

Black Republicans offer hope after Barack Obama's failures on race - Telegraph

"My dad was gone by the time I was seven," the black candidate for the House of Representatives told a mixed group of students at Fort Dorchester High School in North Charleston. "I was flunking out of high school. I failed geography, civics, Spanish and English. When you fail Spanish and English, you are not bilingual, you are bi-ignorant."

But the conclusions that Scott, 45, drew were very different from those of Obama. When he was 15, a man who ran a Chick-fil-A fast-food restaurant taught him "that there was a way to think my way out of the worst conditions". Scott went on to become a small businessman and a proud "conservative Republican".

Barring a cataclysmic upset, Scott will be elected to Congress on November 2nd. There, he will be a ferocious opponent of Obama, to whom he gives a withering "failing grade" for his presidency.

"Obamacare's an atrocity around the necks of average Americans," he told me. "His intentions might be good but he's leading us towards the brink of bankruptcy. Right now, the American people are simply saying they've had enough."

Scott will be the first black Republican congressman from the Deep South in more than a century. Republicans hope to elect at least two other black candidates to Congress next month. Allen West, in Florida, and Ryan Frazier in Colorado, both with distinguished military records, are in very close races against Democrats.

There are currently 42 black members of Congress, all of them Democrats. Republicans haven't had a black congressman since J.C. Watts stood down in 2003. Ironically, opposition to the policies of the first black President on a whole range of economic and social issues are a key motivating factor for this new wave of black conservatives.

Rather than ushering in a post-racial era, Obama's election to the White House appears to have intensified racial divisions in America. This is not, as the Left asserts, because Right-wing opponents are full of white-hooded bigots who refuse to accept a black man as President. Obama's own strange myopia on race has played a big part.

Timothy Johnson, co-founder of the Frederick Douglass Foundation, a group that helps promote black Republican candidates, told me that that Obama was not scrutinised properly in the 2008 election because of his race.

"The election wasn't so much about what Obama brought to the table," said. "People voted for him because they wanted to feel good about themselves, that they weren't racist."

Johnson even argued, Mr Obama had set back the cause of race relations by playing down the white side of his heritage. "His mother was white, his father was a person of colour but every time there's a racial issue he plays the race card just the same as everyone else."

That's a tough charge to make, but Johnson has a point. When a white policeman arrested a black Harvard professor last year, Obama didn't wait to hear the facts before accusing the cop of acting "stupidly".

In a recent *Rolling Stone* interview, Obama gave a coded version of the standard liberal smear of the anti-tax Tea Party movement as being racist, referring its "darker" elements that "are troubled by what I represent as the president".

It's little wonder that a recent Rasmussen survey found that just 36 percent of voters now believe relations between blacks and whites are getting better, compared to 62 percent in July last year.

Scott, an avowed Tea Party supporter, dismisses the accusation that the movement is racist, saying: "this whole race issue is a diversion away from the real basic platform of the Tea Party".

For far too long, Republicans have ceded black votes to the Democrats and failed to recruit candidates like Scott to winnable congressional seats.

If Scott is the only black Republican on Capitol Hill in 2011, he will be all too easily marginalised and treated as a curiosity. That would be a shame because he has some interesting views on cutting the deficit and shrinking government.

"I've been black for a long time," Scott says wearily whenever he is asked about race. He wants to be judged on his character and policies rather than the colour of his skin. At Fort Dorchester, encouragingly enough, not one pupil asked Scott about race or why a black man would be a Republican.

Obama made history by winning the White House. But it will take the likes of Scott to break down the racial barriers in America that the first black president has been content to leave in place.

