

Erasing W

By Robert Reich



As Bill Clinton is resurrected by the Democrats, George W. Bush is being erased by the GOP - as if an entire eight years of American history hadn't happened.

While Bill Clinton stumps for Obama, Romney has gone out of his way not to mention the name of the president who came after Clinton and before Obama.

Clinton will have a starring role at the Democratic National Convention. George W. Bush won't even be at the Republican one - the first time a national party has not given the stage at its convention to its most recent occupant of the Oval Office who successfully ran for reelection.

The GOP is counting on America's notoriously short-term memory to blot out the last time the nation put a Republican into the Oval Office, on the reasonable assumption that such a memory might cause voters to avoid making the same mistake twice. As whoever-it-was once said, "fool me once ..." (and then mangled the rest).

Republicans want to obliterate any trace of the administration that told America there were weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and led us into a devastating war; turned a \$5 trillion projected budget surplus into a \$6 trillion deficit; gave the largest tax cut in a generation to the richest Americans in history; handed out a mountain of corporate welfare to the oil and gas industry, pharmaceutical companies, and military contractors like Halliburton (uniquely benefiting the vice president); whose officials turned a blind eye to Wall Street shenanigans that led to the worst financial calamity since the Great Crash of 1929 and then persuaded Congress to bail out the Street with the largest taxpayer-funded giveaway of all time.

Besides, the resemblances between George W. Bush and Mitt Romney are too close for comfort. Both were born into wealth, sons of prominent politicians who themselves ran for president; both are closely tied to the nation's corporate and financial elites, and eager to do their bidding; both are socially awkward and, as candidates, tightly scripted for fear of saying something they shouldn't; and both presented themselves to the nation devoid of any consistent policies or principles that might give some clue as to what they actually believe.

They are both, in other words, unusually shallow, uncurious, two-dimensional men who ran or are running for the presidency for no clear reason other than to surpass their fathers or achieve the aims and ambitions of their wealthy patrons.

Small wonder the Republican Party wants us to forget our last Republican president and his administration. By contrast, the Democrats have every reason for America to recall and celebrate the Clinton years.

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