

Is Obama a Failed Historian Too?

✘ Anytime I watch President Obama talk about the history of the U.S. economy as he did in Kansas this week, I feel like I'm listening to someone who had been locked away in a time capsule for the last thirty years. According to him, the last few decades of economic prosperity, prior to the 2008 meltdown, were nothing but a farce. That long period of strong economic growth and low unemployment were apparently inconsequential to America's middle class, simply because *their* personal wealth didn't grow at as fast of a rate as it did for *the rich*. He claims that the concept of trickle-down economics is a mere fantasy, and that only our nation's wealthiest citizens benefited from the strong economy that preceded his administration. He also claims that hard work hasn't paid off for the middle class in a long, long time. He even goes as far as using the term "collective amnesia" when describing those who don't share his historical view of the economy.

Talk about revisionist history.

As someone who bought his first car with money he earned from carrying golf bags for rich people and bussing their tables, I take exception to his comments. As someone who put himself through college with the tips he earned as a waiter – tips left by wealthy people, I take exception to his comments. As someone who bought his house and supported his family by developing computer technology for wealthy people, I take exception to his comments. And as the old saying goes, I've never been given a job by a poor person. Most people who've spent any time in the workforce know that *I'm* not the exception. *I'm* the rule. We understand how financial independence can be achieved by working our way up the ladder.

Yet, the message I'm supposed to buy from our president is that all of that hard work doesn't actually benefit **you and me**. It only benefits our bosses. Ridiculous.

I suppose I should expect this sort of talk from a man who has had practically no experience in the American workforce himself, but I don't believe the false narrative stems completely from him being a novice, or even a liberal. The rhetoric is clearly one of desperation from a president whose policies have failed to get this country's economy back on track. Since he can't fix the problem, he believes the answer as usual is to blame someone else. In this case, it's those *evil rich people* who have the gall to run successful companies while many of the rest of us are struggling right now. Envy is a powerful tool, and president Obama stokes it at every opportunity.

While rational people understand that killing the goose who lays the golden eggs comes at their own peril, much of America isn't rational right now. Many feel beaten down and hopeless. That's why I believe the president's shameless continuance of the class warfare strategy is actually working with a good portion of the country. There has long been a natural instinct in our free society to hold secret animosity toward those who have enjoyed more success than we have. I say *secret* animosity because most of us realize that such a feeling is petty and unjust, so we don't typically verbalize it. It's jealousy plain and simple, and jealousy isn't an attractive trait. But the president has sent out a loud and clear message that those unsavory instincts are absolutely justified. Noble, in fact. He wants us to proudly act on them and join him in vilifying those who we wish we were. And his hope is that we as a society are so blinded by that envy that we disregard the historic formula for economic success that made this country the world's last remaining super power.

The president's class envy narrative is going to be a tough hurdle to overcome for whoever the Republican presidential

candidate ends up being. After all, bumper-sticker slogans like *Eat the Rich* are easier to identify with than an economic lesson in supply-side economics – even a Cliff's Notes version. But where Obama is relying on class warfare and revisionist history to get his point across, I believe the GOP candidate needs to rely on *actual* history.

It wasn't all that long ago that unemployment was dipping below 5% nationally, and Americans need to be reminded of that. It wasn't all that long ago that our economy was roaring. Americans need to be reminded of that. Most importantly, the GOP candidate needs to effectively verbalize how America achieved nearly three decades of economic prosperity on the back of Ronald Reagan's reforms in the early 1980s. Sure, some may get tired of Republicans constantly evoking Ronald Reagan into the current day, but the parallels between Jimmy Carter's policies and Barack Obama's policies are too glaring not to draw attention to. The Republican candidate also needs to remind us of how quickly Reagan turned an economic catastrophe into an economic success story. That's important. We've gone through three years of a stagnant economy, high unemployment, and a debt burden that continues to grow at a breathless rate. Americans need to understand that it doesn't have to be this way.

The mantra of the Republican platform should be, *American Prosperity Wasn't A Dream*. At each opportunity, historic periods of America's economic success should be contrasted with how Obama has handled the economy, and the Republican candidate has to make it clear that Obama's America doesn't have to be our new reality.

Will it work? I don't know. But if we don't want a prosperous America to be something we can only revisit in history books, rationality needs to be restored.