



Insulting Blacks

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"I don't feel no ways tired. I come too far from where I started from. Nobody told me that the road would be easy. I don't believe He brought me this far," drawled presidential aspirant Hillary Clinton, mimicking black voice to a black audience, at the First Baptist Church of Selma, Alabama. I'm wondering if Mrs. Clinton visits an Indian reservation she might cozy up to them saying, "How! Me not tired. Me come heap long way. Road mighty rough. Sky Spirit no bring me this far." Or, seeking the Asian vote she might say, "I no wray tired. Come too far I started flum. Road berry clooked. Number one Dragon King take me far."

The occasion of Mrs. Clinton's speech was the 42nd anniversary of Bloody Sunday, on March 7, 1965, when 600 civil rights marchers were attacked by police with billy clubs, cattle prods and tear gas, one of the high points in the black civil rights

struggle. Commemorating a key point in American history is one thing, but a white person mimicking black dialect is demeaning and insulting. And, if it buys her votes from those in attendance, not much flattering can be said about them.

Mrs. Clinton later explained her drawl, around black audiences, to a meeting of the National Association of Black Journalists, "I lived all those years in Arkansas, and, you know, I'm in this interracial marriage." The interracial marriage bit has to do with the frequent reference to former President Clinton, by the Congressional Black Caucus and others, as the "first black president."

Mrs. Clinton is not alone in demeaning talk to black people; she's in good company with Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton, who talk of "going from the outhouse to the White House" and "from disgrace to amazing grace" and other such nonsense.

Neither Clinton nor Revs. Sharpton and Jackson address white audiences in that manner. Before a predominantly black audience, during his 2004 presidential bid, Sen. John Kerry said, in reference to so many blacks in prison, "That's unacceptable, but it's not their fault." I doubt whether Kerry would have told a white audience that jailed white people were faultless. Kerry probably holds whites responsible for their criminal behavior.

In 2004, NAACP President Kweisi Mfume said of President George Bush, "We have a president that's prepared to take us back to the days of Jim Crow segregation and dominance." During the 2000 presidential campaign, Rev. Jesse Jackson warned black audiences by telling them that a Bush win would turn the civil rights clock back to the days of Jim Crow. Now that Bush's two-term presidency is near its end, why

wouldn't someone ask Jesse and Kweisi about the accuracy of their predictions?

Suppose some demagogue in 2000 told Jewish Americans that a Bush presidency would mean concentration camps, or told Japanese-Americans that his presidency would mean internment? Do you think such pronouncements would have been welcomed and applauded? I'm sure that had someone made such a stupid prediction to Jewish and Japanese-Americans, they would have had ridicule and scorn heaped upon them.

What does it say about blacks who can be taken in by pandering, alarmist nonsense from both whites and blacks as a means to get their votes? As a black man, I don't find the most obvious answer very flattering.

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