



Racism emerges in Democratic primaries

BONNIE ERBE

Published 10:00 p.m., Wednesday, May 14, 2008

A telling point about white, working class voters and how some of them will vote when (and it looks like when, not if) Sen. Barack Obama becomes the Democratic nominee was made in an article in this week's Washington Post.

The monster lurking behind the curtain in the Democratic presidential race is racism. Up to now, Obama's supporters in the extreme left wing of the Democratic Party, have tried to ignore its existence. This article is proof, it not only exists, it is unfortunately alive and well, particularly in factory towns:

"For all the hope and excitement Obama's candidacy is generating, some of his field workers, phone-bank volunteers and campaign surrogates are encountering a raw racism and hostility that have gone largely unnoticed -- and unreported -- this election season. Doors have been slammed in their faces. They've been called racially derogatory names (including the white volunteers). And they've endured malicious rants and ugly stereotyping from people who can't fathom that the senator from Illinois could become the first African American president."

It's ugly but it's real. It's been largely ignored by the media as well as Obama supporters up to now. But the fact is there are a lot more American voters who identify with low-income factory workers than there are voters who identify with Harvard Law School graduates. My sad prediction is, assuming Obama secures the Democratic nomination, a racial chasm will open in this country that will rival the Daisetta, Texas, sink hole in depth and the Grand Canyon in width.

Why did Sen. Hillary Clinton score her biggest wins (including her 2-1 victory in West Virginia) in states with large populations of white, older, less educated and in many cases rural voters? Why is she, yet another Ivy League, effete intellectual female, such a hit among the working class?

Could the answer be the chimera of race consciousness, if not racism? Race consciousness, certainly, among these voters is a much more formidable issue than it is among younger, better-educated, urban voters. She's winning the former. He's winning the latter.

In Tuesday's primary vote Obama won 28 percent of the white vote. He's been winning 90 percent of the black vote or more in nearly every state. Even in neighboring Virginia, he won 40 percent of the white vote, according to CNN. And this is white support from among the liberal wing of the Democratic Party. He is much less likely to be able to woo as much white support in the general election where voters overall are a lot less liberal.

Now let's look at Census Bureau data on the numbers of white versus black voters who are likely to turn out in the general election. In the 2004 presidential race overall, 125,736,000 Americans voted, 99.5 million of them being "white non-Hispanic," 14 million African-American, 7.5 million Hispanic and 2.7 million Asian-American.

It's a simple mathematical equation. Remembering that in primary seasons only the extreme wings of each party turns out to vote (for the GOP, the extreme right and for Democrats, the extreme left) if a relatively small, say, 20 percent of white voters will not vote for any African-American candidate, how can that candidate carry the Democrats to victory?

It is said that young Americans don't see race the way older Americans do. In fact, they grew up in such a multi-cultural environment, one wonders whether they see race at all, which is great and long overdue.


And certainly Obama has done more to energize young voters of all races than any Democratic candidate in recent history. But can he motivate enough of them to overcome racial inertia among some older, white voters?

In 2004, almost 28 million voters aged 18-24 voted, versus 105 million aged 45 and older. It's always more important in a general election to motivate older voters rather than younger ones.

Let me be clear beyond a shadow of a doubt. My point is certainly not to defend race-based political decision-making. My point is to show that it exists and that it will, however unfortunately, be a factor in the upcoming general election, as repugnant a thought as that may be to the vast majority of Americans.

The 2008 presidential race is the Democrats' to lose, as were the races of 2004 and 2000, which they went right ahead and lost. The economy is the number one issue on voters' minds and the Democrats have voters' trust and support on that issue. But one wonders whether in the excitement of the moment, Democrats are also overlooking the monster behind the curtain, and whether that monster will be in full view come November.

Comments



Add a comment...

Post to Facebook
Posting as Michael T. Miller ([Change](#))
Comment

Warning: this comments plugin is operating in compatibility mode, but has no posts yet. Consider specifying an explicit 'href' as suggested in the [comments plugin documentation](#) to take advantage of all plugin features.

Facebook social plugin

3 Free Credit Scores

Get All 3 Credit Scores, It's Fast - Easy & Free!
www.debt-tips.com

Woman is 51 But Looks 25

Mom reveals simple wrinkle secret that has angered
ConsumerLifestyles.org

Money Market Rates

Get The Best Money Market Rates With Exclusive Online
firstcountybank.com

Ads by Yahoo!

