



Written by [Patrick J. Buchanan](#) on May 29, 2020

A Fatal Failing of Establishment Elites

In his half-century in national politics, Joe Biden has committed more than his fair share of gaffes. Wednesday, he confused Pearl Harbor Day, Dec. 7, 1941, with D-Day, June 6, 1944.

The more serious recent gaffe, a beaut, came at the close of a recent contentious interview with black activist Charlamagne tha God.

A miffed Biden signed off, saying, “If you have a problem figuring out whether you’re for me or Trump, then you ain’t black.”

Biden was saying that no self-respecting black American would vote for Trump over him this November. Indeed, any such individual would have been labeled in the 1960s with the slur Uncle Tom.

As Biden put it, if you’re for Trump, “you ain’t black.”

Recognizing the damage he may have done with his own and his party’s most loyal constituency, which might object to being taken for granted as knee-jerk Democratic voters, Biden’s staff put in a hasty call to a gathering of the U.S. Black Chamber of Commerce.

There, Biden bumbled full apologies: “I would never take the African American community for granted.... I shouldn’t have been such a wise guy.... No one should have to vote for any party based on their race or religion or background.” He had just been kidding.

Now, as a gaffe, this was not of the magnitude of James G. Blaine’s failure to object when a friendly Presbyterian pastor, Rev. Sam Burchard, rose to disparage the New York Irish Blaine had been courting as being “the Party of Rum, Romanism, and Rebellion.”

In 1884, that slur soured Catholics on Blaine, helping to cost him New York state’s electoral votes and the White House. Thanks to Burchard, Grover Cleveland would become the only Democrat to win the presidency in the half-century between 1860 and 1912.

Biden’s gaffe and Burchard’s slur have this in common: Both manifest a measure of condescension toward a large bloc of voters.

Hillary Clinton did something similar in 2016.

At a closed-door gathering of contributors, she volunteered, to their amusement, that half of all Trump’s voters belong in a “basket of deplorables” for being “racist, sexist, homophobic, xenophobic, Islamophobic.”

Their pathologies are part of their character, Clinton was saying. And while many were “irredeemable,”



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fortunately, they are “not America.”

During the 2008 Pennsylvania primary, Barack Obama was guilty of the same elitist condescension when he told a San Francisco gathering of gay rights advocates why he was not doing well in the Keystone State:

“You go into these small towns in Pennsylvania and, like a lot of small towns in the Midwest, the jobs have been gone now for 25 years and nothing’s replaced them.

“And it’s not surprising then they get bitter, they cling to guns or religion or antipathy toward people who aren’t like them or anti-immigrant sentiment or anti-trade sentiment as a way to explain their frustrations.”

Hard times have curdled the character of these folks, Obama was saying, turning them into bigots and Bible-and-gun nuts.

The people of whom he was speaking would deliver Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, Michigan and the nation to Donald Trump in 2016.

As for Biden’s remark, “No one should have to vote for any party based on their race or religion or background,” it is surely true.

But while not mandatory to support someone of the same race, ethnicity gender or faith, it is naive to deny that identity and tribalism are realities in the politics of this nation.

Was it not the possibility that he could become the first Catholic president why JFK won four of five Catholic votes in 1960?

Was the 95-4 thumping of John McCain by Obama among African Americans not due to the fact that Obama was the first African American nominated by a major party?

Much of Hillary Clinton’s 2016 campaign focused on “shattering the glass ceiling.” Did not Clinton see her gender as a primary political asset in winning “the women’s vote”?

And, what, other than a naked appeal to gender, was behind Biden’s declaration during the primaries that, in picking a running mate, he would exclude all white men, indeed, all men, and select a woman? And what, other than an appeal to black and female voters was behind Biden’s pledge to name a black woman to the Supreme Court?

Biden is now under pressure to choose not only a woman, but a woman of color, an African American, such as Sen. Kamala Harris of California or Georgia activist Stacey Abrams as his running mate.

It tells us something about where American politics is going that, to win the Democratic nomination and the presidency, Biden, a white male vice president, like all his predecessors, has now ruled out any white man in selecting his own vice president.

Biden’s message to Middle America:

This may have been your country, but no more. Get used to it. Which might explain why Trump did so well with white men in 2016.

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