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The recent NBC/Wall Street Journal poll registered what had to be a first ever for any candidate in any presidential election in modern times. The poll put GOP presidential candidate Mitt Romney's share of the black vote at zero percent. At first glance that seems about right. Romney and his VP running mate Paul Ryan have singlehandedly done what few GOP presidential tickets have done and that's actively alienate black voters. Their plans to hack up Medicare, and Medicaid, downsize Social Security, gut the threadbare corporate and financial regulations, environmental protections, and their full throated assault on abortion rights will wreak untold misery among African-Americans.

Their naked anti-government spending campaign stump broadsides to largely white suburban, rural and strongly male crowds further drive the point home that blacks are not even an after-thought in their drive to snare the White House. Their campaign approach would be enough to insure the lowest of single digit support from blacks even if their opponent isn't a popular, and history making African-American president. One would have to hark back to Ronald Reagan in his reelection bid in 1984 to find a GOP president that has ticked off African-Americans to the extent Romney-Ryan have. Even Reagan, despite the low intensity warfare he waged against civil rights organizations and black Democrats, still managed to get three percent of the black vote.

But there's more to the picture than the goose egg number that pollsters say Romney-Ryan will get. The black vote in several ways is very much a part of the GOP's strategy and tactics to win the White House. GOP presidents and presidential contenders Nixon, Reagan, Bush Sr. and especially W. Bush took great pains to give the appearance that they were not overt racists, and that naked racism was not part of their appeal. This included highly orchestrated, stage managed, photo-ops with black celebrities and sports figures, a handful of key black pitch men and women on the campaign trail with them, and in the case of Bush loading up the Republican convention with a pack of show piece, African-Americans to provide entertainment and

perfunctory speeches. This time it's is no different. The GOP convention in Tampa will feature former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, former Democratic congressman Artur Davis, and Mia Love, Mayor of Saratoga Springs, Utah as prime time key note convention speakers.

The next tact is to refine the ploy of voter suppression tactics that the GOP has traditionally employed, in times past, from felon bans to blatant intimidation of black and Hispanic voters at polling places. GOP governors and GOP controlled state legislators did that by drumming up a maze of rules and regulations from ending weekend voting to the rash of voter ID requirements. The aim is the same and that's to damp down the black vote total all under the guise of combating voter fraud.

Then there's the subtle racial pander. This is the GOP's standard use of code words and attack points such as tax and spend Democrats, out of control, wasteful government, and welfare freeloaders. This embeds the notion that minorities, and especially blacks, unfairly scam the system with the active connivance of Democrats and at the expense of hard-working, overtaxed blue-collar and middle class whites. The flip side of this is to continually finger point civil rights leaders and Democrats as the perpetual players of the race card whenever they voice criticism of the racist digs, taunts, and hectoring of President Obama from many Tea Party leaders and followers.

Another insidious GOP ploy with its eye on black voters is to bankroll and promote a handful of visible and vocal black conservatives to recite all the stock criticisms of Obama, civil rights leaders, and Democrats. This creates the deliberate and false impression that a substantial number of blacks don't support the Democratic Party despite the polls. Davis, for instance, plays that role well. In highly touted interviews and appearances, Davis pounds on the tired theme that the Democratic Party has betrayed blacks and that it practices a modern version of plantationism; that is perennially taking the black vote for granted, while offering no tangible programs for the black poor. His tout of Romney and Ryan's emphasis on private sector growth, school choice, and further shredding welfare, is supposedly the path to economic well-being and uplift for blacks. This line will be repeated incessantly by black GOP pitchmen and women in the run up to November 6.

The GOP's aim is not to add a digit or two to the goose egg that polls show Romney will get from black voters. It's to sow seeds of doubt, confusion, and even some hostility toward Obama among just enough blacks to keep them from the polls in the must win battle ground states, present the façade of a color blind party, and sprinkle it all with racially loaded code terms to further inflame conservative white voters. This is the plus GOP banks on among blacks despite Romney's 0 percent black voter support.