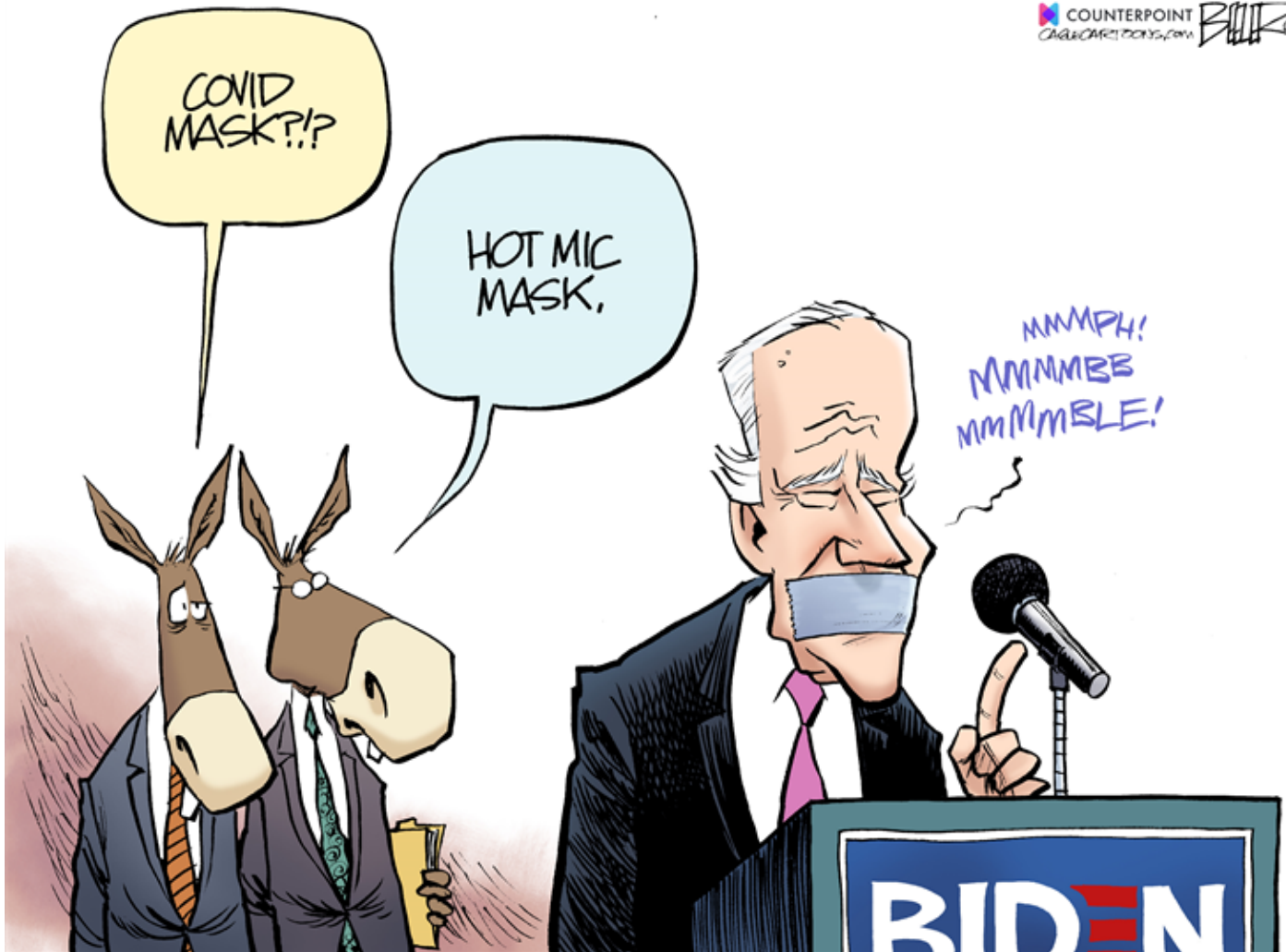


BIDEN'S DEMEANING REMARKS SHOULD WORRY DEMOCRATS

Carl Golden, May 29, 2020

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Not since Hillary Clinton described supporters of then-candidate Donald Trump as “a basket of deplorables” has a public official or candidate uttered such an insensitive, demeaning, condescending and politically stupid remark as that delivered by Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden’s admonition to an African-American radio host that a failure to support him means “you ain’t black.”

Even Biden’s campaign staff was horrified at the comment and sprang quickly into damage control mode, only to make it worse when one of his senior advisers justified it as something said “in jest.”

Does Biden actually believe that African-American voters he and the entire Democratic Party rely so heavily on is an apt subject to joke about?

In only three words – “you ain’t black” – Biden reinforced every stereotype about the Democratic Party’s historic relationship with the African-American community. He implied that black voters are incapable of determining for themselves which candidate to support and that Democrats have taken their votes for granted for years.

Biden apologized for his remark, attributing it to his propensity for being “a wise guy” given to off the cuff commentary not intended to be taken seriously.

Black leaders weren’t buying it.

The founder of Black Entertainment Television, for instance, ripped into the former vice president and suggested he spend the remainder of the campaign apologizing to the African-American community.

The episode is indicative of the nervousness among party leaders over Biden’s viability as the candidate capable of turning Trump out of office. It focused yet again on the concerns over his continued stumbles, mistakes, occasionally incoherent ramblings and propensity toward revisionist history to inflate and embellish his record and accomplishments.

Even in the insular campaign setting brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, when preparation time and talking points rehearsal are ample, Biden has blundered and appeared disconnected from reality.

His discomfort in speaking into a camera in the makeshift studio in his basement in Wilmington, Del., is palpable. He’s remarkably ill at ease, and it shows through. Fairly or not, his performances feed the perception that he is a 77-year-old man in decline and whose cognitive abilities have slipped.

His preoccupation with choosing a vice presidential running mate has taken on the feel of American Idol competition rather than a sober and objective examination of the qualifications and intellect of someone who may very well assume a considerably out sized role in a Biden Administration.

All that’s missing is a panel of B-list celebrities passing judgment on singers, dancers, acrobats, musicians, ventriloquists and comedians. Restoring a sense of dignity to the search is crucial to avoid tumbling over the line from seriousness into farce.

He is committed to a female running mate and while he hasn’t committed to an African-American, there exists an expectation that he will do so as a sign of his gratitude for the overwhelming support black American has given to Democratic candidates over many years.

Indeed, his latest verbal blunder may become a factor in the selection process.

At the same time, he’s under pressure from the party’s progressive wing to turn to the left for a running mate as evidence that he shares their agenda and understands the necessity of bringing them onto his side.

While his “you ain’t black” moment has been seized upon by some as clear evidence that Biden is a closet racist, there is nothing of consequence in his 40-year history in public life to support such a contention.

His center-left ideology has compromise and consensus as its foundation and there have been occasions when achieving public policy goals has not always satisfied the more strident segments of his party. That does not a racist make.

It is clear that Biden will receive overwhelming African-American support in his contest with Trump. History, party loyalty, his eight years sitting at the right hand of President Obama and deep-seated dissatisfaction with the president guarantee that outcome.

It does not, however, mitigate the shame of “you ain’t black.”

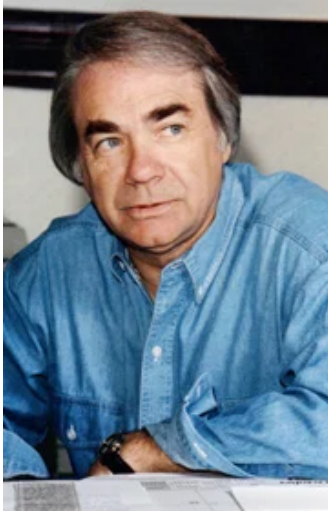
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