

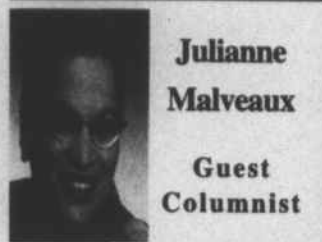
OP/ED



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Polls Don't Decide Elections



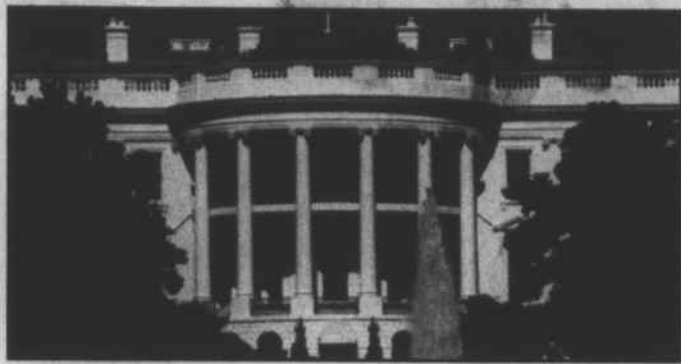
Julianne Malveaux
Guest Columnist

In late September, the "nonpartisan" Web site Real Clear Politics reported that President Obama leads Republican nominee Mitt Romney in several battleground states. According to the polls, President Obama leads by 5.2 percent in Ohio, 4.5 percent in Virginia, 4.2 percent in Nevada, 4 percent in Iowa, and 3 percent in Florida. Do we believe the polls? I'm not so sure. But I surely don't believe these polls should alter an aggressive effort to re-elect this Democratic president.

There are lots of ways to do voter suppression. One is to deny people ballots, or to change the rules on voting. Mandatory state-issued ID, new and more distant polling places, and all of the shenanigans documented by the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law are methods of voter suppression. In some cities and states, police cars have been parked outside polling places, intimidating those who may have minor infractions of law, including unpaid parking tickets.

Another way to suppress the vote is to attempt to influence voter attitudes. For example, in the 2008 election, a Republican operative did robo-calls to the Black community telling people they didn't need to vote because Democratic candidates President Obama and Gov. Martin O'Malley of Maryland had already won. He was convicted of four counts of fraud last year and faces jail time.

Other communities have experienced similar pranks,



including one that crudely told people that the election was on a Wednesday instead of a Tuesday, and another that said polls were open until 10 p.m., although they closed at 8 p.m.. Well-informed voters repel these shenanigans, but some voters fall for them. If such tawdry tactics affect only a few voters in a few precincts, they can have an impact on an electoral outcome. That's why it is so effective to go door to door on Election Day, to provide rides for those who need them, and to do anything and everything to ensure that every voter gets out. That's why it also makes sense to encourage early voting, especially for the elderly and others who may have challenges getting to the polls.

I am wondering if these polls showing President Obama in the lead in key swing states represent another form of subtle voter suppression. If we think the president is leading, then some will pull back on their efforts. And that's exactly what some Republicans are counting on.

My grandmother used to say, "Don't feed me fat meat and tell me it ain't greasy." Or, "Don't spit on me and tell me it's raining."

In other words, don't believe the hype. To be sure, President Obama may be leading the polls in some states, but polls are like putting your finger in the air to see which way the wind blows. They are like

calling the basketball game based on who is leading after the first half. They are like handicapping the horse race based on who is first out of the gate. They tell a story about a point in time, but not about the outcome.

Thus, polling results are both good news and provisional news. The good news – the polls tell us that an Obama win is not only possible but likely. The provisional news – President Obama won't win unless we work for it. Imagine that the basketball team started chilling in the second half because they led in the first, or that the horse first out of the gate decided to slow up because, after all, the win was decided. We've all heard about the flash in the pan, the tortoise and the hare, and the importance of persistence.

These polls ought to be a motivator for those who support President Obama. The goal ought to be to make these poll results a reality by ensuring that Democratic enthusiasm increases, not recedes, and that Democratic turnout does hit record numbers. It ain't over til it's over, and the outcome of this election will depend on the work that is done in the next several weeks.

Julianne Malveaux is a Washington, D.C.-based economist and writer. She is President Emerita of Bennett College for Women in Greensboro.

The 47 Percent



Stephanie Jones
Guest Columnist

When Mitt Romney was busted boasting to wealthy supporters that he has no use for the 47 percent of the American voters who don't pay federal income tax, the former Massachusetts governor further hobbled his already limping presidential campaign. But he may also have unwittingly broken the bond between the GOP and the White Republicans who make up a large part of that 47 percent, paving the way for an interesting potential political realignment.

After all, White Republicans who are retired, serving in the military, are disabled or work hard but don't make enough money to pay federal income tax must have been pretty surprised to hear just what their party's standard bearer thinks of them. After all, they pay plenty of regressive payroll, sales and other taxes.

For months, Romney's remarks were known only to the well-heeled few who had paid \$50,000 apiece to hear him make them. But now everyone knows that the Republican nominee has written off half of the nation's voters, including a substantial portion of the GOP base and, even worse, brags about it in his favored "quiet rooms" with disdain, condescension and a sneer.

We also now know, thanks to his obtuse and incoherent

triple conflation, that logic isn't Romney's strong suit. How does the fact that 47 percent of voters support the president and 47 percent of households don't pay federal income tax and some people who don't pay federal income tax are irresponsible, add up to nearly half of all American voters being lazy, government-dependent, non-taxpaying Obama-supporting victims?

Romney defended his comments by claiming they were "off-the-cuff," as if that means they shouldn't be taken seriously. But the fact that they were spontaneously and spoken when he didn't think he would be overheard by anyone outside of his narrow station makes Romney's comments all the more telling. After all, character is who you are when no one is looking. And when Romney thought we weren't looking, he showed us exactly who he is: a man who believes that people are expendable if they don't serve his purposes, even those people who believed he was on their side.

To those folks who have been so callously cast aside, I say: Welcome to our world. We know how you feel.

In our world, where we Black voters are dismissed and demeaned by the Republican Party as a matter of policy and practice, Romney's comments come as little surprise. While the Republican Party falls all over itself catering to and pandering to White voters, the party and its candidates have long shown very little interest in us. But at least, until recently, they made an effort to pretend to seek our support, even though they knew that we knew that they really didn't mean it.

But in this election cycle,

the party has flung itself headlong into the gutter, fielding a stream of candidates who alternately ignored and insulted us, often in words and tones better suited to the Jim Crow era than the new millennium. The party's refusal to denounce – and its willingness often to participate in and even generate – racist dog whistle swipes at minorities, in general, and the president, in particular – denigrates a once-respectable and respected political organization.

It is no secret what the Republican Party thinks of Black voters – when it bothers to think of us at all; it is one of the reasons that support for Romney among African Americans is so infinitesimal that pollsters can't even measure it. But now, Romney has slipped up and showed us all of us that he thinks much the same thing about a whole lot of White Republican voters, too.

As a result, the White Republicans in the 47 percent are now getting a taste of what Black folk have been experiencing for much too long. But will they realize that they have much more in common with us than with the party that smiles in their faces and talks about them behind their backs? If they do, imagine how our shared experience of being treated as others/outside/less-than could empower us to recognize, build upon and leverage our shared political interests.

Welcome to our world, indeed.

Stephanie Jones is president of Stephanie Jones Strategies, a Washington, D.C. public affairs firm.



Photos by Layla Garza

Four year-old Aydyn McLaren and Riverwood volunteers Cristina Kitchens-Law (left) and Dawn Fisher are all smiles following another productive class.

Riverwood

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classes for the able-bodied.

Founder Susan Hubbard, a former registered nurse, said she was inspired to create the center as an outward expression of her love of horses and her passion for caring for people. The New Jersey native has been riding since she was a child.

"It's important to me to leave good tracks, to feel like I have in some way made a difference, and being able to share my love of horses, kids and the natural world with other people means a lot to me," Hubbard said of her inspiration to start the Center. "At Riverwood, nobody's excluded. You wouldn't know once those kids are mounted who has a physical disability, who's visually impaired, who has cerebral palsy, who had a terrible day at school – everybody's pretty much equal."

Hubbard, who serves as the executive director at the center, says Riverwood allows its riders to experience things they might never have the opportunity to experience any other way.

"For them to leave their chairs on a ramp and be mounted on a horse, where they're not looking up at everybody (is powerful)," she remarked. "They can go places they wouldn't be able to see otherwise."

The Center, which began with eight students and two horses in an outdoor ring adjacent to a chicken coup and a portable restroom, is currently gearing up for its signature fundraiser, the Bluegrass Bash. The center's indoor riding ring will be transformed into a festive venue for the Oct. 27 event, which will offer barbecue, live bluegrass music, a silent auction, dancing and a demonstration by Riverwood riders. Hubbard said proceeds from the Bash are essential to support Riverwood's day to day operation.

"Our tuition and fees cover about a third of what it costs to operate Riverwood, so this is a great opportunity to raise some needed funds and hopefully introduce some folks in the community to Riverwood that may not be here on a regular basis," Hubbard said. "And it gives some of our kids a chance to show off their skills."

Incoming Board President Linda Coleman is a member of the Bash's Planning Committee. She is thrilled to be helping to raise money for a cause she believes in so wholeheartedly.

"These horses, they're just so in tune with the kids. It's just amazing. I've heard non-verbal children who've never talked to anyone, and they'll talk to the horse," said the mother of two. "This is the happiest place. It is the greatest place to go. It's just magical."

Winston-Salem residents Mandy Addicott and Heath McLaurin started bringing their four-year-old son Aydyn to Riverwood last spring. He rides twice a week, during the day with his classmates from the Special Children's School and on Wednesday evenings with the therapeutic riding class.

"Because of his Down Syndrome, he has low mus-



Aydyn poses with his parents, Mandy Addicott and Heath McLaurin.



Pam Stovall-Lee with her daughter, Isabella.

Addicott said she hopes the Bash will attract more donors and volunteers to help support the unique population that Riverwood serves.

"It's important to support our community's disabled children," said the Pennsylvania native. "They're a part of our community too, and I feel like oftentimes, they're overlooked."

Riverwood is currently seeking volunteers to assist riders in the various programs. No equestrian or therapeutic experience is necessary.

The Riverwood Bluegrass Bash will be held Saturday, Oct. 27 beginning at 5 p.m. at the Center, 6825 Rollingview Drive in Tobaccoville. Tickets are \$30 each or \$275 for a table of 10. Children eight and under are free. For more information, visit www.riverwoodtrc.org or call 336-922-6426.

OCTOBER SPECIALS

GOLF AND LUNCH SPECIAL

Play golf and enjoy a non-alcoholic beverage with a hamburger, hot dog or sandwich!

WEEKDAYS

Championship \$40, Seniors \$30, Reynolds \$28, Seniors \$23

WEEKENDS AND HOLIDAYS

Championship \$50, Reynolds \$28

Twilight rates start at 2:00 pm daily-
Championship \$28, Reynolds \$21

Sign up for the first annual
Festival of Lights Golf Tournament-
Saturday, November 17, 2012 at 12:00 pm.
Open to men and women competing as twosomes in a better ball format. Entry fee includes lunch, prizes and a weekday ticket to the Tanglewood Festival of Lights. Call for details or to sign up.

PAR 3 AND FAMILY PRACTICE CENTER GREEN FEES

ADULT \$7, JUNIORS (12 & under) \$4
Weekends & Holidays, Everyone \$8

Annual Memberships

Single \$1200, Family \$1900
Seniors (60+ Monday-Friday) \$800

Join Tanglewood's mens or ladies golf association for friendly competitive golf and fun social activities.

For more information, please call 336-703-6420.
Golf clinic schedules available online at
www.tanglewoodpark.org
On Facebook: facebook.com/TanglewoodParkNC

TANGLEWOOD Park
Just 10 minutes west of Winston-Salem