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# EDITORIAL

## Obama's Hispanic Problem

BY ROGER E. HERNANDEZ

The numbers are in, and the way things look, Barack Obama has about as much chance of winning the Hispanic vote as Pat Buchanan.

Hillary Clinton's Latino advantage on Super Tuesday was like the gap you usually see separating Democrats from Republicans in places like California, the Southwest and the Northeast:

- In California, she beat Obama 69 percent to 29 percent among Hispanic voters, while just managing to squeak by among non-Hispanic whites, 45 percent to 42 percent. Obama won 78 percent of the black vote, which means Clinton's 10-point edge overall in this state came thanks to Hispanics and Asians – she won three-quarters of the latter's vote.

- Among Arizona's Hispanics, she won 53 percent to 38 percent; among New Jersey's, 66 percent to 31 percent.

- In New Mexico, Clinton won the Hispanic vote 56 percent to 36 percent, but lost 55 percent to 39 percent among white non-Hispanic voters.

- Clinton also took the Hispanic vote in

her home state of New York, 73 percent to 26 percent. Obama barely won the Hispanic vote in his own home state of Illinois, 50 percent to 49 percent.

What explains such a poor performance by such a dynamic candidate?

For one thing, the race factor. Conventional wisdom has it that blacks and Hispanics are "minorities" together, supposedly allies in the struggle against racist whites. But it's not that simple. In Florida, blacks and Hispanics are at odds (many Cubans, in particular, believe blacks tend to be uncritical of Fidel Castro). In places like California or Texas, there is more rivalry than alliance. And even in New York, where blacks and Puerto Ricans have for decades indeed been allies, Clinton won the Hispanic vote.

No one familiar with Hispanic communities can honestly discount a 2006 study by Duke University that found Hispanics "bring negative stereotypes about black Americans to the U.S. when they immigrate."

Still, race is not the entire reason for Obama's poor performance -- those stereotypes ease with the next, Americanized gen-

eration, which includes a sizable number of the voters. Another factor is that Hillary is the beneficiary of her husband's popularity among Hispanics, at least the non-Cuban kind. Bill Clinton's simpatico factor meant winning nearly 80 percent of the Hispanic vote in 1996.

And for Hillary, simpatico meant the big margins of Super Tuesday. To be sure, she herself is not particularly famous for simpatico-ness, but people remember her husband and have seen her work assiduously to court Hispanic pols who are part of the political machines loyal to Bill.

Among the few bright lights for Obama is that Hispanics who consider themselves independent are more likely to vote for him. But in the California they made up just 3 percent of the voters in the Democratic primary, and in other states they barely registered in exit polls.

The fact that few Hispanics ever voted for Pat Buchanan means nothing – he had no chance at the presidency. But the fact that few Hispanics are Barack Obama voters means his much more credible candidacy is likely doomed. ■

— Roger Hernandez is a syndicated columnist and writer-in-residence at New Jersey Institute of Technology.

## GUEST OPINION

## Republicans for Hillary

BY RICH LOWRY

Hillary Clinton might be losing Democratic voters to Barack Obama, but she has a stalwart cheering section that won't abandon her even as she slips in the polls: Republicans nearly everywhere.

Bill's relationship to Hillary is blissfully straightforward compared with that of Republicans. They hate her, and they love hating her. They have wanted her to lose the nomination for the mere sport of it, and they have wanted her to win because they think she's the weakest potential Democratic nominee. The party seems united in its quiet pleading: "Please, Hillary, you're in it, now win it -- for us."

Despite her intelligence and discipline, Hillary entered the race saddled with inherent weaknesses. She has the kind of negative ratings candidates usually have only after the battering of a general-election campaign, not before. Her political persona ranges from grim to charmless. She may call herself an "agent of change," but she's emblematic of an entire era of search-and-destroy partisan politics.

She is the Tony Robbins of negative Republican motivation. At a town-hall meeting in Derry, N.H., back in January, Mitt Romney tried to stir the crowd in the immediate wake of Barack Obama's victory in Iowa: "We cannot afford Barack Obama as the next president." About two people applauded. The next day he mentioned Obama again, but added, "I can't wait to meet Hillary Clinton face to face." Sustained applause.

"She has tremendous baggage, high negatives, and she can't be the candidate of change," says a top Republican strategist who pines for her to be the nominee.

All of that was true even before her bitter campaign with Obama created a wave of revulsion against her among liberal opinion makers; before she had a rift to heal with African-Americans, high-income liberals and the Kennedy crowd; before she became the "two-in-one" candidate with Bill again, and at times seemingly the junior partner.

Republicans speak in wishful terms about Hillary winning the nomination and fearful ones about Obama overtaking her. "It'll be hard as hell to run against Obama," says the GOP strategist. The Illinois senator's nega-

tive ratings could be driven up in a general election, but "hope" is an elusive and risky target for attack. In Obama's favor, the strategist says, is that he's "incredibly likable," that he has "iconic status," that "Americans would like to vote for an African-American" and that "he represents real change."

Elections can't be forecast with precision eight months out, of course. If Hillary should win the Democratic nomination, it will be because of strengths not apparent in her lowest moments. And any Democrat has to be favored when 60 percent of the public disapproves of the Republican two-term incumbent's performance.

As for Obama, he has the most liberal voting record in the Senate, according to the National Journal, and his lack of experience might matter to general-election voters in a way it hasn't among hope-hungry Democrats. If Obama has more electorate upside than Hillary, he also might have more downside risk.

But most Republicans don't want to find out. Obama may give inspiring speeches at campaign events thronged by thousands, but for Republicans, there's only one candidate of hope: Hillary Rodham Clinton. ■

— Rich Lowry is editor of the National Review.

## MOMENTS IN TIME

- **On Feb. 21, 1994**, CIA operative Aldrich Ames is arrested for selling secrets to the Soviet Union. At least 10 men were killed after Ames revealed their identities, and more were sent to Russian gulags. Both Ames and his wife were later convicted. Ames was sentenced to life in prison, while his wife, as part of a plea-bargain agreement, received a five-year sentence.

- **On Feb. 22, 1732**, George Washington is born in Westmoreland County, Va. Part of his success in the Revolutionary War was due to his shrewd use of an "ungentlemanly," but effective, tactic of "guerrilla" warfare, in which stealthy "hit-and-run" attacks foiled British armies.

- **On Feb. 23, 1940**, folk singer Woody

Guthrie writes one of his best-known songs, "This Land Is Your Land." Guthrie died in 1967, having lived long enough to see the tune become a rallying song for the civil-rights movement.

- **On Feb. 24, 1786**, Wilhelm Karl Grimm, the younger of the two Brothers Grimm, is born in Hanau, Germany. The brothers' collection of oral folktales includes "Hansel and Gretel," "Snow White," "Little Red Riding Hood," "Sleeping Beauty," "Rapunzel" and "Rumpelstiltskin."

- **On Feb. 25, 1890**, Vlacheslav Skryabin, foreign minister for the Soviet Union who took the revolutionary name Molotov, is born in Russia. An advocate of Marxist revolution, he promoted the prac-

tice of throwing bottles filled with flammable liquid at the enemy, and the famous "Molotov cocktail" was born.

- **On Feb. 26, 1972**, a dam collapses in West Virginia, flooding the Buffalo Creek Valley and killing 118 people. The collapse unleashed a 20-foot wall of water that roared through 17 towns, leaving 4,000 people homeless.

- **On Feb. 27, 1827**, students dance through the streets of New Orleans, marking the beginning of the city's famous Mardi Gras celebrations. The students, inspired by their experiences in Paris, donned masks and jester costumes and staged their own Fat Tuesday festivities. ■