

# Speaking of the Devil

So there I was, speaking at a forum sponsored by Al Sharpton's National Action Network—not exactly my core audience. But since the Reverend comes on my TV program from time to time, I felt it was worthy to return the favor. Besides, I like chatting with the unconverted.

Facing a sea of skeptical faces, I told the largely left-leaning crowd that President Obama was smart to avoid racial politics. The president has consistently said he is not interested in being a “black” leader; he wants to represent all Americans. He has rejected referencing his skin color or even mentioning most racial issues. Some black leaders have even criticized Mr. Obama for not doing enough to help African-Americans.

But I also told the crowd that some supporters of the President are playing the race card all day long. The latest example happened after Newt Gingrich told a Republican gathering that Mr. Obama may be good at basketball, but the country needs a president, not an athlete, in order to improve the job situation. That prompted NBC News reporter Norah O'Donnell to say that since blacks are good athletes, the remark struck her as racial.

As they say at Ridgemont High: “Oh... my... god.”

Most of Ms. O'Donnell's colleagues in the discussion gently mocked her, the exception being Jonathan Capehart, an editorial writer at the *Washington Post*. He, too, felt the racial “implication.”

My question is simple: Is this insane or what?

There is no question that some Obama supporters are using a racial baton to bludgeon opponents of the president, and even though Mr. Obama has criticized that tactic, he may suffer

from it. Many Americans are becoming angry that race-baiting has become a political staple. They clearly see it as an attempt to stifle robust debate.

Also, by crying racial wolf, important race matters may be ignored. Once everything becomes racial, than nothing is. There is absolutely racism in America, but Norah O'Donnell has no idea what it is.

I also told Sharpton's group that branding the Tea Party a racist group would be a huge mistake that could actually create racism. Already, there is a backlash against the Tea Party crashers. According to a new Rasmussen Poll, 24% of Americans now align themselves with the movement, up nine points in a month.

Finally, I said the only positive thing that came out of the attack on 9/11 was the unification of the American people. From my view, blacks, whites, Latinos and Asian-Americans all came together to deplore the senseless terrorism. That comment actually drew a few boos from the crowd, which was perplexing.

At the end of my talk there was a smattering of applause. A small smattering. Perhaps smattering is too strong a word. I gave it my best shot, though. Can't fault me for trying.