

# Commentary Michael Costello The whistle only MSNBC hears

*Michael Costello/Lewiston Tribune*

When I was young, people who heard voices in their heads were confined to psychiatric hospitals. Today they're employed at MSNBC as primetime hosts. And what those voices in their heads are telling them is that Republicans are sending subliminal appeals to racists, using what liberals call "racial dog whistles."

Distracting voters from the abysmal state of the U.S. economy remains the Democrats sole hope for survival this November. And for liberals, racism is like ketchup. It goes on everything.

Of late, MSNBC's commentary has been dedicated to exposing the subliminal racist messages that only they heard during the Republican National Convention. The idea of the racist dog whistle (their term, not mine) implies that certain secret code words are inserted into seemingly benign messages that trigger visceral subconscious racism in the vulnerable listener. And as Democrats are happy to tell you, we are a predominantly racist nation.

The odd thing about these racist dog whistles is that only liberal Democrats seem able to hear them.

Here's how it works. And I don't have to make anything up. This actually happened.

One of MSNBC's prime-time lunatics, Martin Bashir, was interviewing one of his colleagues, Lawrence O'Donnell. Bashir has made a name for himself by cribbing Media Matters talking points without even troubling to rephrase them in his own words. O'Donnell took the usual route toward becoming an unbiased and nonpartisan mainstream broadcast journalist by starting out as a legislative aide for the late Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan, D-N.Y.

So, late in the campaign season, MSNBC hosts have adopted the safe route of limiting their interviews to talking to each other.

Bashir was offended by a line in a Sen. Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., speech at the Republican National Convention in which McConnell quipped that Barack Obama seemed more interested in preparing himself for a second career on the PGA Tour than he was in governing.

Normal people grasped the reference to the 104 rounds of golf that Obama has played while Rome burned.

But that's not what O'Donnell heard. Instead, the voices in O'Donnell's head told him that this was a subliminal message attempting to link Obama with Tiger Woods and, through that association, portray Obama as just another oversexed black man.

Bashir was initially skeptical, but after O'Donnell explained his reasoning, Bashir was finally convinced.

Here's another racist dog whistle heard by the media: "Chicago."

Did you know that Chicago was racist code language? I didn't.

One has to visit Chicago to appreciate the town. Everybody who lives there knows that they are overtaxed by a corrupt city government. But they reliably vote overwhelmingly for the corrupt politicians who steal from them. Aside from corruption, Chicago politics is distinguished by its brass-knuckled thuggery.

When normal people hear the term, "Chicago politics," that's what they understand it to mean.

But those who hear racist dog whistles hear something else entirely. As the MSNBC deep thinkers explain, a lot of black people live in Chicago. And by characterizing Obama as a Chicago politician, Republicans are pointing out that he's an African-American, thereby conveying this shocking information to the blind.

Mitt Romney incited an on-screen screaming meltdown by MSNBC host Chris Matthews by joking that he liked visiting his home state of Michigan because nobody asked him for his birth certificate.

Normal people understood that Romney was making fun of birtherism. Liberals, including most of the Democratic leadership, heard a racist dog whistle.

Matthews explained that he's sensitive to racism because he has lived so much of his life in black-majority Washington, D.C. He's so sensitive to blacks that he now lives in one of America's whitest communities, Chevy Chase Village, which is home to 10 African-Americans. If Matthews saw an unfamiliar black face walking down his street, he'd probably have a George Zimmerman moment and call 911 to report a suspicious person.

Meanwhile, here's what liberals can get away with.

On at least two occasions in 2008, Bill Clinton had this to say about Obama: "A few years ago, this guy would have been carrying our bags."

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid credited Obama's success to the facts that he was "light-skinned" and speaks "with no Negro dialect, unless he wanted to have one."

Also in 2008, Joe Biden marveled at the sight of a black man who was both "clean" and "articulate."

You don't even need to be a dog to hear Democrat racism.

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