

New York Times sees only “whiteness” at Republican convention

David Walsh
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The *New York Times* has become a major purveyor of racist views and politics. Through the slant of innumerable “news articles” and the direct argument of editorials and op-ed pieces by reactionary figures such as Charles Blow and Michael Eric Dyson, the *Times* currently treats individuals, events, political movements, books, films and everything else that comes within its journalistic grasp almost exclusively through the prism of race (and to a lesser extent, gender).

This extends, of course, to the newspaper’s treatment of the Republican National Convention taking place this week. The *Times* begins its July 21 editorial, “The G.O.P.’s Surreal Diversity Show,” by observing that the “unrelenting whiteness of the Republican National Convention—perhaps the whitest in 100 years—is stunning in itself.”

The convention is a disgusting spectacle, a symptom of the extraordinary political and social decline of American capitalism. Would the *Times* have been comforted if a larger number of African American reactionaries had shown up? The Democratic Party convention later this month will supply more than its share of those.

The *Times* goes on to refer to “white speakers like Rudolph Giuliani, the former New York mayor.” Again, the critical issue is not the color of Giuliani’s skin, but the ultra-right-wing character of his views and actions, which have been matched by those of innumerable black mayors and other local politicians in America’s major cities.

But, in any case, who uses terms like this? “Whiteness” and “white speakers.” The *Times* editors would perhaps like to pretend to their readers, and to themselves, that they are merely speaking hard, unpalatable truths when they use the language of racists

and extreme nationalists.

Not so. Those who speak like racists and extreme nationalists invariably prove to *be* racists and extreme nationalists.

The editorial later asserts that “Republicans will eventually understand—even if their nominee does not—that there is no future in being the party of white grievance and racial exclusion.”

The *Times*’s claim is false in many ways. First, there is no such thing as generalized “white grievance.” Nor, for that matter, is there any such thing as a “white population” in any meaningful sense. American society is as decisively and rigidly divided along class lines as any in modern history.

Second, to imply that Donald Trump is a “white people’s candidate” is as slanderous as to suggest that Barack Obama is the representative of African Americans or that Hillary Clinton speaks for women as a gender. Trump is a spokesman for brazen, predatory sections of the American elite and, like Obama and Clinton, a dedicated enemy of every portion of the working class.

The *Times* editors’ vehemence in regard to Trump has an element of bad faith. The newspaper’s incestuous relationships with New York real estate developers, including Trump, are well documented. As journalist Anisa Purbasari has revealed, two days prior to the appearance of a gushing *New York Times Magazine* cover story on Trump in April 1984 (“Spending a day with Donald Trump is like driving a Ferrari without the windshield. It’s exhilarating ...”), the latter wrote to the newspaper’s executive editor at the time, Abe Rosenthal: “I have tremendous admiration for you and the incredible manner in which you conduct yourself and that great institution known as the NEW YORK TIMES. There is no more lasting

success than what you have achieved.”

Trump and the *Times* have subsequently had a falling out; they disagree for the moment about ruling class strategy and tactics, but the real estate mogul and the newspaper’s editors have a hundred times more in common with each other than Trump does with a “white” bus driver or hospital worker or teacher.

Third, the *Times* refers with scorn to social “grievance” of any sort. For the affluent members of the newspaper’s editorial board and the upper echelons of its journalists, things could hardly be better. They continue to enrich themselves off the stock market and property boom, even while millions of black, white, Latino and immigrant workers face unrelenting hardship.

The *Times*’s obsession is not a temporary fit or disorientation. The effort to build a narrative entirely around race is a deliberate, worked-out policy. This is in part the response of a section of the ruling elite to the radicalization of masses of people in America that found initial expression in the 13 million votes for “socialist” Bernie Sanders. The *Times* editors and the Democratic Party hierarchy as a whole intend to drive the issues of race—and gender—relentlessly in the current election campaign, and beyond. The July 21 editorial and its general approach are just a taste of what is to come.

The *Times* is conducting a systematic campaign, in alliance with the Democrats. In the face of class questions coming to the fore, the newspaper’s editors desperately want to “change the subject.” Like Charles Blow, one of their leading racist commentators, the *Times* categorically rejects the notion “that race is merely a subordinate construction of class.” They want the racial narrative to prevail, at all costs. This is an electoral tactic, aimed at propelling the generally despised Clinton into the White House, and, more fundamentally, a class strategy directed at dividing the working population.

But this is a highly dangerous and inflammatory policy. One has the sense that the eruption of a genuine race riot somewhere in the US would be met by the editorial board with an “I told you so,” if not considerable satisfaction.

This policy is not only irresponsible; it is also based on a lie. The social differentiation among African Americans—and among women—in the US has never

been greater. The black population is divided sharply into classes, with a thin layer of entrepreneurs and politicians having profited enormously in the past several decades. Meanwhile the top 10 to 15 percent of women (business executives, consultants, lawyers, doctors, academics and other affluent professionals) has dramatically pulled away from the bulk of working women.

The objective prerequisites for unifying the working class have never been greater. The attacks on workers’ jobs and rights are near-universal, and conditions of poverty and deprivation have equalized or brought into social proximity tens of millions of people. Racial, ethnic, linguistic and regional divisions play less of a role in American life than ever before in history.

It is precisely for this reason that the *Times*, with infallible class instinct, turns again and again to emphasize and highlight race and gender.

There is also the fact that bourgeois politics, the selfish defense of oppression and inequality, invariably gravitates toward race, “blood” and nation. Changing what has to be changed, and allowing for the somewhat more nuanced approach of well-heeled New York pundits, the *Times* editors speak the language of Sunni, Shia or Hindu sectarianism and chauvinism. The newspaper is opening a can of worms, an action for which others may very well pay the price.



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