



WHO ARE THE RACISTS? DERRYCK GREEN

Every single day someone of prominence on the left—a politician, a cable news host, an entertainment figure—accuses someone on the right of being a racist.

Here are typical examples:

MSNBC host Chris Matthews said this: “The age of Jim Crow managed to find a new habitat in the... 21st-century Republican Party.”

Comedian Seth Meyers told his late-night audience that Republicans traffic “in open racism.”

Tennessee state representative London Lamar, a black woman, announced that the entire state of Tennessee is “racist. Period.” This was just after she was elected... in Tennessee! And almost every criticism of President Barack Obama was labelled racist.

The left calling the right racist isn’t new. It’s been going on for decades.

Republican Presidents Richard Nixon, Ronald Reagan, George Herbert Walker Bush, his son, George W. Bush were all accused of being racists. And, of course, from the left’s perspective, “racist” is essentially Donald Trump’s middle name.

To call someone a racist is a very serious charge. A racist is a person who believes that one race is inherently superior or inferior to another. It’s not intelligence, character or values that determine an individual’s worth; it’s his or her skin color. To say that racism is foolish and stupid—not to mention evil—is to understate the case. But according to most Democrats, Republicans are that stupid and that evil. So, let’s examine some conservative policies to see if they are, indeed, racist. If they are, then the left has a valid complaint. And if they’re not, then the left is lying.

The longstanding conservative opposition to Affirmative Action is a good place to start. It was Democratic president John F. Kennedy who, in 1961, first used the term “affirmative action.” But Affirmative Action in the way we think of it now wasn’t implemented until 1970, during the administration of a Republican president, Richard Nixon. The theory was that, because of historical discrimination, blacks were at a competitive disadvantage to other races and ethnicities. To erase that disadvantage, standards that most blacks presumably couldn’t meet had to be lowered.

One could make the case that this policy had some utility when it was first put in place. But that was a long time ago. The conservative position is that blacks have repeatedly proven

they can compete with anyone without the benefits of lower standards. There are countless examples of black success in every field, at every level. The policy is no longer necessary.

But the conservative argument goes further. Study after study shows that, in the case of college admissions, affirmative action hurts more blacks than it helps. By lowering admissions standards for blacks (and some other minority students), colleges set many of these students up for failure. They get placed in schools for which they are not prepared. And high black dropout rates confirm this view. How could it be otherwise? If academically unprepared white students were admitted to Ivy League schools, they, too, would be set up to fail.

Conservatives believe blacks and other minorities are every bit as capable as whites of succeeding as engineers, surgeons, policemen, businessmen, lawyers, and college students. And therefore, lowering standards for blacks is unnecessary as well as insulting. Yet for this belief, conservatives are called racist.

The irony, of course, is that those who accuse conservatives of being racist believe blacks and other minorities are not as capable as whites of succeeding and therefore still need affirmative action—almost a half-century after it was first implemented.

Let's look at another issue where this contrast between conservatives and those who accuse them of being racist is even more starkly drawn: voter ID.

Conservatives say America should require every voter to present an ID when voting, just as European countries do to help keep their elections honest. Are all these democracies racist? Of course not. Yet the accusers say that conservatives who support voter ID are racist.

Why do they say this? Because, they argue, it's really a ruse to prevent blacks and other minorities from voting since many of them just aren't capable of acquiring an ID. Can you get more condescending than that? Let's be real. You need an ID to drive, to fly, to buy a beer, even to purchase some cold medicines. Whites can do it, but blacks can't? Tell me again who the racists are?

One more example: it's conservatives who push for school choice, which would allow all parents, not just wealthy ones, to decide where their children attend school. Tuition vouchers, charter schools—these are conservative initiatives. Those on the left fight these reforms at every turn. It's the left that doesn't trust minority parents to select an appropriate school for their children. Why aren't the people who keep black children in failing schools the racists?

At some point, maybe you'll start asking yourself, like I did: Who's really obsessed with race? The left or the right? And whose policies really hurt blacks?

Maybe it's not who you think it is.

I'm Derryck Green, of Project 21, for Prager University.