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FROM THE DOG WHISTLE TO THE DOG SCREAM: THE REPUBLICAN PARTY'S (AB)USE OF DISCRIMINATORY SPEECH IN ELECTORAL CAMPAIGNS AND PARTY POLITICS

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ABSTRACT

KEYWORDS

The 2016 U.S. presidential election can be described as nostalgic. On one hand, there was the fond remembrance of the Clinton administration characterized by a period of economic prosperity which overshadowed the more disastrous aftermath of various policies (the crime bill, the welfare reform, the Defense of Marriage Act, the repeal of the 1933 Glass-Steagall Act, etc.). On the other, the 2016 election brought to the surface a dormant longing for a privileged past rooted in open discrimination, inequality, segregation, and white supremacy, echoed by Donald Trump's campaign. The Republican candidate had won the party's nomination by openly and devoutly proselytizing against minority groups that allegedly threaten the fabric, integrity, and security of the United States. The more ethnic stereotypical caricatures and outright lies he employed in his speeches, the more successful his primary campaign was and the more he unnerved the Republican establishment, the general electorate, and the media. Yet Donald Trump's campaign was not innovative by any means. Instead, as this study will argue, Trump's electoral success during the primary elections can be in part attributed to the Republican Party's decades-long history of strategic racism that has been instrumental in grooming the party's base into Donald Trump's supporters. In order to showcase that Trump's ascendancy to the top of the Republican primary election was not a political accident, but a natural progression of decades-old officially sanctioned electoral policies, the study analyzes the origins behind the "dog whistle" practice, based on the model of strategic racism advanced by Ian Haney López. In conducting this research, I provide examples from U.S. public officials – past and present – and also highlight the role of the media in the propagation and cultivation of dog whistle politics.

- *dog whistle politics*
- *electoral politics*
- *strategic racism*
- *the Republican Party*
- *party politics*
- *2016 U.S. primary elections*
- *Donald Trump*

As far as the electorate was concerned, the 2016 Republican and Democratic primary elections were characterized by a profound air of disappointment, discontent, and disaffection with the current state of affairs overseen by the two parties. An aggrieved electorate on the Republican side, spurned by eight years of anti-Obama rhetoric, who for decades has been the recipient of a regime of veiled discriminatory

discourses, resonated with Donald Trump's brand of politics. His politics were defined in opposition to the strategic racism so readily available to the Republican operatives and politicians and thus, had been preemptively voided of the usual code words and dog whistles[1]. Instead, Trump served his supporters an unfiltered, unpolished, anti-political correctness, and anti-diplomatic rhetoric, centered in nativism and aimed in particular against Mexican immigrants: "tremendous infectious disease is pouring across the border" (Trump quoted in Walker: 2015) and Muslims: "tens of thousands of people having cell phones with ISIS flags on them? [...] They're not coming to this country. And if I'm president and if Obama has brought some to this country, they are leaving" (Trump quoted in Beauchamp: 2015).

This study analyzes the context in which strategic racism has grown, developed, and become the norm as far as political messaging is concerned in the Republican Party. So successful have the politics of "dog whistling" proven to be, that they were adopted even by the Democrats, as seen in the case of Bill Clinton who screened his rhetoric through the lenses of dog whistle politics during his presidential electoral campaigns[2]. Meanwhile, Hillary Clinton's campaign in the 2008 presidential primary also took advantage of racist undertones against Barack Obama, while in 2016, subtle red baiting[3] was utilized against the Jewish, Democratic Socialist contender from Vermont, Bernie Sanders[4].

The study attempts to show that the electoral campaign conducted by Donald Trump is not a political exception, but instead, represents an unintended consequence of a deliberate strategy pursued for over fifty decades by the conservative members of the Republican Party and superimposed over a period marked by economic downturns, influenced in part by external factors such as the free trade induced transoceanic flight of manufacturing jobs[5]. Since its inception, the strategy of dog whistle politics was

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1   The title of this paper paraphrases conservative commentator S.E. Cupp who was describing Donald Trump's campaign tactics: "I don't think it's a dog-whistle. It's a dog-scream. I don't think they're trying to hide it at all. I firmly believe Donald Trump is responsible for setting the tone at his rallies", in response to a comment that Trump's success reflects a return to the Republican Party's "dog-whistle" appeals to "the silent majority" (Kaufman: 2016).

2   See Haney López (2014, pp. 105-125).

3   During the Cold War, red baiting was a tactic of denouncing, investigating or delegitimizing critical voices of the U.S. government policies, by accusing them of being communist sympathizers, socialists or anarchists. It is primarily associated but not isolated to the policies pursued by U.S. Senator Joseph McCarthy. The "red scare" was associated with the fear related to a potential rise of communism in the United States and the subsequent policies inspired by this phenomenon. For the McCarthy era and the "red scare", see: Fried (1991); Heale (1998); Storss (2015). For the effects of the Red Scare on the Left of the New Deal period, see Storss (2012). For the relations between the Civil Act Movement and practice of red baiting, see Luscomb and Davis (1953); Woods (2004).

4   As Chanes points out, red-baiting tends to be rooted in anti-semitism. In other words, one could infer that red baiting tactics are a dog whistle for anti-semitism, since historically: "[r]ed-baiting and nativism set the seal on a conviction that was widely held in the 1920s by people who did not consider themselves Jew-haters" (Chanes: 2004, p. 73). See examples in the mainstream media: J. Martin, "Alarmed Clinton Supporters Begin Focusing on Sander's Socialist Edge", *The New York Times*, 19 January 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/20/us/politics/alarmed-hillary-clinton-supporters-begin-focusing-on-bernie-sanders-socialist-edge.html?_r=0; T. Mak, "Bernie's Past With the Far Far Far Left", *The Daily Beast*, 30 January 2016, http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2016/01/30/bernie-s-past-with-the-far-far-far-left.html; M. Moynihan, "When Bernie Sanders Thought Castro and the Sandinistas Could Teach America a Lesson", *The Daily Beast*, 28 February 2016, http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2016/02/28/when-bernie-sanders-thought-castro-and-the-sandinistas-could-teach-america-a-lesson.html; O. Khazan, "Why Soviet Refugees Aren't Buying Sanders's Socialism", *The Atlantic*, 12 April 2016, http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/04/bernie-sanders-trump-russians/477045/ (accessed on 01.06.2016).

5   Thompson (2016) notes in the case of white men, "the full-time, full-year employment rate of men without a

one of the main pillars in the development of strategic racism since it was designed on a framework of racial conditioning. The research questions I set out to answer have revolved around the idea of whether Donald Trump's success – outside his own individual qualities that have attracted a large audience – has not been aided in part by the strategic racism of dog whistle politics? Another question is aimed at addressing whether the fact that this strategy proved to be successful in past elections, enabled Donald Trump to adopt an even more direct approach without fear of reprisals on the part of the targeted electorate? Why did this electoral strategy that is tailor-made for a particular white audience (found especially in the Southern states but not isolated to that region) managed to be so successful beginning with the early 1960s?

After the public proved to be receptive to these coded discriminatory messages, it was only a matter of time for someone to make the leap towards a more direct approach such as the one pursued by Donald Trump's campaign, without the fear of a backlash from this particular group of voters. In this context, the study also addresses the role played by the media in facilitating the (un)critical transmission and normalization of the problematic electoral messages propagated by the Republican Party in general and by the 2016 Republican presidential candidate in particular. To answer these questions, I divided the study into three sections: the first part provides a literature review on the issues of strategic racism and dog whistle politics – starting from Haney López and including several other authors in this field of research. It also reviews the evolution of "dog whistle" politics from a historical perspective – tracing it back to Republican figures such as Lee Atwater, Barry Goldwater or Ronald Reagan. Moreover, it provides a description of the electoral groups most susceptible to this campaign strategy. The second part covers how strategic racism is an effective tool of derailing, obstructing or eliminating legislation that benefits but is not only limited to people of color. In support of this assertion, the study cites official statements from Republican figures such as the United States Representative Steve King and the 54th Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, Paul Ryan. Finally, in the third part, the study presents the role of mass-media in the transmission of racially coded messages as well as its indirect complicity in uncritically promoting an openly discriminatory speech as in the case of Donald Trump.

1. Origins of Dog Whistle Politics

1.1. Literature review

While there is an entire body of literature[6] dedicated to studying voting behavior, this article is interested in the ways in which the voters' behavior can be influenced and shaped in order to successfully promote particular policies. In this section, I provide a theoretical framework regarding the concepts of strategic racism and dog whistle politic, by referring to the works of Haney López (2014), Mendelberg

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bachelor's degree fell from 76 percent in 1990 to 68 percent in 2013". Meanwhile their wages have also decreased considerably: "Non-college men have been trampled by globalization, the dissolution of manufacturing employment, and other factors, for the last few decades. In places like West Virginia, the mortality rate for middle-aged white men has grown since 1980, despite the fact that US GDP per capita has quadrupled in that time" (Thompson: 2016).

6   In general, voting behaviors tend to be divided across five explanatory models: the ecologic model, the economic model, the psychological model, the sociologic model, as well as the combined model (or the Merril – Grofman model). For a comprehensive analysis of the models of voting behaviors see Cwalina et al: 2008; for a Romanian extensive review of the literature, see Ivănescu: 2015, pp. 35-92, Ivănescu: 2016).

(2001), Goodin and Saward (2005), Coates (2011), Goldfield (1997), Hillygus and Shields (2008), etc.

In 1988, in an article about surveying voting attitudes, Richard Morin, polling director at *The Washington Post*, observed that "[s]ubtle changes in question-wording sometimes produce remarkably different results. ... researchers call this the 'Dog Whistle Effect': Respondents hear something in the question that researchers do not" (Morin quoted in Safire: 2008, p. 190). Safire argues that moved to the realm of electoral strategizing, these quasi-subliminal messages "seem innocent to a general audience but resonate with a specific public attuned to receive them" (Safire: 2008, p. 190). In order to understand the mechanisms that have enabled the practice of dog whistle politics, it is important to note that the contemporary forms of racism[7] have evolved passed what Wilson regards as "the more categorical forms of racist ideology – in particular, those that assert the biogenetic inferiority of blacks" (Wilson: 2011, p. 19) and transitioned towards a more subtle form of racism. Bobo and Smith observe that as a result of the progress made during the Civil Act era and the subsequent dismantling of the Jim Crow system[8], white Americans' racial attitudes moved towards a form of "laissez-faire racism", which provides a framework to continue and advance discriminatory practices and policies (Bobo, Smith: 1998, p. 185). The authors argue that at its core, "laissez-faire racism blames blacks themselves for the black-white gap in socioeconomic standing and actively resists meaningful efforts to ameliorate America's racist social conditions and institutions" (Bobo, Smith: 1998, p. 186). Head notes that while "the laws that enforced this caste system [referring to the system supported by slavery and racial segregation] are no longer in place, its basic structure still stands to this day" (Head: 2007, p. 2). A quote from Piliawsky (1984) found in Coates' chapter on covert racism in the United States, states that:

> "By the 1980s, white racism had evolved from its nastier blatant forms to respectable racism. No longer fashionable in polite conversation to explicitly race-bait, racism today is more subtly expressed in the code words of merit, competency based education, reverse discrimination, tax revolt, and tuition tax credits. Today's respectable racism is particularly dangerous because it attempts to deprive blacks of the validity of their grievances, thereby placing demands of blacks in the position of appearing to be outrageous" (Coates: 2011, p. 257).

According to Albertson (2015), coded communication in politics has generally revolved around racial appeals. Goodin and Sawan describe "dog whistle politics" as:

7 Where racism is defined as "an ideology of racial domination that features two things: (1) beliefs that one race is either biologically or culturally inferior to another and (2) the use of such beliefs to rationalize or prescribe the way that the 'inferior' race should be treated in this society as well as to explain their social position as a group and their collective accomplishments" (Wilson: 2011, p. 19). Meanwhile institutional racism refers to "the endemic character of racial injustice and inequality. As a social structure, racism is understood to be a product of the systematic allocation of resources, privileges, and rights differentially by race: It is distributed across the whole range of social institutions both historically and in the present, and it does not require intention or agency to be perpetuated" (Winant: 2005, p. 1988). See also: Allen (2009) and Allen (2010).

8 Following the end of the Civil War, the Jim Crow laws enabled a system of segregation that discriminated against the Black population in most of the Southern states of the United States, starting after the Reconstruction period. They were centered on the idea of awarding the status of "separate but equal" to the members of the African-American minority and were in effect from 1890 to 1965. For more on this issue, see Cole, Ring: 2012; Tischauser: 2012; Berrey: 2015, etc. See also the Supreme Court decision in Brown v. Board of Education from 1954, which declared the state laws that mandated public school segregation as unconstitutional.

"a way of sending a message to certain potential supporters in such a way as to make it inaudible to others whom it might alienate or deniable for still others who would find any explicit appeal along those lines offensive" (Goodin, Sawan: 2005, p. 471). The authors note that the influence of "dog whistle politics" is arguable or relative since as I have also mentioned, this practice has a name and is associated with a negative connotation. In other words, "the message [of 'dog whistle politics'] is not literally inaudible to others beyond its intended target" (Goodin, Sawan: 2005, p. 471). This aspect, though, does not mitigate the fact that the intended target does not see these political messages as being particularly problematic. According to Crenshaw: "Even though many white people sense that privilege accompanies whiteness, they do not overtly acknowledge their white privilege because they think of themselves as average, morally neutral, non-racists" (Crenshaw: 1997, p. 255). In this case, Whitley argues that this racialized doublespeak in the transmission relay between candidates and voters, is underestimated, "ignored or explained away, especially if a voter identifies with a candidate in other ways" (Whitley: 2014, p. 43).

In order to better understand this phenomenon, I will attempt to explain how the concept of "race" evolved in the second half of the XXth century and how strategic racism operationalized the new racial realities in the aftermath of the Civil Act era. Race is a central aspect in the larger context of the American political development and history. According to Goldfield (1997), the race factor was decisive in establishing a "system of racial domination" (Brenner: 1998, p. 48) that has continued to be perpetuated even to this day. What sets this system apart from other racist enterprises is its extraordinary capacity to evolve and thrive "albeit in continually altered form and content" (Brenner: 1998, p. 48). Flores observes that while the old racist terminology is no longer acceptable, it has "changed in a strategic fashion": people now resort to "racial shields" or "dog whistles" instead of the more openly racist vocabulary (Flores: 2015, p. 266). Haney López argues that in the post-Civil Rights period, from the 1960s onwards, politicians in both parties but especially in the Republican Party (Barry Goldwater, Richard Nixon, and later on, Ronald Reagan) "recognized and sought to take advantage of the existing bigotry in the voting public, bigotry they did not create but which they stoked, legitimized, and encouraged" (Haney López: 2014, p. 35). The author goes on to state that these politicians "were willing to play racial hardball to get elected [...] and acted out of strategic racism" (Haney López: 2014, p. 35).

Haney López defines strategic racism as representing the "purposeful efforts to use racial animus as leverage to gain material wealth, political power, or heightened social standing" (Haney López: 2014, p. 46). In other words, as Flores states in his comprehensive research on the Latino minority and Voting Rights Act, strategic racism functions through "the conscious manipulation of a political or policy process to one's strategic advantage through the manipulation of race or race consciousness" (Flores: 2015, p. 236). This particular form of racism does not occur as a random *accident de parcours* in the way towards racial progress, in which a random group of individuals decide on a course of action that ultimately ends up affecting and discriminating against a particular minority group or another, instead, as Flores suggests, strategic racism represents "a process that has an overall intention to use race to influence the substance of policy" (Flores: 2015, p. 236).

In the context of electoral politics and voter ID laws, strategic racism is regarded "as a process understood as the totality of circumstantial actions based on the use of race or racial shields [dog whistles] to gain and maintain the political control over the governing levers of state government" (Flores: 2015, p. 236). In Haney López's view,

strategic racism provides support for dog whistle politics since the coded messaging is purposefully crafted in order to develop "frames that spark racial anxiety, while hiding the racism from their opponents, and, even more importantly, from their supporters" (Haney López: 2016, p. 16), Haney López further observes that:

> "Strategic racism [...] gets us beyond the question whether dog whistlers are actual bigots. Does Trump really hate Mexicans and Muslims? Whether he does or doesn't, it's clear that he has made the calculated decision that attacking these groups is good politics – that purposefully fanning fear and anxiety can win him support" (Haney López: 2016, p. 16)[9].

Post-desegregation, the racist practices and institutions do not disappear; instead, they witness what Mendelberg (2001, p. 102) describes as the "normative shift", changing the register from the overt to the covert, from the explicit to the implicit. What we are witnessing by the late 1960s is the operationalization of strategic racism which translates into the development of "implicit political communication" (Mendelberg: 2001, p. 25), defined as: "increasingly implicit ways of attacking concrete measures designed to implement racial equality" (Mendelberg: 2001, p. 102). In terms of electoral strategies, the candidates who promote this agenda are not necessarily supporters of White supremacism, nor are they confined strictly to the South. Mendelberg describes the practice of "dog whistle politics" as having been first developed by the "Democrats when they were the party of white supremacy, then used by the Republicans in a concerted effort to win over racially resentful whites and shift the alignment of electoral coalitions in their favor" (Mendelberg: 2001. p. 102).

Since it is based on the profile of a particular segment of the electorate, this practice is purported to be implicit – as vague and innocuous as possible so to alienate as few of the general voters as possible. Hillygus and Shields explain how the appeal to dog whistles enables candidates "to target issue messages to narrow segments of the population" without running the risk of losing more voters than those actually gained by pursuing this course of action (Hillygus, Shields: 2008, p. 6). The authors argue that strategies of electoral communication can promote "a message so that it can be heard only by those intended to reach, like the high-pitched dog whistle that can be heard by dogs but is not audible to the human ear" (Hillygus, Shields: 2008, p. 6)

In an era prior to the sedimentation of dog whistles as a *de facto* electoral strategy, Murakawa describes how in the same month that President Lyndon Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act (July 1964) – representing a landmark law in antidiscrimination legislation – Barry Goldwater in his speech on accepting the Republican Party nomination for president, was decrying the "growing menace" "in our streets" "to personal safety, to life, to limb and property, in homes, in churches, on the playgrounds, and places of business", adding that "[h]istory shows us – demonstrating that nothing – nothing prepares the way for tyranny more than the failure of public officials to keep streets from bullies and marauders" (Murakawa: 2008, p. 234). Goldwater was signaling to his audience that "black civil rights [...] are linked to crime", deliberately "conflat[ing] civil disobedience with 'violence in our streets' and black activists with 'bullies and marauders'" (Murakawa: 2008, p. 234).

From this point onwards, electoral campaigns will address the race issue in an oblique manner while the media will (un)wittingly relay negative stereotypes about minority groups, as Gray (2005), Entman (2000) or Coltrane and Messineo (2000) have

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9 See also Powell (2007); Alexander (2010); Craig, Richeson (2014).

shown in their research[10]. Valentino et al observe how code words related to "law and order", "crime", "thugs" or "welfare recipients", trigger racial thinking even when race is not explicitly referred to (Valentino et al: 2002, p. 75). The constant reinforcement of these messages leads segments of the public to regard minority groups in a negative light. In the 1980s, Ronald Reagan, for example, stressed the "privileged connection" between minority groups and big government, which subsequently, influenced the attitudes of the American people in a negative manner. Valentino et al cite the research conducted by Edsall and Edsall (1991, p. 203) who have argued that as a result of this practices, the most vulnerable groups – "unpopular groups such as trade unionists, blacks, Hispanics, feminists, and homosexuals [were perceived] to be united in making unreasonable demands for rights and resources they did not deserve", when compared to the hard-working "ordinary" Americans (Valentino et al: 2002, p. 75).

In the following section, I provide a brief historical overview of how "dog whistle politics" began to manifest itself in the American political context during the second half of the XXth century. While the effects of dog whistle politics may not be entirely quantifiable, researchers have attempted to demonstrate that there is a connection between strongly coded racial messages and their influence on voters, especially when the voters are implicitly told that any "allegedly" unwarranted gains obtained by minority groups, such as the African American community, are detrimental to their well-being. Though the racial code might not be as coded as its proponents would like to believe, its extensive use in the public discourse has been complicit in the proliferation of a political, cultural, and media environment that proved to be amenable to a Right wing demagogue like Donald Trump. This study does not claim that dog whistle politics have necessarily been a decisive factor in the overall success of the 2016 Republican Party presidential candidate, instead, what I am attempting to highlight is the historical Republican complicity in developing and perfecting this political communication strategy, that in 2016, unwittingly reawakened the dormant racist legacy promoted by the various Wallaces and Goldwaters of the United States.

1.2. The History of Dog Whistle Politics: Architects and Audience

Robert E. Goodin and Michael Saward observe that if in the general case, "candidates must first tell people what specific policy or policies they propose to implement if elected", in the case of those engaging in dog whistle strategies, they "are doing almost the opposite of that": "They are not telling everyone what specific policies they propose to implement if elected. Instead, they tell one group of voters one thing, while allowing (and indeed, encouraging) another group to believe another" (Goodin, Saward: 2005, p. 473).

In the late 1960s, Lee Atwater – Republican strategist – defined the ethos behind this electoral strategy and outlined its main characteristics:

"You start out in 1954 by saying, "Nigger, nigger, nigger". By 1968 you can't say "nigger" – that hurts you. Backfires. So you say stuff like, uf, forced busing, states rights, and all that stuff. You're getting so abstract now, you're talking about cutting taxes, and all these things you're talking about are totally economic things and a byproduct of them is, blacks get hurt worse than whites. And subconsciously maybe that abstract, and that coded, that we are doing away with the racial problem one way or the other. You follow me – because obviously

10   For a more comprehensive list, see Valentino et al (2002).

sitting around saying, "We want to cut taxes and we want to cut this", is much more abstract than even the busing thing, and hell of a lot more abstract than "Nigger, nigger". So anyway you look at it, race is coming on the back burner" (quoted in Haney López: 2014, p. 57).

Politicians would focus their messaging on appealing to Middle America's "Silent Majority" – a term first popularized by President Richard Nixon in a speech from 1969 when addressing the nation on the Vietnam War. In the book *The Real Majority: An Extraordinary Examination of the American Electorate*, published in 1970, Richard Scammon, political scientist and former Director of the U.S. Bureau of the Census (1961-1965) and demographer Ben Wattenberg characterize "the Silent Majority" as "unyoung, unpoor, unblack":

"Furthermore, the young and the poor are unmonolithic in their Presidential voting behavior. Six in seven voters are over thirty. Nine out of ten are unpoor. Nine out of ten are white. Because there is some duplication... a fair guess is ... that seven of ten American voters are neither young, nor poor, nor black. Lesson: "Talk about building a powerful "new political coalition" whose major components are all the young, all the poor, all the blacks doesn't make much electoral sense". Reprieve: That the electorate is unyoung, unpoor, and unblack does not mean they are antiyoung, antipoor, or antiblack" (Macinnes: 1996, p. 122)[11].

In other words, as Democrat politician Gordon MacInnes observed, the social movements from the sixties – civil rights, antiwar, radical feminism, counterculture – while indicative of a "cultural revolution" were not the "political opportunity" Democrats had hoped for (Macinnes: 1996, p. 122). The Democratic Party itself was facing an identity crisis during the 1960s and 1970s, with its electorate being split between: "so-called hard hats-auto, steel, and construction workers – and on the other [...] America's growing legions of college students" (Draut: 2016, p. 98). Draut explains how the mostly white Union members – long time Democratic voters – "bristled at integration efforts both in the workplace and in their children's schools, viewing the progress of equality for black Americans as a direct threat to their own modest comfort and hard-won security" (Draut: 2016, p. 98). In this period of radical transformation and upheavals occurring in the United States, the Middle Americans were defined by "a sense that they have *lost* what was rightfully theirs" (Robinson: 1998, p. 335). According to Richard Lemon in *The Troubled American* (1969), they were alienated from "a social system which, *by rights*, they ought to dominate" (Robinson: 1998, p. 335).

In 1964, a young Ronald Reagan was a strong supporter of Barry Goldwater who was running for President at that time and in a campaign speech that made him a favorite in the eyes of the Republican Conservatives (Harris and Bailey: 2014, p. 118), Reagan talked about how: "There can be no security anywhere in the free world if there is no fiscal and economic stability within the United States. Those who ask us to trade our freedom for the soup kitchen of the welfare state are architects of a policy of accommodation" (quoted in Haney López: 2014, pp. 57-58). Goldwater will later lose the 1964 presidential election to the incumbent New Deal Democrat, Lyndon B. Johnson, but not before making long-lasting inroads with the white voters in the South, by winning Arizona, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia and South Carolina.

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11 See also Scammon and Wattenberg (1970).

Afterwards, it was just a matter of time and design until dog whistles like: "inner city", "States' rights", "forced busing", "cut taxes", "law and order", or "welfare recipients" (Desmond-Harris: 2014), had proven their salience from an electoral standpoint.

2. Dog Whistle Politics in the Contemporaneous Period

2.1. *Purpose in Madness. Examples of Party Strategizing*

The Republican Party's presidential primary electoral campaign from 2015-2016 has remarked itself first and foremost for peeling off the code from the mainstream political discourse. Political messaging, according to Simon Cross, employs "'high-frequency' code to refer indirectly to what is really intended to be communicated" (Cross: 2016, p. 101). The one responsible for removing the veil is Donald Trump, whose antics and perchance for unsophisticated populist demagoguery have done away with fifty years of lucrative electoral politics in strategic discrimination. For the better part of the last fifty years, ever since Barry Goldwater had been the Republican Party's nominee to run for President in 1964, the code had been a trademark of dog whistle politics, successfully utilized later on to promote, advance, and implement Conservative ideals. Then, in 1992, Bill Clinton, the Democratic Party's very own nominee, would himself run and win on a platform adapted to dog whistle politics[12].

According to various media sources, during the last months of 2015 and the beginning of the 2016 Presidential primaries, the Republican Party appeared to be in the throes of an existential crisis. As the following selection of articles from mainstream media indicates, journalists, analysts, and other similar political experts anticipated an in-party reckoning: "GOP Plunges Into Identity Crisis" (S. Wong and P. Schroder, *The Hill*, 10 October 2015); "The Crisis of Republican Authority" (R. Douthat, *The New York Times*, 10 December 2015); "The Great Republican Revolt" (D. Frum (speechwriter for President George W. Bush), *The Atlantic*, 22 December 2015); "The Monumental Fall of the Republican Party" (E.L. Dionne Jr., *The Washington Post*, 20 January 2016); "The Crisis of Conservatism" (A. Smith, *The Hill*, 28 January 2016); "GOP Establishment Stares Into the Abyss" (A. Isenstadt, *Politico*, 10 February 2016); "The Republican Party's Implosion over Donald Trump's Candidacy Has Arrived" (P. Rucker and R. Costa, *The Washington Post*, 28 February 28 2016); "Donald Trump Confronts Conservatives with an Existential Crisis" (B. Beutler, *The New Republic*, 29 February 2016); "Senses of Crisis Envelops GOP as Trump Rises" (M. Viser, T. Jan, *Boston Globe*, 3 March 2016); "Trump Throws the GOP into an Identity Crisis" (K. Tumulty, *The Washington Post*, 4 March 2016); "Donald Trump: A Long-term Crisis of the GOPs Own Making" (I.I. Mitroff, *The Huffington Post*, 1 April 2016); "Republican Crisis May Deepen If Trump Loses Wisconsin" (M. C. Bender, M. Niquette, *Bloomberg Politics*, 4 April 2016), etc. Previously, the media would ironically question the sanity of the Republicans in order to decipher their apparently erratic, nonconforming, and politically incorrect behavior: "Are the Republicans Mad?" (*The Economist*, 28 April 2012); "Republicans' Big Problem with Crazy" (M. Cohen, *The Guardian*, 15 August 2013); "How the GOP Slowly Went Insane" (J. Lovett, *The Atlantic*, 16 October 2013); "How Long Can the GOP Hide the Crazy?" (D. Obeidallah, *The Daily Beast*, 20

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12 Bill Clinton was hailed as the successful representative of the Third Way (the Democratic Party's centrist attempt at a right wing – left wing synthesis) and was an exponent of the New Democrats – in effect Moderate or Centrist Democrats – that moved the Party increasingly further to the center and were characterized by being "resistant to black concerns, tough on crime, and hostile to welfare" (Haney López: 2014, p. 108). See also: Sugrue (2010).

September 2014), etc. (Filimon: 2016, p. 214).

That some of this "madness" is as strategic as the racism, is also not new, after all it was none other than the Republican Richard Nixon who made out of the Madman theory, a feature of his presidential administration and foreign policy. Similarly, the madness and racism are strategic in nature and effective in practice. In the case of Representative Steven King, he single-handedly succeeded in shifting the debate on immigration at a time when efforts were made to reform the law. If Dick Durbin – No. 2 Senate Democrat – described the undocumented Dreamers[13] as "some of the finest in society – high school valedictorians, even, who deserved the same opportunities as native-born children", Representative King counteracted by saying that: "I go down to the border and … I see these guys that are coming across. For every [young undocumented immigrant] who's a valedictorian, there's another hundred out there who weigh 130 pounds – and they've got calves the size of cantaloupes because they're hauling 75 pounds of marijuana across the desert" (quoted in Kapur: 2014). Later, Representative King would explain how even though "the one hundred-to-one claim was an 'estimate', he points out that he succeeded in shifting the immigration debate. He fueled the conservative antagonism that killed the Senate bill in the House" and provided a more *objective* characterization of the Dreamers (Kapur: 2014). A fellow Republican colleague of King, Brent Siegrist, noted that: "Most of his controversial comments are the kind that you might say are off the cuff. They're not. He's a bright guy", he says. "He knows what he's doing when he's stirring the pot. And he likes that" (Kapur: 2014).

Ken Mehlman – 62nd Chairman of the Republican National Committee (2005-2007) – openly recognized in a speech before NAACP (The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People), from 2005, that: "By the seventies and into the eighties and nineties, Republicans gave up on winning the African American vote, looking the other way or trying to benefit politically from racial polarization" (quoted in Haney López: 2014, p. 1). If in 2005, Mehlman expressed contrition and was disappointed in his party's behavior, a decade later nothing much had changed. Moreover, eight years with an African-American President in the White House seemed to have only exacerbated these long standing political convictions, strategies, and rhetoric based in racist undertones.

2.2. A Game of Chinese Whispers: The Brown-Paper Bag Story

To further exemplify the dog whistle politics, I turn to Paul Ryan, the 54th Speaker of the House of Representatives and former 2012 Republican vice-presidential candidate. In 2014, Ryan exemplified the racist undertones when during a speech given to the CPAC (Conservative Political Action Conference), he criticized President Obama's free school lunch program by noting that it gives children "a full stomach – and an empty soul": "*The left is making a big mistake here. What they're offering people is a full stomach and an empty soul. The American people want more than that*" (quoted in Dockterman: 2014). Ryan then wraps the manipulative dog whistle from two angles: quoting a story from Eloise Anderson – who is an African-American woman and who was appointed by Governor Scott Walker, as the Secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families – about a child who for all intents and purposes, is African-American and who would willingly pass a free lunch if that would somehow motivate his family to

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13 From the DREAM Act, whose acronym stands for: Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors, a legislative proposals that aims to grant residency to undocumented immigrants as part of a multi-phased process.

care for him and feed him:

> "She [Eloise Anderson] once met a young boy from a poor family. And every day at school, he would get a free lunch from a government program. But he told Eloise he didn't want a free lunch. He wanted his own lunch – one in a brown-paper bag just like the other kids'. He wanted one, he said, because he knew a kid with a brown-paper bag had someone who cared for him" (Ryan quoted in Dockterman: 2014).

The story evokes the image of an African-American child, coming from a broken family, with a dead beat dad and an absent mother, parents who would be taught important lessons about "dignity" where not for the Left's insistence – in Ryan's view – on providing comfort to the poor. "Comfort for votes" reads between the lines. The problem with this account is that is false in the essential parts. Ryan's "brown-paper bag" story traces back to a Congressional hearing from July 2013, focused on the War on Poverty, chaired by Paul Ryan and where Eloise Anderson was an expert witness. Anderson was effectively criticizing the federal assistance programs for enabling parents to be less responsible:

> "My thought has always been around the SNAP [Supplemental Nutrion Assistance Program] program even when it was called "food stamps" is, why do you have this program, school program, school breakfast, school lunch, school dinner, when do we start asking parents to be responsible for their children?" (Anderson quoted in Kessler: 2014).

Yet the brown paper bag story was eerily familar to the one from an auto-biographical book entitled *An Invisible Thread: The True Story of an 11-year-old Panhandler, a Busy Sales Executive, and an Unlikely Meeting with Destiny* (2011) written by Laura Schroff and Alex Tresniowski, about the relationship between an executive and a young boy whose mother is a drug addict. At one point in the book, the two have the following exchange:

- "*If you make me lunch,* he said*, will you put it in a brown paper bag?*
- I didn't really understand the question. *Do you want it in a brown paper bag?* I asked. *Or how would you prefer it?*
- *Miss Laura,* he said*, I don't want your money. I want my lunch in a brown paper bag.*
- *Okay, sure. But why do you want it in a bag?*
- *Because when I see kids come to school with their lunch in a paper bag, that means someone cares about them. Miss Laura, can I please have my lunch in a paper bag?*" (Kessler: 2014).

When *The Washington Post* points out this similarity to Joe Scialfa, the communications director at Anderson's Wisconsin Department of Children and Families, Scialfa answered that:

> "In the course of giving live testimony, Secretary Anderson misspoke. What she had intended to say was the following: "Once I heard someone say, 'what was important to him as a boy was that he didn't want school lunch, he wanted a brown bag because the brown bag that he brought with his lunch in it meant that

his mom cared about him"". Secretary Anderson was referring to a television interview which she had seen with Maurice Mazyck" (Kessler: 2014).

Maurice Mazyck is in fact African-American and together with Laura Schroff partnered, according to the same *Washington Post* article, with the No Kid Hungry group, whose aim is to put a stop to childhood hunger in the U.S. What is one of the main aspects of the program? "[C]onnecting hungry kids with federal programs such as school lunches and food stamps". Moreover, the group had been against the 2013 budget proposed by Paul Ryan, which included cuts in the food stamp program (Kessler: 2014). In addition, the original story did not contain any reference related to free lunches or other government assistence programs.

What did the CPAC audience hear? That children would rather go hungry than be subjected to federal charity. Furthermore, Ryan's story was then cited and promoted by conservative outlets such as the *National Review*, under the following headline: "Paul Ryan's Moving Story That Explains the Difference Between Hard Work and Dependency" (Brennan: 2014). Even though Ryan is not entirely at fault for promoting a false story, this is but one recent example in a decades long multi-layered strategy aimed at turning the tide against the 1960s' civil rights gains. As seen above, it has no qualms in using the very minorities on the back they are campagning against, to do their dog whistling for them. So successful has this strategy proven to be, that the Clintons[14] and other Democrats[15] have also adopted dog whistle tactics when addressing primarily white audiences, inclined to resonate with these messages.

3. Media, the Unmitigated Proliferation of Dog Whistles, and the Public Rejection of Direct Racism

Media amplify the reach of these coded messages, functioning as an echo-chamber that "intensif[ies] a signal by providing more extensive coverage to an event or story" (Quillian, Pager: 2010, p. 81). In the over-extensive coverage of Donald Trump's primary campaign, it facilitated the propagation across the wavelengths of messages curtailed to a specific audience. Meanwhile, the general audience was exposed to damaging portrayals of race in so far as journalism, TV, and Holywood are concerned. Haney López argues that:

"Rather than treat nonwhites as complex persons, the media often reduce minorities to walking stereotypes: rapists, gang members, maids, terrorists, and so forth. [...] As a result, media consumers learn to see nonwhites only as racial archetypes, while simultaneously being reminded that whites are unique individuals shaped by and in turn capable of shaping the world around them"

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14   In 1996, Hillary Clinton gave credence to the "theory of superpredators", stating that: "They are often the kinds of kids that are called "super-predators". No conscience, no empathy, we can talk about why they ended up that way, but first we have to bring them to heel". Twenty years later, Bernie Sanders noted that the term "superpredators" "was a racist term and everybody knew it was a racist term" (Berenson: 2016).

15   See for example current Governor of New York, Andrew Cuomo's remarks from 2008 (at that time New York Attorney General and supporter of Hillary Clinton), when referring to Barack Obama: "It's not a TV crazed race. Frankly you can't buy your way into it. You can't shuck and jive at a press conference. All those moves you can make with the press don't work when you're in someone's living room". (Cuomo cited in Kleefeld: 2008). Kleefeld observes that the phrase "shuck and jive" is a slang referring "to mischievous blacks behaving innocently in the presence of an authority figure so as to lie and get out of trouble" (Kleefeld: 2008).

(Haney López: 2014, p. 182).

In addition, Haney López notes that the media not only toils in stale stereotypes, but even more importantly, they amplify the dog whistles elements when they uncritically disseminate the daily political news (Haney López: 2014, p. 182). As Siegrist explained above, when referring to Representative King's remarks: "Most of his controversial comments are the kind that you might say are off the cuff. They're not. He's a bright guy". "He knows what he's doing when he's stirring the pot" (Kapur: 2014). He knows that the media will carry the message forward to his audience. Representative King knows this. Donald Trump knows this. The media know this as well, as former anchorwoman Campbell Brown acknowledged in a *Politico* editorial:

"I really would like to blame Trump. But everything he is doing is with TV news' full acquiescence. Trump doesn't force the networks to show his rallies live rather than do real reporting. Nor does he force anyone to accept his phone calls rather than demand that he do a face-to-face interview that would be a greater risk for him. TV news has largely given Trump editorial control. It is driven by a hunger for ratings – and the people who run the networks and the news channels are only too happy to make that Faustian bargain. [...] It's understood in the newsroom: Air the Trump rallies live and uninterrupted. He may say something crazy; he often does, and it's always great television" (Brown: 2016).

Proponent of Critical Discourse Analysis, Teun van Dijk points out that currently, the mass-media constitute the most effective means for propagating racism, racist bias, and prejudice (van Dijk: 2012, p. 17). After all, the problem with Donald Trump is not in his overt racist speeches making him highly unpopular with the general electorate, but in the fact that by appropriating the rating-chasing media as his own personal megaphone, he abandoned the racially charged code and forced his running Republican competitors to keep up with him outside a rigorously crafted framework of racially divisive political messages. The re-branded racism takes many "discursive" shapes – "often subtle and symbolic" that:

"are expressed, enacted and confirmed by text and talk, such as everyday conversations, board meetings, job interviews, policies, laws, parliamentary debates, political propaganda, textbooks, scholarly articles, movies, TV programmes and news reports in the press, among hundreds of other genre" (van Dijk: 2000, p. 34).

The groundwork had already been laid long before Donald Trump even considered running for President. It just needed the right populist demagogue at virtually any time and any place. The socio-economic-political-and-entertainment complex would do the rest. The more the primary campaign drew to a close, the more it became apparent that Donald Trump's campaign style proved to be the most successful when compared to his more traditional and experienced competitors[16].

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16 In the initial phase of the Republican primary with the exception of Donald Trump, Carly Fiorina (former CEO of Hewlett-Packard (1999-2005) and Ben Carson (retired Director of Pediatric Neurosurgery at Johns Hopkins Hospital between 1984 and 2013), 14 candidates were regarded as seasoned politicians: "Nine were former or incumbent state governors: Jeb Bush – Governor of Florida (1999-2007); Chris Christie – Governor of New Jersey (2010– present);

As mentioned in the first part of the study, the media anticipated an overhaul of the Republican Party, stemming from an identity crisis that would have left its mark on the Grand Old Party and change it irreversibly as a result of the 2016 campaign. But was the Party really irreversibly changed by the high octane rhetoric of Trump, or was it merely inconvenienced by the fact that Trump removed the veil from the simmering, equally hateful, and harmful conservative policy agendas? In another article reviewing the 2016 Republican primary campaign, I note that:

"Trump's rise to the top of the Republican primary presidential campaign during 2015 [and 2016], exposed the holes and flaws in the mainstream tapestry of political analysis. Taibbi (2015) points out that "most veteran political observers figured that the concrete impact of Trump's candidacy would be limited in the worst case to destroying the Republican Party as a mainstream political force". Instead, Trump's campaign so far had the opposite effect and galvanised the partisan base. The poll numbers paint an image where "the voter base of the Republican Party absolutely hates the Republican Party leadership and establishment", according to Steyn (Hanchett: 2015). Trump does not have to win the Republican nomination in order to incur lasting "damage" to the Republican Party. Years earlier, the Tea Party used to be initially dismissed as an innocuous extreme [form of] fringe conservatism, only for it to quickly gain traction. At present, the Tea Party has not only been coopted by the GOP [Great Old Party – Republican Party], it has also pushed the party's narrative, even farther to the Right" (Filimon: 2016, p. 220).

Trump's negative polling with the broader electorate had put him at an obvious disadvantage in the general election. After all, 2016 was not 1958. In 1958, Southern Democrat populist George Wallace lost the gubernatorial primary in Alabama in favor of John Malcolm Patterson, State Attorney General at the time, supported by the Ku Klux Klan. After his defeat, Wallace would declare: "[...] you know why I lost that governor's race? ... I was outniggered by John Patterson. And I'll tell you here and now, I will never be outniggered again"[17] (Wallace quoted by Gaillard: 2004, p. 114). Though the demographic game has changed in the last fifty years, Donald Trump still capitalized on the support of the Republican and Republican leaning electorate (Hartig et al: 2016), even though he constantly polled in the negatives with women and minorities[18]. An Associated Press – GfK poll from April 2016, showed that:

Jim Gilmore – Governor of Virginia (1998-2002); Mike Huckabee – Governor of Arkansas (1996-2007); Bobby Jindal – Governor of Louisiana (2008 – 2016); John Kasich – Governor of Ohio (2011 – present); George Pataki – Governor of New York (1995-2006); Rick Perry – Governor of Texas (2000-2015); Scott Walker – Governor of Wisconsin (2011 – present). Five were United States Senators: Ted Cruz – Texas (2013 – present); Lindsey Graham – South Carolina (2003 – present); Rand Paul – Kentucky (2011 – present); Marco Rubio – Florida (2011 – present); Rick Santorum – Pennsylvania (1995-2007)" (Filimon: 2016, pp. 211-212).

17   Five years later, in 1963, Wallace would win the gubernatorial election in Alabama and in his Inaugural Address will profess: "Today I have stood, where once Jefferson Davis stood, and took an oath to my people. It is very appropriate then that from this Cradle of the Confederacy, this very Heart of the Great Anglo-Saxon Southland, that today we sound the drum for freedom as have our generations of forebears before us done, time and time again through history. Let us rise to the call of freedom-loving blood that is in us and send our answer to the tyranny that clanks its chains upon the South. In the name of the greatest people that have ever trod this earth, I draw the line in the dust and toss the gauntlet before the feet of tyranny . . . and I say . . . segregation today . . . segregation tomorrow . . . segregation forever" (Wallace: 1963).

18   A Gallup poll found that women had a strongly negative image of him (70% had an unfavorable opinion while

"seven in 10 people, including close to half of Republican voters, have an unfavorable view of Trump [...] It's an opinion shared by majorities of men and women; young and old; conservatives, moderates and liberals; and whites, Hispanics and blacks. [...] Even in the South, a region where Trump has won GOP primaries decisively, close to 70 percent view him unfavorably. And among whites without a college education, one of Trump's most loyal voting blocs, 55 percent have a negative opinion" (Pace, Swanson: 2016).

The negative opinion was not enough to dissuade the Republican voters from voting for Donald Trump, in favor of the Democratic candidate, even though Hillary Clinton's general election strategy had attempted to attract moderate Republicans, especially women. Trump appealed to the disenfranchised white working class electorate, the white middle class, and – as the New York Republican primary showed – to richer and better educated voters. An article in *The Economist* showed that 43% of the Republican college graduates and postgraduates supported Trump: voters earning under $50,000 constituted 29% of the electorate and 32% of Donald Trump's supporters, while voters earning over $100,000 represent 37% of the electorate and 34% of Trump's base (The Data Team: 2016). This data dispels the classist myth that Trump was supported only by poor and less educated voters (The Data Team: 2016).

The Republican Party won the presidential election and reinstated the Democrat – Republican cycle at the presidential level, established in the post-Cold War period. Furthermore, though many eulogies were sung during 2016 in the memory of the once great Republican Party, the results of the 2016 campaign showed that the eulogies were without merit and quite possibly, directed at the wrong party. On November 8, 2016, the Republicans won not only the Presidency, but also maintained control of the House of Representatives, the Senate, and of the Governorships. At state level, the situation was even more dire for the Democratic Party, with the Republicans controlling around 69 of 99 legislative chambers (Bosnam, Davey: 2016): "With Donald J. Trump's win, Republicans will soon control the White House, both chambers of Congress, the tilt of the Supreme Court, more state legislative chambers than any time in history, and more governor's offices than they have held in nearly a century" (Bosnam, Davey: 2016). Moreover, as we have seen during President Obama's administration, the Republican Party had no problem in mobilizing its base and becoming the *de facto* Congressional Party in counterpoint to the Presidential Democratic Party between the two mandates. From this position, the Republican Party has had a successful rate of filibustering Democratic presidents, gerrymandering into victory their candidates to various state and federal positions as well as passing voter ID laws that have been targeted at people of color – who are generally more inclined to vote for the Democratic Party.

Where Donald Trump has been successful was in proving that both the code and the slur are equally efficient and do not end in immediate rejection. Like Representative King before him, Trump has moved the goalposts of the debate further to the Right. During the primary, the media – when not focused on providing 24/7 access to Donald Trump – has been busy conflating a Democratic socialist's rhetoric about the influence of Big Money in politics and the need to provide better public services, with the hate speech of a right wing demagogue aimed at harnessing the frustration, anger, and resentment of white voters. The media's facile and false equivocation between Sanders

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only 23% had a favorable opinion) (Gallup: 2016).

and Trump[19] have insured that the political establishment that created Trump and others less blunt and loud than him will continue to act with impunity. Haney López summarizes the ethos of dog whistle politics as follows: "We fiercely oppose racism and stand prepared to repudiate anyone who dares utter the n-word. [...] But let's be honest: some groups commit more crimes and use more welfare, other groups are mainly unskilled and illiterate illegals, and some religions inspire violence and don't value human life" (Haney López: 2014, pp. 3-4). This is the quintessence of the new racism enabled through racial codes and propagated through the mainstream and partisan media.

4. Conclusions

In April 2016, the Editorial Board of *The Washington Post* published an article on "Why Republicans Still Must Not Rally around Trump", where it described Trump as an atypical candidate, calling him "a unique threat to the Republican Party and to the country":

"Mr. Trump degrades people, serially insulting women, Latinos, Muslims, immigrants, Jews and others. He erodes the discourse, frequently and flagrantly lying about things such as whether "scores" of terrorists have recently entered the United States as migrants – one of numerous false claims he made in a speech on foreign policy... He proposes undermining foundational civic institutions such as the free press. He shows contempt for the separation of powers by threatening the speaker of the House. Where his policy agenda is not thin, it is scary, such as his call to ban Muslims from entering the United States. In short, he should inspire fear that someone so lacking in judgment and restraint could acquire the powers of the presidency" (Editorial Board: 2016).

As I have argued in this article, Trump constitutes a political aberration only in so far as his campaign rhetoric is undiluted by artifice, unperturbed by political correctness, and relatively unchallenged by the media or at least, ineffectually challenged including during the general election. It is important to note that while Trump is the tip of a racist iceberg, it was not only Trump that engaged in this extreme electoral charade but in effect, all of the Republican candidates that have participated in the 2016 primary campaign: from Jeb Bush and his comments on "anchor babies", to Ted Cruz and his comments on the jihad led by the LGBT community against "people of faith who respect the biblical teachings that marriage is the union of one man and one woman", from Carly Fiorina and her statements on torture and abortion to Ben Carson who declared that Islam is incompatible with the Constitution (Obeidallah:

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19   The mainstream press had repeatedly embraced the trappings of grouping Donald Trump and Senator Bernie Sanders in a series of misleading false equivalences, as the following articles shows: J. Filipovic, "Inequality Isn't Just About Money. It's Also About Sexism and Racism" – with a byline stating: "Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders have talked a lot about inequality, but they're both largely speaking to white men", *Cosmopolitan*, 12 April 2016; T.B. Edsall, "The Trump-Sanders Fantasy", *The New York Times*, 24 February 2016; W. Marshall, E. Gerwin, "Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders Are Delusional on Trade Policy", *The Daily Beast*, 11 April 2016; J. Cook, "Trump and Sanders Rallies Highlight a Political Odd Couple", *The Wall Street Journal*, 7 April 2016; K. Siddell, "The Trouble With Bernie Trump and Donald Sanders", *The Huffington Post*, 4 April 2016; N. Steinberg, "Steinberg: The Left Can Be as Looney as the Right", *Chicago Sun Times*, 3 April 2016; S. Chapman, "What Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders Don't Get About the Causes of Our Trade Deficit?", *Chicago Tribune*, 1 April 2016; T. Worstall, "The Economic Errors of the Donald and Bernie: This Is Not a Zero Sum World", *Forbes*, March 21, 2016; P.H. Rubin, "The Zero-Sum Worlds of Trump and Sanders", *The Wall Street Journal*, 20 March 2016.

2015) etc. As Obeidallah notes: "It's no longer code; it's now in our face. The GOP's 2016 platform is that Latino immigrants are coming to rape you, blacks want handouts, gays are waging a holy war versus Christians, and Muslims are not loyal to America" (Obeidallah: 2015). Variations of these political behaviors have been representative of the Republican Party for decades, sometimes directly, sometimes indirectly, like in the brown paper bag story mentioned above. By reducing the problem only to Trump, the media once again did a disservice to the public and underestimated the deeper problems of the political establishment.

The dog whistle strategy attempts to condition segments of the White electorate in a Pavlovian manner, in the hope of obtaining the desired electoral results. Media have disseminated the code words across various mediums (newspapers, TV, movies) and people have reacted to them accordingly. The notion that the electorate is changing, that we are witnessing a change of generations, that the youth is more progressive than its predecessors, that people of color are more emboldened thanks to grassroots activism of groups like Black Lives Matter, is a necessary, but as of yet, insufficient condition for political change. The results of the 2016 general election have underscored this: Hillary Clinton won the popular vote by almost three million votes but lost the Electoral College vote in several key states such as Ohio, Wisconsin, North Carolina or Florida. At the beginning of Barack Obama's presidency, he was presented as the one who will reach across the aisles and unify political divergences. Instead, in his failed bid for bipartisan consensus, the President in his two terms had been filibustered in Congress by the Republican Party, as much as all the other previous U.S. Presidents combined[20] (Jacobson: 2013).

In conclusion, it is important to highlight the fact that even if Donald Trump would have lost the general election, the problems affecting the Republican Party and the political establishment would not have suddenly ceased to exist. The Republican Party has not been in the business of negotiation since it had unilaterally decided that compromise is a sign of defeat. As noted elsewhere: "the very purpose of compromise and negotiation is defeated when one side is not willing to compromise and the other should not have to compromise on programs and policies necessary to the wellbeing of the social fabric in a democratic state" (Filimon: 2016, p. 220). Consequently, the 2016 primary campaign can be reduced to one word: retrograde. On one hand, we had a Republican returning to the Southern Democrat Wallace's well for inspiration; on the other, there was a Liberal Democrat inspired by Ronald Reagan[21] and inextricably tied to the implicit legacy of the Third Way by virtue of being a Clinton. Both were relics of a bygone era that refuses to let go because while the demographic data might not be in its favor anymore or for the moment, all the other political, economic, and financial levers still are.

This campaign has demonstrated that the Republican base is attuned to the political messages of its representatives, be it in racial code or without. At this point, the strategic racist rhetoric is part of the self-propagating and reinforcing cycle where even though the political elite might not be as well attuned to the electorate as the other way around, it will conclude that this path is the only one available to them, especially since the financial backers of the Party are the opposite of what might constitute a "bleeding heart liberal". Trump or no Trump, with a radicalized base and

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20   See also Ted Cruz – another contender in the Republican primary, regarded as a better alternative to Trump – and his attempt to filibuster President Obama's Affordable Care Act in his 2013, during his 21 hours long talkathon (O'Keefe, Kane: 2013).

21   In a speech on American exceptionalism, Hillary Clinton describes how: "The United States is an exceptional nation. I believe we are still Lincoln's last, best hope of Earth. We're still Reagan's shining city on a hill" (Clinton quoted in White: 2016).

an ultra-conservative support from the top, backwards is the only way forward for the Grand Old Party.

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