

June 12, 2012

[Jennifer Rubin](#) has words for a president who has a love affair with government. *The president's news conference belly-flop Friday was a killer on two levels. Obviously, the private sector is not doing fine, as Obama admitted later in the day when he tried to walk back the remark. (But if it's not doing fine is he to blame? No! That's [2E and 2F](#).) But the rest of his message — that it's good to keep growing the public sector — won't be walked back. That is what he believes and why his comments, coupled with Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker's victory in last week's recall election, spell big trouble for him. ...*

... President Obama seems unaware that we need the private sector to generate wealth (you know, make things, sell things, etc.) or that we face in the near future a fiscal crisis when we can no longer off-load our debt. Where does he think the money to pay for an ever-expanding public employee workforce comes from? ("The fair if depressing takeaway from Mr. Obama's press conference is that he continues to believe, despite three and a half years of failure, that more government spending is the key to faster growth and that government really doesn't need to reform. This is how you get a jobless rate above 8% for 40 months and the weakest economic recovery in 60 years.") ...

[Andrew Malcolm](#) says the White House has a new economic advisor - Wile E. Coyote.

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In that sense President Obama was strategically wise Friday afternoon not to try to somehow explain his morning jaw-dropper about the private U.S. economic sector doing just fine with the real unemployment rate above 14%. Instead, the Democrat simply contradicted himself. Create a new quotable reality. The Chicago way.

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1) It came as Obama gives the consistent week-after-week impression that he's much more interested in raising millions at campaign fundraisers (13 in just 3 "work" days) than lowering the unemployed ranks by millions,

2) It adds to the impression that a lost Obama, distracted by Mitt Romney's surprising early strengths, is kinda panicked, will say almost anything to make it true and easily slips off-script with silly, immediately refutable statements. ...

John Hinderaker thinks it is "Obama's most clueless moment yet. "

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George Will gets on to the student debt crisis.

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Richard Vedder, an Ohio University economist, writes in the Chronicle of Higher Education that as many people — perhaps more — have student loan debts as have college degrees. Have you seen those T-shirts that proclaim "College: The Best Seven Years of My Life"? Twenty-nine percent of borrowers never graduate, and many who do graduate take decades to repay their loans. ...

Joe Nocera, of the NY Times, points to another area where college administrators have failed.

The lead article in The Chronicle of Higher Education this week is about a University of Memphis football player named Dasmine Cathey. He lives not on campus but in his aunt's home nearby, where he helps raise his siblings, who were essentially abandoned by their mother. He has two children of his own (with different mothers). He uses his Pell grant money to help pay

the household bills and often skips class because he has to drive a family member somewhere. It's a lot for a college student to shoulder, but he doesn't shirk it.

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So while the article, written by Brad Wolverton, causes one to root for Cathey, who is a largely sympathetic figure, it also, inevitably, raises the question: How in the world did he get into college? But, of course, we know the answer to that. He is in college because, as one of his former coaches puts it, "He had all the tools you could ask for." Football tools, that is. ..

UC Santa Cruz prof on the trap of minority studies.

When Naomi Schaefer Riley was fired by the Chronicle of Higher Education for her trenchant remarks on Black Studies programs, most of those who criticized the firing saw in it a display of the campus left's intolerance. Fair enough, but this episode also has a much broader meaning.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, large populations of poor immigrants arrived in the U.S.--Irish, Italians, and Jews from Russia and Poland. Their extreme poverty placed them at the bottom of the social ladder, and they were often treated with contempt. Yet just a few generations later they were assimilated, and their rapid upward social mobility had produced mayors, senators, judges, and even Presidents from among their ranks. None of this could have happened without first-rate public education.

To be sure, they worked hard to get ahead, but they were not obstructed by something that afflicts the have-nots of today: as they walked through the school gates they were not met by people intent on luring them into Irish or Italian Studies programs whose purpose was to keep them in a state of permanent resentment over past wrongs at the hands of either Europeans or establishment America. ...

Right Turn

Obama's love affair with government

by Jennifer Rubin

The president's news conference belly-flop Friday was a killer on two levels. Obviously, the private sector is *not* doing fine, as Obama admitted later in the day when he tried to walk back the remark. (But if it's not doing fine is he to blame? No! That's [2E](#) and [2F](#).) But the rest of his message — that it's good to keep growing the public sector — won't be walked back. That is what he believes and why his comments, coupled with Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker's victory in last week's recall election, spell big trouble for him.

The [Wall Street Journal editorial board explained](#):

GDP growth in the first quarter was a measly 1.9%, revised down from an initial 2.2%. The President's response is to say as his first policy priority that the federal government should borrow or tax more so it can then finance more hiring by state and local governments. Spur the economy by growing the size of government.

It's true that government spending is part of GDP, and spending more can boost reported GDP for a time. But the lesson of the stimulus — which spent hundreds of billions of dollars in aid to the states — is that this boost is temporary and fades when the spending ends.

President Obama seems unaware that we need the private sector to generate wealth (you know, make things, sell things, etc.) or that we face in the near future a fiscal crisis when we can no longer off-load our debt. *Where does he think the money to pay for an ever-expanding public employee workforce comes from?* (“The fair if depressing takeaway from Mr. Obama’s press conference is that he continues to believe, despite three and a half years of failure, that more government spending is the key to faster growth and that government really doesn’t need to reform. This is how you get a jobless rate above 8% for 40 months and the weakest economic recovery in 60 years.”)

The lesson in Wisconsin was entirely lost on the president. There, the taxpayers figured out that paying for (with rising taxes) the cushy salaries and lavish benefits of government employees is not the way to put the state’s fiscal house in order. If you want to lure business, increase economic activity and return prosperity you cannot keep growing government — all that borrowing, spending and taxing eventually catches up with you.

[New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie](#) grasped this point when he spoke in Chicago:

Christie argued that New Jersey has more government workers per square mile than any other state, but said the trend is reversing under his leadership. Midway through his first term, the state now has fewer people on its payroll than it has since Republican Christie Todd Whitman was governor more than a decade ago, he said.

“That’s the right direction, Mr. President, not the wrong direction,” Christie said.

“It is an outrage to have the president of the United States stand up and say to hardworking governors — Democrats and Republicans in this country — that state and local government hiring is moving in the wrong direction, and we’re to blame,” Christie said.

The president has learned nothing in the past four years. In his book we haven’t enlarged government *enough*, borrowed *enough*, hired *enough* civil servants and taxed wealth-creators *enough*. If the entire electorate thought like Paul Krugman, this philosophy would be hailed. But in the real world, Americans simply don’t buy this.

The left blogosphere has predictably pulled out from the excuse matrix two defenses for Obama’s Friday meltdown: “It is a communications problem” (Obama didn’t say what he meant), and “The voters don’t care.” But are they going to defend the preposterous notion that what is holding us back is too few government workers? The president is sinking, but the entire Democratic Party and liberal punditocracy need not go down with the ship. For now, however, the lefty blogosphere seems determined to do precisely that.

Investors.com

[Obama's new economic adviser, Wile E. Coyote](#)

by Andrew Malcolm

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2) It adds to the impression that a lost Obama, distracted by Mitt Romney's surprising early strengths, is kinda panicked, will say almost anything to make it true and easily slips off-script with silly, immediately refutable statements. (As well as, believe it or not, an off-color joke to an LA crowd about his own wife.)

The Supreme Court overturning a federal law like ObamaCare would be unprecedented. The private sector economy is doing fine. And, be it carefully noted, these gaffes came off-teleprompter, during spontaneous answers to questions. Watch for the schedule to contain fewer such uncontrollable interrogations.

3) It came in the same week that Wisconsin voters appeared to spank Democrats and their dues-paying allies in public sector unions by refusing to recall reform-minded Republican Gov. Scott Walker. This keeps him in office and likely emboldens a fair number of the other 28 GOP governors to proceed accordingly. (A substantial number of cheeseheads were also bothered by the unions' high-handed ouster attempt in mid-term, absent malfeasance. But that would take explaining.)

4) It came in the same week that Romney's campaign nonchalantly announced it had raised \$77 million in May, fully 25% more than the incumbent. *D'oh!*

5) It strengthened the news meme that the Harvard grad will blame everyone else -- anyone else -- before accepting responsibility. Europe. Republicans. Speculators. George W. Congress was [Obama's target in his weekly remarks for failing to pass more jobs bills](#),

even though he could have said the Democrat Senate, which has log-jammed more than two dozen House jobs bills. (In true bipartisan fashion, [Obama's own budget got not one single vote](#) in Congress.)

6) And it came right after seriously disappointing May jobs numbers, indicating the 2012 political salvation of an economic spurt is inexorably slipping beyond the Real Good Talker's grasp. The May numbers came on the same day that he was inappropriately trying to stay employed himself by holding six out-of-town fundraisers.

Our astute [colleague Ed Carson points out elsewhere on this site](#) that, contrary to claims by the nation's top elected duffer, private sector jobs are *down* 4.6 million in the last 52 months.

While the number of federal government employees *increased* nearly a quarter-million paychecks, 11.4%, in the same period. This despite the Democrat candidate's vow four years ago to go through every budget line-by-line. You betcha.

One largely overlooked aspect of Obama's Friday remarks was his plea that the nation needs to grow state and local governments to provide more jobs. Obama displayed his keen grasp of the Acme School of Economics by making his top stimulus spending idea increasing the size of governments. It isn't working on the federal level, so maybe it will now in the states.

This increasingly desperate president's election year economic policies are like deer-hunting with an AK-47 on automatic. Who knows? You might hit something.

Powerline

[Obama's Most Clueless Moment Yet?](#)

D.C. Opulence, Private Sector Misery

by John Hinderaker



The world according to Barack Obama

President Obama's seemingly-bizarre claim that "the private sector is doing fine" is echoing across the country. When I first saw the quote, I thought it must be a momentary gaffe, or perhaps taken out of context. But no: Obama really did say, at some length, that the private sector is prospering and we need to spend more money on government:

The private sector is doing fine. Where we're seeing weaknesses in our economy have to do with state and local government. Oftentimes cuts initiated by, you know, Governors or mayors who are not getting the kind of help that they have in the past from the federal government and who don't have the same kind of flexibility as the federal government in dealing with fewer revenues coming in.

And so, you know, if Republicans want to be helpful, if they really want to move forward and put people back to work, what they should be thinking about is how do we help state and local governments and how do we help the construction industry?

Mitt Romney responded immediately:

Now this morning, the President had a press conference. I don't know if you heard it, but he called a press conference and pulled people in and said a number of things, and one of the most interesting things he said was this: he said the private sector is doing fine. He said the private sector is doing fine. Is he really that out of touch? I think he's defining what it means to be detached and out of touch with the American people. Has there ever been an American president who is so far from reality as to believe in an America where 23 million Americans are out of work, or stopped looking for work, or can only find part-time jobs and need full-time jobs, where the economy grew in the first quarter of the year at only 1.9 percent, where the median income in America has dropped by 10% over the last four years, where there have been record number of home foreclosures, for the President of the United States to stand up and say the private sector is doing fine is going to go down in history. It's an extraordinary miscalculation and misunderstanding by a President who is out of touch, and we're going to take back this country and get America working again.

Romney's comments are certainly fair, but I think there is more going on here than merely another instance of Obama's cluelessness. Rather, I think the belief that the private sector is rich and the public sector is poor, so that transfers of wealth from private sector to public sector are endlessly justified, is embedded deeply in Obama's ideology.

The classic formulation of this proposition goes back to John Kenneth Galbraith's *The Affluent Society*, published in 1958. Galbraith contrasted the worlds of "private opulence and public squalor" in the course of arguing for massive government spending programs. Galbraith's book was epically wrong-headed, but the idea that the private sector is rich and the public sector is underfunded lives on as one of the pillars of liberal ideology.

Most everyone knows that times have changed. Government spending consumes an ever-growing share of America's wealth, and study after study shows that public sector workers are paid vastly better than private sector workers. In today's world, opulence is far more a feature of the world of government than of private industry. But this is a fact around which leftists like Barack Obama simply cannot wrap their minds. They cling bitterly to the old stereotypes, because to do otherwise would call into question their entire worldview. To them, the private sector is always "doing fine;" if anything, in their hostile eyes, too well.

Obama's friends in the press will try to minimize the significance of what he said today, I suspect unsuccessfully. Romney's campaign will make sure that millions of Americans find out that Obama thinks the economy's miserable performance over the last four years is perfectly acceptable, at least as far as the private sector—something like 85% of Americans—is concerned.

UPDATE: NPR used your tax dollars to editorialize on Obama's behalf:

The screenshot shows the NPR website interface. At the top, the date is June 8, 2012. Navigation links include 'support public radio', 'NPR Shop', 'NPR Social Media', 'Login', and 'Register'. The main navigation bar includes 'home', 'news', 'arts & life', 'music', 'programs', 'listen', 'HOURLY NEWS', and 'PODCASTS'. A search bar is present with the text 'SEARCH' and a 'go' button. Below the navigation is a banner for 'it's all POLITICS' with a 'VOTE' graphic. The main article is titled 'GOP Dope Slaps Obama For Saying Private Sector's 'Doing Fine'' by FRANK JAMES, dated June 8, 2012, at 01:18 pm. The article categories are '2012, White House, Economy'. A photo shows Obama at a podium with other people seated behind him. A 'Flash' placeholder is visible on the right side of the page.

Washington Post **[Subprime college educations](#)** by George F. Will

Many parents and the children they send to college are paying [rapidly rising prices](#) for something of declining quality. This is because “quality” is not synonymous with “value.”

[Glenn Harlan Reynolds](#), a University of Tennessee law professor, believes that college has become, for many, merely a “status marker,” signaling membership in the educated caste, and a place to meet spouses of similar status — “associative mating.” Since 1961, the time students spend reading, writing and otherwise studying has fallen [from 24 hours a week](#) to about 15 — enough for a degree often desired only as an expensive signifier of rudimentary qualities (e.g., the ability to follow instructions). Employers value this signifier as an alternative to aptitude tests

when evaluating potential employees because such tests can provoke lawsuits by having a “disparate impact” on this or that racial or ethnic group.

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In 2010, the New York Times reported on Cortney Munna, then 26, a New York University graduate with almost \$100,000 in debt. If her repayments were not then being deferred because she was enrolled in night school, she would have been paying \$700 monthly from her \$2,300 monthly after-tax income as a photographer’s assistant. She says she is toiling “to pay for an education I got for four years and would happily give back.” Her degree is in religious and women’s studies.

The budgets of California’s universities are being cut, so recently Cal State Northridge students conducted an almost-hunger strike (sustained by a blend of kale, apple and celery juices) to protest, as usual, tuition increases and, unusually and properly, administrators’ salaries. For example, in 2009 the base salary of UC Berkeley’s vice chancellor for equity and inclusion was \$194,000, almost four times that of starting assistant professors. And by 2006, academic administrators outnumbered faculty.

The Manhattan Institute’s [Heather Mac Donald notes](#) that sinecures in academia’s diversity industry are expanding as academic offerings contract. UC San Diego (UCSD), while eliminating master’s programs in electrical and computer engineering and comparative literature, and eliminating courses in French, German, Spanish and English literature, added a diversity requirement for graduation to cultivate “a student’s understanding of her or his identity.” So, rather than study computer science and Cervantes, students can study their identities — themselves. Says Mac Donald, “□‘Diversity,’ it turns out, is simply a code word for narcissism.”

She reports that UCSD lost three cancer researchers to Rice University, which offered them 40 percent pay increases. But UCSD found money to create a vice chancellorship for equity, diversity and inclusion. UC Davis has a Diversity Trainers Institute under an administrator of diversity education, who presumably coordinates with the Cross-Cultural Center. It also has: a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Resource Center; a Sexual Harassment Education Program; a diversity program coordinator; an early resolution discrimination coordinator; a Diversity Education Series that awards Understanding Diversity Certificates in “Unpacking Oppression”; and Cross-Cultural Competency Certificates in “Understanding Diversity and Social Justice.” California’s budget crisis has not prevented UC San Francisco from creating a new vice chancellor for diversity and outreach to supplement its Office of Affirmative Action,

Equal Opportunity and Diversity, and the Diversity Learning Center (which teaches how to become “a Diversity Change Agent”), and the Center for LGBT Health and Equity, and the Office of Sexual Harassment Prevention & Resolution, and the Chancellor’s Advisory Committees on Diversity, and on Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Issues, and on the Status of Women.

So taxpayers should pay more and parents and students should borrow more to fund administrative sprawl in the service of stale political agendas? Perhaps they will, until “pop!” goes the bubble.

NY Times

[Majoring in Eligibility](#)

by Joe Nocera

The [lead article](#) in The Chronicle of Higher Education this week is about a University of Memphis football player named Dasmine Cathey. He lives not on campus but in his aunt’s home nearby, where he helps raise his siblings, who were essentially abandoned by their mother. He has two children of his own (with different mothers). He uses his Pell grant money to help pay the household bills and often skips class because he has to drive a family member somewhere. It’s a lot for a college student to shoulder, but he doesn’t shirk it.

College itself, however, is a different story. As an incoming freshman, Cathey could barely read, and academics remain a chore. His papers — a handful of which are posted on the Chronicle’s Web site — seem more like the work of a seventh grader than a college student. Among the courses he has failed are Family Communication and Yoga. His major is called “interdisciplinary studies.” As the article ends, the athletic department’s academic advisers are desperately trying to get him to go to class so he can graduate.

So while the article, written by Brad Wolverton, causes one to root for Cathey, who is a largely sympathetic figure, it also, inevitably, raises the question: How in the world did he get into college? But, of course, we know the answer to that. He is in college because, as one of his former coaches puts it, “He had all the tools you could ask for.” Football tools, that is.

In the months since I first began writing about the hypocrisy of the college sports establishment — I should note that Wolverton [has written](#) about [my N.C.A.A. columns](#) — I’ve heard one consistent refrain from readers. De-emphasize college sports, people have said; that’s the only way universities can reclaim their souls. Last month, when Buzz Bissinger, the author of the classic book, “Friday Night Lights,” wrote [an article](#) in The Wall Street Journal entitled “Why College Football Should Be Banned,” a reader sent me the link with a short note. “This is the article you should have written,” it read.

I’ve been resistant to that solution because I think it is hopelessly naïve. College football and men’s basketball are huge businesses that are only going to be bigger: witness the way universities are inching toward a lucrative football playoff system, for instance. Anyone who really thinks college presidents will suddenly get religion and put education over sports is dreaming. Even if they wanted to, their regents wouldn’t let them.

Yet The Chronicle’s article makes you wonder: at what cost? The real point about Dasmine Cathey is that he is no anomaly. Since 2003, when the N.C.A.A. stopped mandating minimum

S.A.T. or A.C.T. scores, university athletic departments have been accepting more and more “student-athletes” who can barely do high-school work, much less handle college. Universities have created their own academic underclass, whose job is to play football and basketball — and whose academic goal isn’t to actually learn anything but merely to stay eligible. Hence “interdisciplinary studies.”

“If I had a degree from Memphis, I would feel my degree was devalued knowing that this student was given a passing grade with those papers,” [said Gerald Gurney, a professor at the University of Oklahoma](#). Gurney has some serious scholarship in this arena. He spent 31 years in athletic departments, most recently as the leader of academic support at Oklahoma. Although he is still at the university, he is no longer connected to the athletic department. Instead, he’s become a critic of college sports.

“Since the N.C.A.A. changed the standards,” he continued, “the gap between the average ‘specially admitted’ athlete and the average student in the classroom has gotten tremendously larger. We now have a cottage industry of learning specialists for athletes. I am a purist,” he added. “I believe the value of a college education is to teach students to think critically. It shouldn’t be for remedial reading.”

When I asked Bissinger what should be done about this growing problem, his answer was — to my ears, at least — appealingly hardheaded. Pay the players their scholarship money in cash, he replied. If the players used that money to get an education, great. If they decided they would rather spend it on a car, so be it. That won’t satisfy the purists, I realize, but it has the benefit of being honest. It doesn’t devalue everyone else’s degree.

As for Dasmine Cathey, he told me that he was happy that he had gone to the University of Memphis. But he acknowledged that he “got more of a college experience than a college education.” Now working as a delivery man, he was determined to get those last few credits and graduate, he told me.

I congratulated him on learning to read. “Thanks,” he said. “The thing I have to work on now is understanding what I’m reading.”

Minding the Campus

The Trap of Minority Studies Programs

by John Ellis

When Naomi Schaefer Riley was fired by the *Chronicle of Higher Education* for her trenchant remarks on Black Studies programs, most of those who criticized the firing saw in it a display of the campus left's intolerance. Fair enough, but this episode also has a much broader meaning.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, large populations of poor immigrants arrived in the U.S.—Irish, Italians, and Jews from Russia and Poland. Their extreme poverty placed them at the bottom of the social ladder, and they were often treated with contempt. Yet just a few generations later they were assimilated, and their rapid upward social mobility had produced mayors, senators, judges, and even Presidents from among their ranks. None of this could have happened without first-rate public education.

To be sure, they worked hard to get ahead, but they were not obstructed by something that afflicts the have-nots of today: as they walked through the school gates they were not met by people intent on luring them into Irish or Italian Studies programs whose purpose was to keep them in a state of permanent resentment over past wrongs at the hands of either Europeans or establishment America. Instead, they could give their full attention to learning. They took courses that informed them about their new land's folkways and history, which gave them both the ability and the confidence needed to grasp the opportunities it offered them.

When we compare this story with what is happening to minority students today, we see a tragedy. Just as Pinocchio went off to school with high hopes, only to be waylaid by J. Worthington Foulfellow, minority students are met on the way to campus by hard-left radicals who claim to have the interests of the newcomers at heart but in reality prey on them to advance their own selfish interests. Of course, what black students need is the same solid traditional education that had raised Irish, Italians, and Jews to full equality. But that would not serve the campus radicals' purpose. Disaffected radicals wanted to swell the ranks of the disaffected, not the ranks of the cheerfully upward mobile. Genuine progress for minority students would mean their joining and thus strengthening the mainstream of American society--the mainstream that campus radicals loathe.

Faculty radicals worked hard to put the kind of coursework that had served others so well out of the reach of minority students. They stigmatized those courses as Eurocentric, oppressive, and dominant-class oriented, and they worked successfully to remove them from curricular requirements. The very idea of upward mobility was made to appear a capitulation to the corrupt value system of the dominant class.

As thinkers, campus radicals are poor role models for students. Their ideas are simple and rigid, and they rely heavily on conspiracy thinking that infers far too much from too little. They are powered by emotional commitments that are highly resistant to the lessons of experience. As a result, their cherished ideas are now virtually obsolete, and strike any reasonably well-informed observer as downright silly. The minority students that they attract into their orbit are dragged down to this low intellectual level.

This background is the key to the fury that Naomi Schaefer Riley's criticisms of Black Studies dissertations unleashed. Radical leftists have achieved considerable influence on campus in part because they were able to add substantial numbers of incoming minorities to their numbers. They need those students in self-destructive Black Studies courses that keep them resentful and under-educated. But that is only possible if they can maintain the illusion that they help and support black students, rather than exploiting them. Ms Schaefer Riley was a threat to that illusion, and that is why she was attacked so vehemently.

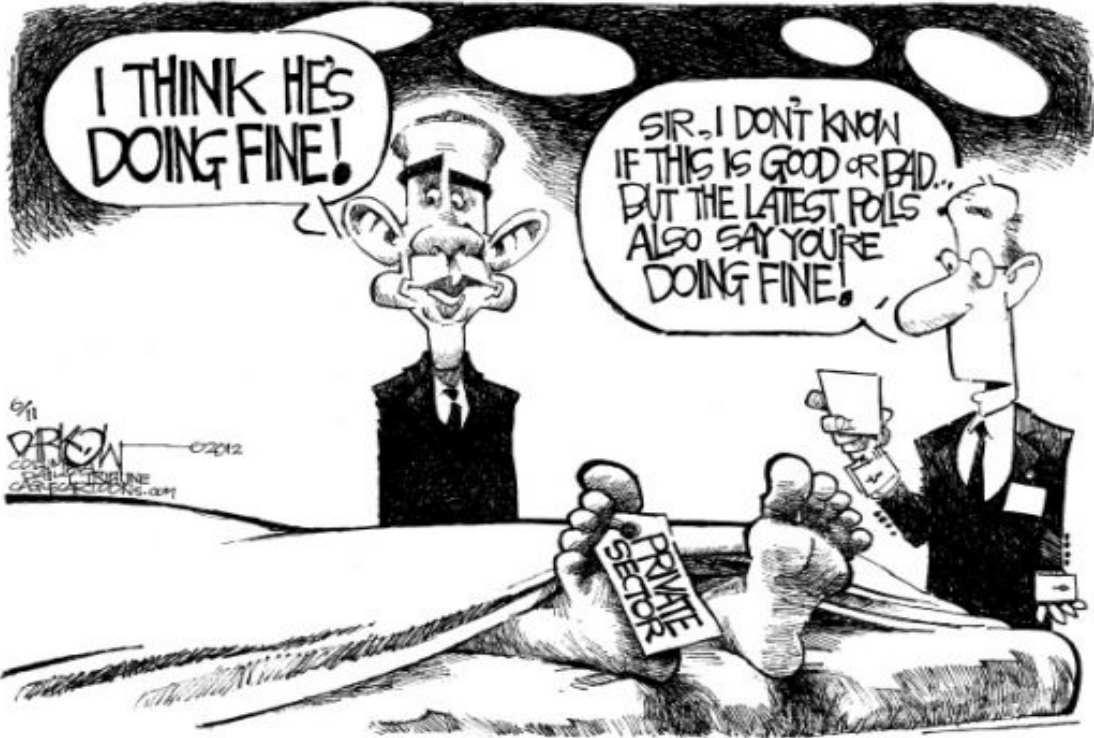
Black Studies does have one thing right: black students are indeed oppressed. What they have wrong is who is doing the oppressing. People of good-will on both sides of the political aisle should join together to insist that black students be given the same chance that other groups got to join the mainstream. This latest version of the plantation ought to be abolished.

John M Ellis is Professor Emeritus of German Literature at UC Santa Cruz, and President of the California Association of Scholars.



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