

Obama and Political Color Blindness - Not!

Jerry Krase (May 07, 2010)



Readers of i-italy have long been interested in the fortunes of Barack Obama. Here is an unfortunate update (to which a couple of unfortunately Italian Americans have contributed). With black and/or white, ying and/or yang, left and/or right and everyone in between looking at the current President of the United States of America through colored glasses, it is hardly necessary to invoke philosophical metaphors such as Occam's Razor for answering simple questions about race in American society today, or even the late great state of Arizona for that matter.

Someone asked me the other day if I really thought that the Republican Party's lockstep



opposition to virtually anything proposed by Obama has anything to do with race so I decided to use 14th century English logician, theologian, and Franciscan friar William of Occam's razor to make my case in the affirmative. Occam's razor is a meta-theoretical principle that "entities must not be multiplied beyond necessity" (*entia non sunt multiplicanda praeter necessitatem*) and thereof the simplest solution is usually the correct one. In other words, does Charlie Daniels play a mean fiddle? Is Too Tall Jones too tall? Do bears relieve themselves in the woods? Does Sarah Palin look great in leather even when standing next to an oh so pathetically pandering one time maverick John McCain before a crowd of Tea Partyniks? Occam would agree that if from coast to coast the words "race" and "Obama" seem inseparable, then they are so.

Occam would need only a dull blade for David Paul Kuhn in the Los Angeles Times who noted that Democrats are [losing White men](#) [2]. And an even duller one for New York GOP governor hopeful Carl Paladino who is under fire for sending out racist, [trashy e-mails](#) [3]. According to Celeste Katz and Kenneth Lovett at the Daily News the renegade sent a string of racist and smutty e-mails to pals and associates ranging from screeds against Barack to videos of naked ladies, as well as racist rants, hard-core porn and a video clip involving bestiality. In one, an African tribal dance is labeled an "[Obama inauguration rehearsal](#)" [4]."

Paladino has also offended recently elected New York State Senator [Diane Savino](#) [5] who didn't find "Guido" offensive re: "Jersey Shore" but she drew the line with "dago." Evidently Carl used the term in a 2008 interview with The Buffalo News. To Savino the fact that Paladino (along with un/announced gubernatorial candidates Rick Lazio and Andrew Cuomo) is Italian-American is especially galling. "If I wanted to watch Italian Americans act like buffoons, I'd watch 'Jersey Shore,'" Savino said. "I don't want to see it in the governor's mansion...I was appalled when I saw that. And you know what's even more appalling? Nobody else seems appalled. Where's the outrage?"

Let's be real. Even the more and less rabid of the right-wing media know it when there is an 800 pound gorilla in the room and have no problem calling a spade a spade when the kettle is black. Take for example, syndicated right-leaning Pilipino-American pundit of color Michele Malkin, who [Wikipedia](#) [6] claims went home crying to her mother when children called her a racist name. Mom, allegedly, comforted her saying "everyone has prejudice" for which she has been "eternally grateful." No doubt because it informs her columns that claim, among other things reactionary, that the Left faked the racism, harassment, and violence against them by Tea Party activists such as shouting "nigger" at Black House [Democrats](#) [7].

Of course not everyone who is against Barack Hussein is so because of his brownness. I may be a racist, or not, but have been livid about many of his in/actions since taking office. From my point of view, the best thing about him so far is that he is, at least, half Black, which to me is a major step in the correct direction despite his putting down that he is all-Black (but not 'Negro') on the 2010 Census form. His action by the way, also greatly disturbed the non-racist right, which prefers his racial ambiguity.

Even rabid rightist are worried about the "appearance" of racism and have been increasing the visibility of a few persons of color in their generally colorless midst. In "[A Mighty Pale Tea](#)" [8] Charles M. Blow (assumedly a person of some color) tells of his visit to a Dallas Tea Party rally where he first thought "Wow! This is much more diverse than the rallies I've seen on television." Then realized that he was looking at stadium workers..." when he "approached the gate and was asked, "Are you working tonight?" He went because it was supposed to be especially diverse. "The speakers included a black doctor who bashed Democrats for crying racism, a Hispanic immigrant who said that she had never received a single government entitlement and a Vietnamese immigrant who said



that the Tea Party leader was God. It felt like a bizarre spoof of a 1980s Benetton ad." The audience scene was a different stroke: "with the exception of a few minorities like the young black man who carried a sign that read 'Quit calling me a racist.'"

Not to be outdone, Tommy Christopher, wrote "[O'Reilly Proves Tea Party Is Not All White With 'Paid' Black Tea Party Activist](#) [9]" It seems that on his Factor program Bill examined charges of monochromatic Tea Parties by interviewing black conservative author of *The Big Black Lie*, Kevin Jackson, who speaks and promotes his book at Tea Party events all around the country admitted getting paid to show up in his naturally Blackface at the rallies, where he sees no evidence of racism. When O'Reilly asked where all the black Tea Partiers were, Jackson said Blacks are "not really politically charged," just after saying that Black congressmen were slaves to Nancy Pelosi's 'Massuh.'

In the same vein of man biting dog story, Jennifer Steinhauer in [The New York Times](#) [10] remarked that Obama's election has had the unanticipated consequence of "at least 32 African-Americans running for Congress this year as Republicans, the biggest surge since Reconstruction." This despite the Republican National Committee Chairman Michael Steele's honest answer to "[Why should an African-American vote Republican?](#) [11]" The GOP's highest-ranking African American told 200 DePaul University students "You really don't have a reason to, to be honest -- we haven't done a very good job of really giving you one. True? True." (9)

Studies clearly show that racism is a product of ignorance. I teach that racism is simply stupidity. One might ask therefore what fuels the ignorance (stupidity) so much in evidence at Tea Party rallies. [Brian Stelter](#) [12] provides some clues. Fox is their favorite news source according to a New York Times-CBS News poll. 63% of Tea Party supporters get most of their TV news from Fox vs only 23% of other misinformed Americans. (The survey did not include readers of *The New York Post* or the *Wall Street Journal*.) Stelter also reported that "Fox Canceled Hannity's Attendance at Tea Party's Tax Day Rally in Cincinnati." Fox News executives said they canceled it because they didn't know Tea Party organizers were raising money based on his coming to the rally. "But Mr. Hannity's producers at Fox were aware for months that tickets were being sold, said Chris Littleton, the president of the Cincinnati Tea Party, a nonprofit group. And Mr. Hannity mentioned the sales on his TV show a week ago." Fox is a unit of the News Corporation, whose chief executive is Rupert Murdoch.

Even Republican Party controlled public education is getting back into the racism act since Obama moved into the once pristine "White" House. As to "[Southern Discomfort](#) [13]," Jon Meacham in a New York Times op ed noted that Virginia governor Robert McDonnell issued a proclamation declaring April as "Confederate History Month" to celebrate those "who fought for their homes and communities and Commonwealth" and to foster understanding of "the sacrifices of the Confederate leaders, soldiers and citizens during the period of the Civil War." The Republican governor at first did not mention slavery because he "focused on the ones I thought were most significant for Virginia." Meacham concluded that "Whitewashing the war is one way for the right — alienated, anxious and angry about the president, health care reform and all manner of threats, mostly imaginary — to express its unease with the Age of Obama, disguising hate as heritage." I should note that Virginia is hardly the only Republican state attempting to put more right-wing conservative stamps on public education. The Washington Post's [Michael Birnbaum](#) [14] reported that historians criticized proposed revisions to the Texas social studies curriculum, because many of the changes are inaccurate. The changes define what textbooks must include and what teachers must cover. "The [curriculum](#) [14] plays down the role of Thomas Jefferson among the founding fathers, questions the separation of church and state, and claims that the U.S. government was infiltrated by Communists during the Cold War."



Scientists tell us that it is hard to control our emotions from showing up on our faces. So seeing anti-Obamaism might be as easy as looking at the face of John Boehner who leads the Republican minority in the House of Representatives when he stands near the man or perhaps the loose lips of Supreme Court Justice Samuel Anthony Alito, Jr. when the same man said at his 2010 [State of the Union address](#) [15]:

With all due deference to separation of powers, last week the Supreme Court reversed a century of law that I believe will open the floodgates for special interests -- including foreign corporations -- to spend without limit in our elections. (Applause.) I don't think American elections should be bankrolled by America's most powerful interests, or worse, by foreign entities. (Applause.) They should be decided by the American people. And I'd urge Democrats and Republicans to pass a bill that helps to correct some of these problems.

Finally, on the Black side of the equation we have to consider whether Obama also suffers from expectations of being the ultimate Race Man. According to [Mark Anthony Neal](#) [16] (re: Denzel Washington), "'Race Man' is a term that describes black men of stature and integrity who represented the best that African Americans had to offer in the face of Jim Crow segregation. It has lost some of its resonance in a post-civil rights world, but it remains an unspoken measure of commitment to uplifting the race. Race men inspire pride; their work, their actions and their speech represent excellence instead of evoking shame and embarrassment." With black and/or white, ying and/or yang, left and/or right and everyone in between looking at the current President of the United States of America through colored glasses, it is hardly necessary to invoke philosophical metaphors for answering simple questions about race in American society today, or even the late great state of Arizona for that matter.

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