

# Can Obama Win Re-Election by Promising Free Stuff

☒ By now we all know that the candidate who four years ago told us he would bring us together has become the president who will run for re-election by trying to drive us apart.

The president can't say two words without saying these two words: "Fair share." The rich, we're told, aren't paying their "fair share" and that's not fair.

The other day, as he explained why his new budget calls for tax increases on the wealthy, the president said, "We don't begrudge success in America. We do expect everybody to do their fair share, so that everybody has opportunity, not just some."

And since everybody on Team Obama got the memo, the president's chief of staff Jack Lew recently said, "In the short term, we need to keep the economy growing. In the long term, we need to get the deficit under control ... and we do it in a way that's consistent with American values so that everyone pays a fair share."

You will hear those two words over and over again between now and Election Day. That's because Mr. Obama, who promised he would change the tone in Washington and usher in a new post-partisan era, has figured out what we all already know: He can't run on his record, so he'll run trying to convince the middle class that the rich are getting away with murder; that the middle class is struggling because the rich are not; that if those *intransigent* Republicans in Congress would only go along with his plan to increase taxes on the rich, then happy days would be here again.

I suspect that even Mr. Obama, an intelligent man, doesn't believe any of this. He's got to know that if he taxed the

rich at 100 percent of their income, it still wouldn't put a dent in the national debt. Besides, if you increase taxes on the wealthy – the people who hire people who aren't rich – we might slip into another recession. But this isn't about economics. It's about politics. Mr. Obama has done the math.

He knows that there are a lot more voters in the middle class than in the top one percent. Turn the 99 percent against the one percent and you can win re-election. Hope and change has become divide and conquer.

But since Mr. Obama is so concerned about fairness, let's ask him if it's fair that the top one percent of wage earners – the people he's always bashing – pay about 40 percent of all federal income taxes while the bottom 50 percent pay about 2.7 percent.

Mr. Obama says he is not waging class warfare against the wealthy in America. He is, of course. His campaign slogan might as well be: "Vote for Me ... I'll Give You Free Stuff." This is enticing. Imagine if you pay no federal income taxes and one of the candidates says, "I'll take money from rich people and give it to you to pay your mortgage – even if you were irresponsible and bought a house you couldn't afford. Vote for me, I'll make sure you get unemployment benefits for almost two full years. And, oh yeah, vote for me and I'll make sure you get birth control pills – free of charge.

The most important, underreported story in America is the one about who we Americans are becoming. As Bill O'Reilly put it: President Obama is "calculating that the American voter has changed into a person who wants free stuff from the government and is willing to sacrifice some freedoms in order to get the free stuff. And you know what? The President might be right."

Unlike a lot of you who think Mr. Obama doesn't stand a chance, I have less faith in the American people than you. A lot less. I'm with H. L. Mencken who supposedly said, "You'll

never go broke underestimating the intelligence of the American public.” Not any of YOU, of course. I’m talking about EVERYONE ELSE. The ones who can be bought with cheap promises. As my pal Bill O’Reilly put it: “Free stuff is a powerful lure. No question about it.”

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## They See Racists Everywhere ...

✘ So I’m reading the op-eds in the Sunday New York Times and the headline catches my eye: “What’s Race Got to Do With It?” I roll my eyes and say to myself, Here we go again.

The column is by Lee Siegel, an opinion writer of the liberal persuasion, whose main point is – and these are his exact words – “Mitt Romney is the whitest white man to run for president in recent memory.”

“Of course,” he says, “I’m not talking about a strict count of melanin density. I’m referring to the countless subtle and not-so-subtle ways he telegraphs to a certain type of voter that he is the cultural alternative to America’s first black president.”

Bet you didn’t see that one coming. Just kidding.

Romney’s “whiteness,” says Siegel, is “grounded in a retro vision of the country, one of white picket fences and stay-at-home moms and fathers unashamed of working hard for corporate America.”

Sounds good to me. But Siegel’s not-so-subtle point is that this was also racist America.

So what’s he getting at? Simple, that Romney offers “millions of Americans” who are unwilling to accept Mr. Obama as someone

who legally and morally deserves to sit in the White House “the white solution of the problem of a black president.” He goes on to say that, “I am sure that Mr. Romney is not a racist. But I am also sure that, for the many Americans who find the thought of a black president unbearable, he is an ideal candidate.”

Ok, so let’s review: According to Lee Siegel, Mitt Romney is not a racist, but he appeals to millions of racists in America – because of his whiteness – and this whiteness “could well put him over the top in the fall.”

This is not political analysis. It is something mean and shallow that is only masquerading as political analysis. Are there racists in a country of some 310 million people? Unfortunately, yes. Do some of these bigots like Romney because he’s white and Mr. Obama is black? Probably. But in a big country like ours there are also black racists who also see things through a prism of color. That’s not Barack Obama’s fault; and the white racists aren’t Mitt Romney’s fault.

It’s true that Siegel never blames Romney for the racists out there. But like a drive-by gangster he sprays his bullets recklessly. After all, what are we to think of a white man who appeals to bigots?

A few weeks ago, Andrew Rosenthal, the paper’s editorial page editor, published a blog about white racism in America, or at least his view of it, saying that, “There has been a racist undertone to many of the Republican attacks leveled against President Obama for the last three years, and in this dawning presidential campaign.”

He even goes further than Siegel and accuses Romney of “oblique” racism because Romney has said that president Obama wants to create an “entitlement society.”

So merely saying that the president believes in big

government, with its many programs that “spread the wealth around” – which strikes me as nothing more than a run-of-the-mill political accusation – somehow, in the liberal mind, is racist.

My friend Bill O’Reilly believes these people are saying these inane things in order to energize the black vote. I don’t think so. I think they’re saying these inane things because a) they honestly believe that conservatives have bigotry running through their DNA and b) these pundits, despite their SAT scores, are not very smart people.

They fancy themselves progressives, but they haven’t progressed at all from the bad old days of segregation and Jim Crow. They still live in 1955 America. They see racism everywhere. In a strange and sad way, this warped view of America makes them feel better about themselves. They’re the good ones, they can tell themselves. The ones who aren’t racists.

And I’m starting to think that the liberal nonsense that dresses itself up as analysis is the face of a growing fear among the liberal elite. Fear that their messiah may fall. They could never accept that he may be rejected because of his policies or because of incompetence. That would be too painful, given how much of their own hopes and dreams they have invested in him. It must be something else. And what else could it be, except for racism?

Inside their comfy, liberal elite bubble, the only reason the great Barack Obama could lose is because of the rampant bigotry in America. It’s nonsense, for sure. But it’s a lot easier for them to take than reality.

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# Now “Anybody But Romney” Has a Name

✘ Now that Mitt Romney has won a landslide victory in Iowa – by 8 votes – “real conservatives” are gearing up for war. Not against Barack Obama. Against Mitt Romney.

“Real conservatives” never liked Mitt and never will. They say he’s not a principled conservative. They’re right. They see him as a “Massachusetts moderate” which is even worse than a regular moderate, a species of politician they hold in contempt. They see moderate pols – and the voters who support them – as soft, the opposite of how they see themselves, which is take-no-prisoners tough.

But now that Iowa is in the history books, it’s not just “anybody but Romney” anymore for the “real conservatives.” Now “*anybody*” is a real person, with a face, a voice and a name – Rick Santorum.

The “anybody but Romney” crowd would have been perfectly happy with any of the “real conservatives” in the race. They could have supported Michelle Bachmann if she was the one who emerged from the pack. But now she’s gone. They loved Herman Cain, but he went south and is now just a memory. They could gladly get behind Rick Perry, who will campaign in South Carolina before he drops out, too, if he doesn’t do well there. For a while they even liked Newt Gingrich. Not because they *really* liked him, but because he wasn’t Mitt Romney. They salivated over Sarah Palin and went into mourning when she said, Thanks but no thanks.

But now they’re all gone, or soon will be, leaving Rick Santorum as the great “real conservative” hope. They may give a whole bunch of reasons for liking Santorum, but make no mistake – he’s their guy first and foremost because he’s not

Mitt Romney.

But here's where my "real conservative" friends lose me. They seem to think Santorum can actually beat Barack Obama, even though he couldn't even hang on to his Senate seat in Pennsylvania last time around, losing by 700,000 votes and winning just 41 percent of the vote against his Democratic opponent's nearly 59 percent.

Most of all "real conservatives" don't seem to understand that the election will pretty much be decided in nine swing states – Florida, Colorado, Nevada, New Hampshire, Ohio, North Carolina, Virginia, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin. Santorum would do great in places like Idaho, Wyoming, Utah, Mississippi and a bunch of other deep red conservative states. But the battleground states aren't red as much as they're purple – a mixture of blue *and* red. They're moderate states filled with moderate voters. Will Republicans have the best shot at winning those crucial states if their candidate is the "real conservative," the most conservative candidate left standing?

I get the impression that "real conservatives" don't really understand moderates and independents. All they know for sure is that they don't like them, that they don't respect them, and that they think they're no better than liberals. At least liberals believe in *something*, the "real conservatives" think. What the hell do these moderates and independents, who jump from one party to the other ever four years, believe in? And you know what "real conservatives" dislike most of all? Having to pander to the moderates and independents. Sometimes I think "real conservatives" would rather lose – standing by their precious principles, of course – than expend too much energy appealing to wishy-washy voters they don't trust.

This is not an endorsement of Mitt Romney, veiled or otherwise. Despite the perfect hair, he's far from the perfect candidate. And who knows, he might lose, too, if he comes off

as “the white Obama,” as one caller to Rush Limbaugh’s radio show described him. As I have said in this space before: I want the most conservative candidate *who can win* to get the nomination. And, even with his near victory in Iowa, even with his sudden popularity, I’m having a hard time believing that Rick Santorum is that candidate.

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## I Have a Confession to Make ...

✘ It may be a bit late for confession, but here goes anyway:  
I never felt comfortable with any of the Republican candidates for president. Not after they opened their mouths, anyway.

I could be wrong but I get the feeling that Michelle Bachmann and Rick Santorum would turn the country into a theocracy if they had the clout to get away with it. I thought Rick Perry might be someone I could support, until he started talking – about anything. Jon Huntsman, the liberal media’s favorite Republican, oozes sanctimony whenever he pontificates, which is not an attractive trait. Herman Cain never had the chops to be president, sex scandal or no sex scandal. As for Ron Paul, he’s not as crazy as a lot of his critics make him out to be, but he’s crazy enough. That leaves Mitt Romney and Newt Gingrich.

I really wanted to like Newt. But the man with a million ideas ought to keep a few of them to himself, like the one about inviting judges to Washington to explain decisions that Newt doesn’t like. And if they don’t come voluntarily, hey, what’s the U.S. Marshall Service for if not to round up judges and haul them before Congress to explain themselves? Sorry Newt, that was a bridge too far. But honest, I’d still vote

for you if I thought you could win. But I don't. The presidential election should be about one person – Barack Obama. If Newt gets the nomination, it's going to be about him.

What about Mitt? Well, his critics are right – he's not a principled conservative. And you do get the impression that he'll be for or against whatever he has to be for or against in order to win. Not admirable stuff, even for a politician. But can he beat Barack Obama? Let's just say, he's got the best shot.

But I don't simply want the guy with the best shot. I want to be excited about the GOP candidate. I want to think he or she is one of America's best; someone who inspires us. I'd feel that way if William F. Buckley were alive and well and young and were running. I'd feel that way, too, if Bill Bennett were the Republican candidate. Or Chris Christie. Or Paul Ryan. Or Haley Barbour. Or Charles Krauthammer. Or Marco Rubio in a few years. But since none of them are running, it looks like I'm stuck with the guy with the best shot.

Just about everyone who identifies himself as a conservative will vote for the Republican nominee, *whoever it is*. They can whine all they want about how "I'll never vote for such-and-such" for whatever reason, but if they dislike the president as much as they've been telling us they do ... they won't sit out the election. They understand that that would be a vote for the man they desperately want out.

A smart friend of mine – I'll call him Burt (because that's his name) – tells me not to worry. "I just don't see how Obama is going to win this time," he says. "One, he won't be running against McCain or Bush; two, the economy is his; three, in none of the polls is he above 50% against Romney, Gingrich or a generic Republican; four, nobody who didn't vote for him in 2008 is going to vote for him this time around, and a great many people who voted for him then have learned their

lesson; five, no group that supported him by huge margins in '08 – be it Hispanics, young people or Jews – shows any sign of doing it by the same margin in 2012. Hard for him to improve on the 91% vote the post-racial candidate received from blacks. And, for good measure, the GOP has won a great many Senate seats and governorships in the past few years, especially in so-called toss-up states.”

Makes sense, on paper anyway. But I'm not sure I'm buying it. Despite the weak economy, despite the high unemployment numbers, despite the fact that most Americans think we're on the wrong track, *despite all of that*, Barack Obama, I think, still has a chance to win re-election. Actually, I think he's got a lot more than just a chance.

Burt tells me “It's just nerves.” Boy do I hope he's right.

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## **Rob Peter to Pay Paul: Bad Economics! Good Politics?**

☒ So the man who once promised he would bring us together has now kicked off his campaign for re-election determined to tear us apart. Irony doesn't begin to tell the story.

Barack Obama went to conservative Kansas “laying out a populist argument for his re-lection next year,” as the page one story in the New York Times described it. Or to put it another way, President Obama went to Kansas laying out his campaign strategy which is simple and easy to understand: He will do every thing he can to divide Americans into two camps – the greedy rich and everyone else.

And he will make clear every chance he gets that if we re-

elect him he will do everything he can to take money from those who have it and distribute it to everyone else, especially the hard-pressed middle class which, coincidentally, takes in most of the folks who will choose the next president.

In Kansas he blamed “the breathtaking greed of a few” for the financial crisis and said, “This is a make-or-break moment for the middle class, and all those who are fighting to get into the middle class.” Republicans, he said, “want to go back to the same policies that stacked the deck against middle class Americans for way too many years. And their philosophy is simple: We are better off when everybody is left to find for themselves and play by their own rules. I am here to say they are wrong.”

Never mind that Republicans also want the middle class to succeed. They just don't think that taxing the rich is going to help the middle class. Mr. Obama's plan may not be good economics, but it just might be good politics. As I have mentioned in this space before, quoting George Bernard Shaw, “A government with the policy to rob Peter to pay Paul can be assured of the support of Paul.”

That's what worries me. I have no faith in Paul. I think Paul is the real greedy SOB in this story, the one who has no problem taking money from rich people. Why not, Paul figures. They have it. I need it. And the president says it's okay to feel this way.

So, unlike many of my conservative compadres, I think Mr. Obama's class warfare strategy may succeed. And let's say it does. Let's say he wins re-election. Then comes gridlock, which is fine with me. It's not likely that the president will have long enough coattails – if he has any at all – to change the political complexion of Congress. So the president knows he's not going to get his tax increase on the rich. None of this is about actually doing that. It's all about

politics. The man who promised to usher in a new era in politics is playing the oldest political game in the books: divide and conquer.

Taking money from the haves in order to buy allegiance from the have-nots wouldn't do much to create growth in the economy, anyway. Good chance, it would do just the opposite. Raise the taxes on the wealthiest among us, the ones who create jobs, and they just might want to hang on to their money instead of spending in on salaries for new employees.

But going after rich people is in the DNA of liberal Democrats. It makes them feel good about themselves. And remember, Franklin Roosevelt ran against "the plutocrats" in 1936 and despite a depression and high unemployment, he easily won re-election.

How does it end if Mr. Obama is re-elected? What happens to our economy then? Well let's just say they tried this Peter/Paul thing already – in Europe. How's that working out over there? Something for all the Pauls to think about before they vote next November.