

## **Our heartstrings are no longer for sale**

I think we've finally reached the dead-end on the long political road of seduction.

After being subjected to one year of campaign promises and three years of governing promises from President Obama, many Americans have managed to shake themselves awake from a mind-numbing REM sleep induced by the most elementary marketing tactic known to man – appealing to our deepest-seated desires...and fears. And to be fair, the Obama win was also based on the *incumbent fatigue* that nearly always occurs after a political party has been in power for eight years, irrespective of its failures or successes.

It's really pretty impressive how the President and his acolytes constructed a campaign organization whose singular purpose was to win the power of the Presidency, and it's equally impressive how they've kept the campaign going for three additional years! They would all deserve an 'Emmy' for their performances if this were a made-for-TV movie. Unfortunately, this is no movie. This is reality, American style.

### **The great PR victory**

And while we must give them all credit for this remarkable PR accomplishment, America cannot afford to swoon in admiration of its theatricality any longer, especially when our country is smarting from unprecedented deficits, obscenely high unemployment, a vacillating and seemingly sophomoric foreign policy, along with a new class war that can only be described as a *bait and switch* tactic designed to move voters' focus from the Administration's many failures.

The Presidents' men are convinced that Mr. Obama's personal likeability will save his Presidency, but they forget that the voters didn't elect a class president. They elected a real President that was supposed to represent all of the people and not just those that subscribed to his own political philosophy (and that goes for his own party that has repeatedly refused to vote for his proposals like the budget)! This President's modus operandi has been to avoid working with the opposition, and in some cases even demonizing them.

This is not statesmanship. It is blind stubbornness and a total affront to Americans' sensibilities and a misreading of their inherent fairness.

It is also unworthy of a leader who resolutely adheres to a narrow economic and social philosophy that has effectively stiff-armed the desires of millions of moderate Democrats and independents who cast their votes for him in the hopes that he would *bring us together* as he so often promised on the campaign trail in 2008.

### **Leadership not followship**

Presidents' decisions must never be based solely on political polling, nor should they totally ignore them, especially when they concern foreign policy or social issues that affect all Americans. Every President must occasionally swallow his pride and cross the aisle of the political divide to get things done. Stern looks, veiled threats and smugness will not win the day, neither will condoning ramrod techniques to pass massive social legislation (the Affordable Healthcare Act) in the dark of night.

While some may judge his actions as *courageous*, and encourage him to redouble his efforts and *take off the gloves*, others will call his intransigence *hubris* and *arrogance*, not audacity. I believe that most Americans are tired of bare knuckle street fighting tactics and want their leaders, starting with the Commander-in-Chief, to unclench their fists and extend their hands in bi-partisanship (though this may be wishful thinking in a political season that can only be described as a free-for-all). That shouldn't stop us from wanting it, however. Critics of the President will accuse him of being a totally *political animal*, one that cares little for the Constitution or the institutions of government if they get in his way.

Supporters will say that *process shouldn't stop progress*, and that if the President can get what he wants by going off script (Executive Orders, etc.) then so be it. It's getting harder to ascribe the best motives to Mr. Obama's actions when indications of his willingness to *go rogue* are everywhere.

The latest example is the 'forced contraception coverage' decision that mandates religious institutions discard their own strongly-held theological beliefs and accede to an overbearing government's view of what those beliefs ought to be. If that doesn't skirt the edges of the First Amendment, I don't know what does.

### **Should likeability trump good governance?**

In the end, I'm convinced that the likeability factor will loom large in the 2012 campaign for the Presidency, probably accompanied by the *have and have-not* (the 1%) argument. We'll have to accept that fact as part of the package, but what we should want to see and hear is a serious discussion of the candidates' visions for America, absent the usual platitudes and harkening back to *shining cities on a hill* or *I have a dream-like* references that sounded much better when uttered by their original authors.

We are electing a leader in November and not a heroic figure conjured up from the wellspring of our own imagination or one that is based on a composite of our own personal desires. If we really want a President that can help get us out of the metaphorical ditch we find ourselves in, then we need to elect one with the skills, talent and experience necessary to truly lead our fragmented nation into the next four years.

To do that, you and I will need to reboot our decision-making process in favor of a rational, objective assessment of the candidates' records. There's an old saying in the entertainment business, "You're only as good as your last performance," and performance is the one metric that Americans have traditionally chosen over advertising when buying anything of enduring value.

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