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Presumptive GOP presidential candidate Mitt Romney got exactly what he wanted at the Universal Bluford Charter School in West Philadelphia last week. That was the ultimate photo-op. He had a room filled with Black teachers, administrators, and at times smiling students. But most importantly he had banks of TV cameras and reporters recording his every move and word at the school.
Romney well knows that he has absolutely no chance of scoring anything more than low single digit numbers from Black voters. Even his pitch at the school for expanding vouchers and more charter schools drew skepticism and even sharp retorts from the charter friendly Black educators and parents at the school.

But Romney had little choice but to hand pick a setting in a Black neighborhood, and stage a carefully orchestrated photo-op appearance. He has to publicly establish for the campaign record that he is not a one-dimensional presidential candidate that's stuck on business and the economy and that he's perfectly capable of addressing and dealing with minority issues and problems.

Still, an appearance here and there on the campaign trail before selected Black audiences doesn't change the other brutal political reality about Romney, the GOP and the 2012 presidential campaign. The first, as already mentioned, is that he will get a relatively scant number of Black votes. The other political reality is that he doesn't need them to be competitive or even win. The two tips to that are Romney's personal approach to the campaign and the GOP's recent four decade history of presidential politics.

Romney has not publicly sought any major endorsements from Black GOP elected officials, or prominent Black Republicans. The relatively large number of Black Republicans that gained some attention in the 2010 mid-term elections because of their number has disappeared from the political scene. They will not be much help to Romney in drumming up Black Republican votes, and to date he's shown little interest in actively courting them.

Colin Powell, the biggest name Black Republican, even publicly ripped Romney for his misread of foreign policy priorities. Powell almost certainly will endorse Obama as he did in 2008.

Romney's noticeably lily-white retinue of aides, campaign staffers, advisors, and bankrollers, not to mention endorsers and pitch persons, meanwhile, is in stark contrast to that of GOP presidential candidates of past years. GOP presidential candidate Richard Nixon in 1968 got well-publicized endorsements from Black celebrities such as James Brown, Sammy Davis Jr.

and Wilt Chamberlain. Former President George W. Bush went much further and managed to blunt the hard criticism that a GOP White House is almost always virtually an exclusively white, rich, male, clubby preserve with his arguable breakthrough appointments of Powell, as Secretary of State, and Condoleezza Rice, as National Security Advisor. Earlier this year, Black conservative and former Oklahoma GOP congressman J.C. Watts lambasted Romney for the paucity of Blacks in his camp.

The GOP's political calculus of what it takes to win or even be competitive in a presidential election virtually ensures Blacks will have little to no role in a GOP presidential campaign.

GOP presidential candidates anchor their campaigns on getting a crushing number and percent of conservative whites -- especially white males, in the South and the Heartland -- who have consistently delivered more than one-third of the electoral votes needed to secure the White House. GOP presidents and aspiring presidents, Nixon, Reagan, Bush Sr., George W. Bush, John McCain and legions of GOP governors, senators and congresspersons, would have no chance of maintaining the GOP's regional and national political power, position and influence without them.

White blue collar voters have shrunk from more than half of the nation's voters to less than forty percent. The assumption, based solely on this slide and the increased minority population, is that the GOP's white vote strategy is doomed to fail. This ignores three political facts. Elections are usually won by candidates with a solid and impassioned core of bloc voters. White males, particularly older white males, vote consistently and faithfully. They vote in a far greater percentage than Hispanics and Blacks.

The Tea Party's recent resurgence in senatorial contests in Indiana and Nebraska has served as a further cautionary warning to Romney that ultra conservatives and Christian Evangelicals can't be taken for granted. They still can turn out in significant numbers to tip a close campaign. They will not be there for Romney in 2012 if there's any hint that he will backslide on conservative mantras of less government, a free hand for corporate enterprise, full military spending, and uncompromising opposition to abortion and gay marriage.

Romney would have to soften his stance on these issues to make even marginal headway with Black voters. That would trigger screams of betrayal from ultra-conservatives. The risk is far too great and the rewards to little for him to take that chance.

The West Philly charter school visit was the first of Romney's scripted stops to show that he too has a program for and is attuned to the problems of urban America. His future stops in ghetto neighborhoods won't be any different than the Philadelphia one. They're good photo ops but not much else.

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