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A pink elephant could crash Dem party

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A pink elephant may crash the Party of Color in the next several weeks, but the intruder will not be some unwelcome Republican.

Like all such party animals, this one could be ignored by Democratic hosts who hope he'll just go away. But if he's not stopped now, he could be back to spoil the big celebration planned later in the year.

The pachyderm I am describing is a big problem that Democrats could face if, unlike Comedy Central's Stephen Colbert, a significant number of Latino participants in key Democratic primaries "see race" when they cast their votes.

Hard as that will be for the elders and matrons of the Inclusive Party to admit, it suggests a more convincing scenario for why, to date, Hillary Rodham Clinton has outpolled Barack Obama in many of the barrio precincts. The polite explanation has been that Hispanic voters love the Clintons on their "issues" — whatever those are now or were in the 1990s.

Such possible electoral manifestation of prejudice is a two-way street, of course. You would have to be blind not to have observed the black and brown gang warfare that has gone on in some of our inner cities in recent decades, the jagged tip of an ugly social-cultural iceberg.

If one of the two finalists in this history-making election had not been black but had been named Juan, a different kind of cross-racial discrimination would be the subject of this essay.

So why do I risk being hated on by my friends in the Democratic Party for bringing this up?

Well, we are about to witness bloody hand-to-hand combat for every single delegate to the convention that will be held in Denver next August. And street fighting can bring out the worst among even the most enlightened multi-cultural paragons of virtuous political diversity (i.e., left-liberal Democrats).

Stipulated, I am a partisan of my fellow Illinoisan Obama, who I believe is transcending race in this campaign.

But, putting on my media critic hat, I would urge those whose business it is to interpret our politics, the press corps, to carefully observe how Clinton Inc. plays the "brown-black" race card as the campaign moves toward Texas. That extra scrutiny was earned by trash talk from the Supreme and Un-Fireable Manager of Clinton Inc. (our "first black president") between Iowa and South Carolina.

All of this could have been predicted for a political party (I lament it is mine) that has been playing identity politics with a vengeance for the past several decades.

With an unfortunate focus on granting entitlements based on tribal affinity rather than celebrating the rights, liberties and personal responsibilities of individuals in a pluralistic democracy, strengthened by civic cultural assimilation, we Democrats have been courting

racialist warfare for a long time.

As I tell my students, if you want to end race consciousness in America, stop being race conscious.

My advice to fellow Democrats: Kick that pink elephant out of the party. Don't allow even the slightest hint of conflict to break out between Hispanic and black Democrats. Because one of the few good things John McCain has going for him is that he's not in the anti-Hispanic-immigrant, wing-nut, Lou Dobbs wing of the Grand Old (very old this year) Party.

And my counsel to Obama would be to keep on talking about what Mexican-Americans and other Latin Americans can teach all of us when it comes to the importance of family and a strong work ethic in the pursuit of the American dream.

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