate whether or not America should keep its word and meets its obligations. It’s time for these folks to stop governing by crisis.”

It is also time to set the record straight about the debt limit – what it is, what it does and why it should never be a political pawn in an ideological game (yes, game) of who will blink first. The Treasury Department defines the debt limit as “the total amount of money that the United States government is authorized to borrow to meet its existing legal obligations, including Social Security and Medicare benefits, military salaries, interest on the national



TO BE EQUAL
Marc Morial

debt, tax refunds, and other payments. The debt limit does not authorize new spending commitments. It simply allows the government to finance existing legal obligations that Congresses and presidents of both parties have made in the past.”

In other words, raising the debt ceiling is not a license for unchecked partisan spending. It

the damage to the American people and to federal employees is mounting – with almost 1 million federal workers furloughed and “essential” workers reporting to work but not being paid. In addition, government agencies and organizations that provide critical services to millions of Americans – and that are still reeling from the detrimental effects of the “sequester” – have been forced to suspend needed services, putting both the economic health of the nation and the physical health of our people in jeopardy.

But, as bad as all of this may be, it pales in comparison to what could happen if Congress creates another manufactured crisis by

to the Treasury Department, if America defaults on our global financial obligations, it would likely send our economy back into a deep recession – with high interest rates, reduced investment, higher debt payments, and slow economic growth – that could last for more than a generation.

This issue is not one to manipulate for political power plays or to use as a stick to force repeals of passed legislation. With the world watching and China – our largest creditor – using this as an opportunity to remind us of “the lessons of history” from our 2011 credit rating downgrade attributable to Congressional deadlock, the stakes are high and the consequences of inaction are even more dire. Political grandstanding isn’t worth it for anyone, and in the end, it will be the American people – not one party or political figure – who lose if we continue down this path.

Let’s be clear – principled, partisan fights are a part of democracy. But we must never become so irreconcilable that rigid ideology is valued above the needs of American citizens. Our message to Congress is clear: Don’t play with the full faith and credit of the United States. Act now and demonstrate to our nation and the world how democracy can be – at its best.

Marc H. Morial, former mayor of New Orleans, is president and CEO of the National Urban League.

We must never become so irreconcilable that rigid ideology is valued above the needs of American citizens

does, however, ensure that our nation continues to pay our bills and abide by previously reached agreements.

Adding to the crisis is that as of the time of this writing, the government shutdown has entered its second week. With each passing day, new burdens are added to already hard-pressed communities across the country. Even with the recent House vote to guarantee back pay for furloughed workers,

failing to raise the debt limit by October 17.

Throughout our nation’s history, our government has never defaulted on our legal obligations. In fact, the debt limit has been permanently raised, temporarily extended or has undergone a revision of its definition 78 distinct times since 1960 (49 times under a Republican president and 29 times under a Democratic president). According