



Obama factor

Playing the race card: Nothing new for Clinton

Howard Manly

It started as a joke — something funny that comedian Chris Rock wrote in Vanity Fair about Bill Clinton being the first black president.

The joke gained gravitas when Pulitzer Prize-winning author Toni Morrison pondered why President Clinton received second-hand treatment from conservatives during his scandal-plagued eight years in office.

"Years ago," Morrison wrote, "in the middle of the Whitewater investigation, one heard the first murmurs; white skin notwithstanding, this is our first black president. Blacker than any actual black person who could ever be elected in our children's lifetime. After all, [Bill] Clinton displays almost every trope of blackness —

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single-parent household, born poor, working class, saxophone-playing, McDonald's-and-junk-food-loving boy from Arkansas."

Now that Morrison has come out for Barack Obama, her line of thought is better untangled by social historians. What is left unstated is the almost seismic shift in black devotion to Clinton.

Once considered unshakable, black voters in South Carolina voted overwhelmingly for Obama, leaving Hillary Clinton staggering, yet again. First it was in Iowa, and now in the Deep South, where Hillary's former president husband was thought to be a favorite son. More important: while Obama gained 80 percent of the black vote, he gained 20 percent of the white vote at a time when many pollsters believed he would only earn 10 percent.

That shift can be attributed to the genuine credibility of Obama's message of change and the sheer transparency of one of the most basic of Clinton political strategies — playing the race card.

The gambit opened earlier this month with Hillary Clinton suggesting that Obama was no Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., and worse, that Dr. King's role was in some way minimized because it took President Lyndon B. Johnson to sign the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Rewriting history is one thing, but Clinton allies took their strikes against Obama to a personal level. U.S. Rep. John Lewis, D-Ga., a civil rights icon who marched with King, defended Hillary Clinton and said Obama, indeed, is no Dr. King. Billionaire Bob Johnson, the former owner

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Democratic presidential hopeful Sen. Barack Obama, D-Ill., campaigns with Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, D-Mass., during a rally on the campus of American University in Washington, D.C., on Monday, after he received endorsements from Sen. Kennedy and Caroline Kennedy, the daughter of the late President John F. Kennedy. (AP photo/Charles Rex Arbogast)

Obama sweeps S.C., ready for Super Tuesday

Brian Wright O'Connor

DILLON, S.C. — Maggie Manning, standing beneath a faded Coca-Cola sign on the brick siding of a dry goods store, looked down Main Street past the vacant storefronts and slant-in parking spaces, mostly empty, and accurately predicted that Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama would sweep this old mill town.

"We as African Americans have always wanted someone in the house," said Manning, 47, on a break from work at a local retail outlet. "With Jesse, it was close but we didn't get there. With Barack, we just might."

The Rev. Jesse L. Jackson won South Carolina in 1984, including sparsely populated Dillon County, located in the northeast corner of the state on the North Carolina border, where cotton fields and soybeans spread over a flat landscape broken up by the occasional sleepy crossroads town.

While the Jackson campaign stirred hope, Obama seemed to stir something stronger in economically depressed Dillon, where over 50 percent of households earn less than \$25,000 a year and half of the black adult population hasn't finished high school.

Riding that sense of promise, over 80 percent of African Americans voting in the South Carolina Democratic primary last Saturday cast their ballots for Obama, carrying the Illinois lawmaker to a landslide victory over New York Sen. Hillary Clinton and favorite son John Edwards, who was born in the Palmetto State.

In winning 55 percent of the primary vote over Clinton's 27 percent, Obama became the first candidate in the four early voting states to win a majority of ballots cast. Along the way, he won support from 57 percent of South Carolina voters who had never cast ballots in a primary, 66 percent of those who had never voted at all, and 67 percent of voters between the ages of 18 and 29.

The victory left the Obama campaign with the most votes and most delegates going into the Feb. 5 Super Tuesday contests in 22 states, including Massachusetts, California and New York.

With balloting scheduled for states in the Midwest and South as well, as many as half the delegates needed to win the party's nomination will be at stake.

In the days leading up to the South Carolina primary, sharp exchanges between Obama and Clinton — particularly comments from former President Bill Clinton dismissing Obama's opposi-

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Campaign '08

Patrick speech highlights jobs, education, civic engagement

Steve LeBlanc

Gov. Deval Patrick, delivering his first State of the State address last Thursday evening, said the key to reviving the state's economy is strengthening education, creating more jobs and inspiring the public to become more engaged in civic life.

He used his own rags-to-riches life story to drive home the point — and make the case for a handful of contentious initiatives, including his

call for the creation of three resort casinos in Massachusetts.

He also threw down a challenge to lawmakers with whom he has occasionally clashed to help push through his agenda — from a \$1 billion, 10-year life science initiative to a five-year plan to virtually eliminate homelessness in Massachusetts.

"The people don't expect us to agree on everything, but they do expect us to engage. They expect us to work together toward the best so-

lution. They expect action, and they deserve it," Patrick told an audience of lawmakers, state and local officials and family members. "I ask you to join with me in partnership."

Patrick, who has described himself as an impatient governor, also spoke about what he called the cost of inaction on key programs like early education, renewable energy initiatives and repairs to roads and bridges.

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Gov. Deval Patrick delivers his first State of the Commonwealth speech as Senate President Therese Murray (left) and House Speaker Salvatore F. DiMasi (right) watch last Thursday at the State House in Boston. (AP photo/Bizuayehu Tesfaye)

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