

Hispanics & the GOP

Michael Sean Winters | Feb. 22, 2010 NCR Today

The Washington Post ran both a [news column](#) [1] and an [op-ed](#) [2] the other day on the subject of the GOP's efforts to win back Hispanic voters. Between 1988 and 2008, the number of Hispanic voters grew from 16.1 million to 19.5 million, an increase of 21 percent and there is no sign that such growth will abate anytime soon. If you don't go out and bring more Hispanics to our party, the math isn't there to win, no matter what the other side does, Henry Bonilla, a former Republican congressman from Texas told the paper.

The problem, of course, is that there is no way to win Hispanics so long as the GOP is busy courting the Tea Party movement which includes more than its fair share of anti-immigrant racists. Former Congressman Tom Tancredo was one of the keynoters at the recent Tea Party convention and he has done more than any single Republican in the country to alienate his party from the fastest growing demographic in the electorate. As long as Republicans refuse to endorse comprehensive immigration reform, they do not stand a prayer with Latinos.

Kathleen Parker perceives a solution in the person of Marco Rubio, the Cuban-American candidate for Senate who was one of the stars at the recent CPAC convention. Parker is normally thoughtful so far as conservatives go: She does not believe that the President's birth certificate was faked, she does not believe that the current health care system is just dandy, and she does not endorse torture. But, boy did she get this one wrong. If you want to see most Hispanics get enraged about immigration, ask them about Cuba. Rubio may have an inspiring personal story, his parents fleeing communist Cuba and making a life for themselves and their family stateside. But, in that process the Rubios had a big advantage. Cubans are not treated like other Hispanics by the immigration system. If they touch American soil, they are given green cards automatically.

It will take more than a candidate with a name that ends in a vowel to win Hispanic voters.

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[1] <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/02/19/AR2010021902615.html?sub=AR>

[2] <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/02/19/AR2010021903043.html>