



WASHINGTON WATCH
WITH ROLAND MARTIN

TRANSCRIPT

SHOW AIRING January 24, 2010

Host: Roland Martin

Guests: White House Senior Advisor David Axelrod

Associated Press News Editor Sonya Ross

***Roll Call TV* host/Comcast Network Bureau Chief Robert Traynham**

Democratic pollster Cornell Belcher

Democratic strategist Karen Finney

Hip-Hop Journalist Erik Parker

News One/Interactive One Chief Content Officer Smokey Fontaine



TV One – Washington Watch

K. Wills Transcripts

Contact/Producer: Jay Feldman

Host Roland Martin & TV One's "Washington Watch" -- January 24, 2010 Show

Story/Angle: "Washington Watch" – Massachusetts & the Obama Agenda, Haiti, etc.

**(HEAD-
LINES)**

MR. ROLAND MARTIN: At the top of our agenda this week: the upset victory of Republican Scott Brown in Massachusetts forces a major shift in President Barack Obama's agenda and political strategy; and finally the Obama administration is taking on the big banks just as the big bonuses are about to be paid. And the people of Haiti remain in dire need. What more can be done? We'll talk to a writer who was on the ground as the earthquake hit.

Our "Washington Watch" newsmaker this week: White House Senior Advisor David Axelrod on the pressures of the presidency now that the change President Obama campaigned for isn't happening as fast as the American people expected.

In our "Washington Watch" news panel, Sonya Ross, news editor for the Associated Press; Robert Traynham, host of "Roll Call TV" on the Comcast Network; Karen Finney, political strategist and former director of communications for the DNC, as well as MSNBC contributor; and Cornell Belcher, Democratic strategist and pollster.

And is the enthusiasm still there among America's youth, who were part of the Obama Movement, that put him in the White House?

[END OF SEGMENT.]

**(SEG-
MENT 1)**

MR. MARTIN: Joining me now on “Washington Watch” is White House Senior Advisor David Axelrod.

David, welcome to the show.

MR. DAVID AXELROD: Thank you.

MR. MARTIN: Before we –

MR. AXELROD: Good to be here.

MR. MARTIN: -- start talking about politics this week, I want to deal with the whole issue of Haiti in terms of what is happening there. So many people still need food and shelter. They need medicine. Should the United States have gone with the U.S. military at the outset, versus USAID, in order to put the infrastructure in to get the needed supplies there?

MR. AXELROD: Roland, I can tell you that I sat in the Situation Room at the White House as – shortly after this tragedy unfolded, and there were representatives of the military, of USAID and every – FEMA – every agency that could conceivably have an involvement in this, and all resources were deployed. The problem was that it took some time to move the necessary equipment and manpower into the region. There are some 14,000 troops there now, but we were told that, “No, it’s going to take a little while to get the aircraft carrier down there,” to do all the things that were necessary.

There – it’s been a massive mobilization, and now, you know, I think we’ve delivered -- 600,000 bottles of water, 400,000 meals. We’ve treated thousands of people for medical care. We’ve got search and rescue crews in there, and the military is very much there. But we – we – we moved as quickly as was humanly possible to

respond, and the President had, you know, really – would – could not have been clearer to everyone in that room that this was a top priority and that no – no time was to be spared.

MR. MARTIN: Lives are, obviously, still most important to be saved, but you have – some UN folks are saying there should be a Marshall Plan for Haiti. That's obviously long term, but should people be thinking along -- along those terms: how do you rebuild that country after this devastation?

MR. AXELROD: Well, I think that, obviously, the – the long term is a – is a concern, and not just a concern of ours, but a concern – should be a concern of the region and – and the international –

MR. MARTIN: Right.

MR. AXELROD: -- community. And there's no doubt we should – that we need to be thinking along – and we *are* thinking along, but the – the immediate crisis is so overwhelming, that the important thing right now is to get – is to get our emergency crews wherever they're needed.

MR. MARTIN: That's a crisis offshore in terms of what's happening in Haiti. Some folks say there's a crisis in the United States when it comes to the Democratic party. This week, a big upset in Massachusetts. Martha Coakley losing to Scott Brown. Have the American people lost confidence in this president a- -- and the Democratic party by controlling the House and controlling the Senate in terms of putting this country in the right direction? Because according to the polling numbers, they say it's not going in the right direction.

MR. AXELROD: Well, I don't know why anybody would feel like it was going in the right direction when we're in the middle of a terribly difficult economic time. We walked in the door into the greatest recession since the Great Depression, and we knew then – I told the President the day we got the economic forecast, which was mid-December, before he took office – I said, "Well, enjoy your poll numbers, because they're not going to be this way a year from now." You can't govern in an economy like this and maintain those numbers, because people understandably are – are – restless and – and eager for improvement – and a- -- as are we.

We've obviously made some improvement in the sense that we've broken the back of the – of the worst of the recession, but the storm did so much damage – 7 million jobs lost – that it's going to take some time. We knew that.

Now, in terms of Massachusetts, I *do* want to point out that Senator-elect Brown himself said that he didn't think the race was a referendum on the President. The President's approval numbers were actually quite high in Massachusetts.

MR. MARTIN: Those are –

MR. AXELROD: That's not –

MR. MARTIN: -- those are –

MR. AXELROD: -- not to say that there –

MR. MARTIN: -- those are *policies*. I mean the whole issue of the reaction to Wall Street – the anger there, in ter- -- in terms of healthcare – those things. I mean, look. The President came out strongly against the banks last week, but let's just be honest. We s- -- we heard nine months of, you know, "The bonuses are too high," but

there was not definitive action to target the banks, and I think people were saying, “Look. What are you going to *do*?”

MR. AXELROD: Roland, well, I – I would say this. We’ve been aware of – of this for some time. We knew back in the – when we came to office, we were told that the financial system was on the verge of collapse, that there was a real threat of another Great Depression. The previous administration started this TARP program to try and stabilize the banks. We, I think, managed it much more effectively, and we’ve gotten a lot of that money back, but we knew it wasn’t popular then. Who would be happy about having to stabilize an industry where the reckless speculation helped create the – the crisis that we’re all suffering through? We always understood that.

In terms of bonuses, we said then, and we took some tough steps then to say, “No short-term cash bonuses.” You know, “Put most of the money in stock. You have” – “You have to have a stake in the success of your company.” A lot of those firms followed that, but nobody can condone \$145 billion in bonuses in an environment like this.

MR. MARTIN: So much time and attention and political capital was put into healthcare, obviously. Looking back, was it a mistake not to be as – as – as focused in terms – and as *public* – when it came to the economy? And are you looking at changing the political strategy, knowing full well you’re not going to have the super majority in the Senate to be able to move legislation through in terms of combating a filibuster?

MR. AXELROD: Well, obviously, we need to consider what the implications of –

of the Republican strategy is. The Republican strategy in the Senate is to turn 50 into 60. In other words, no longer do you need a majority to carry the day in the Senate. You need 60 votes for everything, because the Republicans are filibustering every single bill, using a procedural device to slow everything down – *even stuff they support*. You know, they've slowed down for weeks bills that they then all *voted* for –

MR. MARTIN: Bu- -- bu- -- but –

MR. AXELROD: -- simply to disrupt the process. W- -- we need to call that out, and we need to – they need to explain to the American people whether throwing a wrench into everything at a – at a time of national emergency is the appropriate policy.

MR. MARTIN: -- but the Demo- –

MR. AXELROD: They –

MR. MARTIN: -- -crats –

MR. AXELROD: -- want – they want to win an election and take us back to the policies that got us into this mess in the first –

MR. MARTIN: -- but the –

MR. AXELROD: -- place.

MR. MARTIN: -- Democrats still have [an] 18-vote margin, and so, therefore, why is it that – why aren't the Democrats being even more aggressive? Because, look, President George W. Bush never had a[n] 18-vote margin in the Senate, and he was still able to get bills through. So, d- -- are the Democrats willing to be tough enough to go against the Republicans?

MR. AXELROD: Well, Roland, we – we've gotten some very difficult things

through, and *certainly* we're going to be willing – we're tough enough to challenge them on – o- -- on any matter, but the reality is that they have used the filibuster in ways that they've never been used before, and we're going to have to – we're going to have to work through what the implications of that are. If they continue in that strategy, we're going to have to have a public discussion about exactly what they're up to at a time, as I said, of great national need and great national emergency.

MR. MARTIN: All right. Going back – a- -- again, when it comes to political strategy –

MR. AXELROD: Yes.

MR. MARTIN: -- looking back, how do you then move forward? Because Republicans are saying, "Work with us," but we've heard "no," "no," "no" all year. Is the President going to pull them in and begin to truly make this whole – reach this whole notion of bipartisanship? Or, do you expect Republicans to continue on –

MR. AXELROD: Well, we're –

MR. MARTIN: -- the path that –

MR. AXELROD: -- we – we're – look, we're going to give them the opportunity to be as good as their word, but we're prepared that they're – that they may *not* be. If, in fact, they want to slow down health insurance reform, the question is, "Give us your plan to deal with the problem of people who have preexisting conditions, who can't get insurance." "Give us your plan to deal with rescission, so that when people get sick they don't get thrown off their insurance." "Give us your plan to" – "to cap the po-" – "out-of-pocket expenses for people, so if they get seriously ill, they won't go broke."

“Give us your plan to deal with all these problems that ‘re afflicting middle-class people and - a- and others all over this country.”

MR. MARTIN: Now, that’s Republicans. How do you deal with your own party? It seems that – that the President and the administration is – is dealing with a Democratic party that has no understanding of unity. You have folks with all kind[s] of different ideas in the House and the Senate, and so i- -- in many ways, your problem with healthcare this year wasn’t with Republicans; it was trying to pull your own party together. How do you make it happen with so many of them saying now every seat’s now in play, and they’re all freaking out because of what happened in Massachusetts?

MR. AXELROD: Well, let me say this. You know, I – I understand the – the nature of politics. I understand that events shape people, and this is a – this is a – a scary event for people. I don’t think the answer is to be timid. I don’t think the answer is to run in another direction. The – th- -- our efforts on health insurance reform were the most – they – they were valuable, they were important, and they – and when you tell people –

MR. MARTIN: Right.

MR. AXELROD: -- what was in the bill, they’re well appreciated. But what’s going to happen is if we don’t move forward, and we don’t produce something, the American people are going to believe the caricature that was –

MR. MARTIN: On healthcare.

MR. AXELROD: -- drawn by Republicans and the health insurance industry. I think that’s a terrible mistake. Pass the bill, and when people realize that they have

new power relative to their insurance companies; when they realize that, if they're a senior citizen, they've got new coverage on prescription drugs – no more huge donut hole; when people realize there's a cap on their out-of-pocket expenses, let – let the opponents of health insurance reform say, "No. We want to take that away from you." That would be good politics.

MR. MARTIN: 'Bout 30 seconds. Are we going to see the President strike a populist tone in his State of the Union address Wednesday night?

MR. AXELROD: Roland, the President of the United States ran for president to – to – to – to create jobs, but also to raise incomes, to make sure that this economy works for everyone, and not just a fortunate few. And he will address that in the State of the Union.

MR. MARTIN: Okay. We'll see what happens next. David Axelrod, we certainly appreciate it. Thanks a lot.

MR. AXELROD: Great. Great to be with you.

MR. MARTIN: Folks, the mood of the country seems angry and frustrated with Washington and the President. How will that affect the President's plans and policies? Our "Washington Watch" panel this week: Sonya Ross, of the Associated Press; Robert Traynham, host of "Roll Call TV"; Karen Finney, Democratic political strategist; and Cornell Belcher, a pollster in the Obama campaign – they're all talking about that and much more. Plus, heartbreak from Haiti. We'll talk to a journalist who is using the Internet to let people know that help is still needed in Haiti.

[END OF SEGMENT.]

**(SEG-
MENT 2)**

MR. MARTIN: As we said, a decidedly Democratic state elects a Republican, the polling on the President's policies are trending down, and what is the country saying to the White House, and what should the President do about it?

Our "Washington Watch" Panel this week: Sonya Ross, of the Associated Press; Robert Traynham, host of "Roll Call TV"; Karen Finney, Democratic political strategist and MSNBC contributor; and Cornel Belcher, pollster with us as well, and talking about a number of different issues.

Folks, welcome to the show. Sonya, you're the newbie over here.

[CHUCKLING.]

MR. MARTIN: That's right. Everybody else has been here before. Let's –

MS. SONYA ROSS: [Crosstalk] –

MR. MARTIN: -- jump –

MS. ROSS: -- your definition of "newbie."

MR. MARTIN: Yeah, you a newbie! You a newbie!

[LAUGHTER.]

MR. MARTIN: So, we're gonna *haze* you on this show!

Let's get right to it. Michael Dukakis ran on the "Massachusetts miracle." After this election this week, we call it the "Massachusetts *mess*." Democrats are *all over* the place, trying to figure out what the heck happened. First of all, *how the hell* do you lose Ted Kennedy's seat?

[LAUGHTER.]

MR. MARTIN: So- --

MR. ROBERT TRAYNHAM: You lose --

MS. KAREN FINNEY: Sounds like --

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- it --

MS. FINNEY: -- well, you lose it --

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- well, it's not Ted Kennedy's seat; it's the *people's* seat, and that's one of the reasons --

MR. MARTIN: -- Ted Kennedy had the seat 47 years --

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- that's one of the reasons --

MR. MARTIN: -- so you know what I'm talking about.

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- that's one of the reasons why Scott Brown won. Look, there's three camps that 're out there in the Democratic party right now. There is a camp out there that's blaming the White House for not parachuting in, in the beginning and saying, "Look, Ms. Coakley, we're going to take over this race. You *have* to win this race 'cause it's Massachusetts, where Democrats outnumber 9 to 1." There's a second camp out there that says, "You know what?" These are the Blue Dog Democrats that 're saying, "You know what? We actually screwed this up. We" -- "We did not listen to the American people. This is exactly" -- "*not* exactly what they want when it comes to healthcare." And the third camp is the folks out there that is blaming the Coakley campaign for messing up a *horrible*, horrible race.

The fact of the matter is that she did not campaign until the last minute. She did

horrible in her debate prep. She *assumed* that this was the “Kennedy seat” and, by default, her seat because she was a Democrat. And if you look at it, it’s a circular firing squad. They’re all to blame.

MS. FINNEY: Well, I think if we take a step back, there’re a couple of things – right? There’s plenty of blame to go around, but any –

MR. MARTIN: Rightfully so.

MS. FINNEY: -- rightfully so, and everybody who deserves it should take their – their piece. *But* the big trend is this is a year where we know that the anti-incumbent and anti-establishment sentiment is growing. Any mood like that – you have to work hard. You have to show up and do the work. Some would say that Coakley didn’t do enough of that and took it for granted. Complacency is a sin in American politics. We know that, and the voters spoke up.

The other thing, though, that I think we have to look at – and this is something Cornell and I worked on when I was at the DNC – and that is if you look at the coalition of voters that President Obama put together: young, African-American, Hispanic, moderates, independents – those voters consider themselves Obama voters. They do not consider themselves core, base Democratic party voters, meaning in this election cycle they are up for grabs for whoever –

MR. TRAYNHAM: A- --

MS. FINNEY: -- will make the –

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- bu- -- bu- --

MS. FINNEY: -- the arguments that – [crosstalk].

MR. CORNELL BELCHER: And they like – and they liked the insurgent campaign – candidate. Look, what happened two years – what happened a year ago with Obama is the insurgent, change candidate won, and what we’re seeing right now is insurgent, change candidates winning. The- -- you know, change isn’t – isn’t partisan. It doesn’t have a “D” or an “R” in front of it.

MR. MARTIN: [Crosstalk]- --

MR. TRAYNHAM: But – but it – but it –

MS. FINNEY: But I –

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- seems –

MS. FINNEY: -- think –

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- this is *Massachusetts*. This is a state – as you alluded to a few moments ago –

MR. MARTIN: With –

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- that ---

MR. MARTIN: -- 51 percent independent voters –

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- well –

MR. MARTIN: -- so that – so that –

MS. FINNEY: -- [crosstalk]- --

MR. MARTIN: -- 9 to 1 – that 9 to 1 issue, frankly, I think – [unintelligible]* – the window there, because, again, even the makeup of that state has changed. But – but – but let me get to this point in terms of wha- -- what I think that you have to confront. I was told point-blank Black radio stations were not even called in Boston, in

Massachusetts, until the *day of*.

MS. FINNEY: *Sure*.

MR. MARTIN: There were many Black –

MS. FINNEY: They didn't –

MR. MARTIN: -- voters –

MS. FINNEY: -- *know* 'er.

MR. MARTIN: -- core Democratic voters, who said, "Oh! This is the first phone call we've gotten from anybody in the campaign."

Sonya, do you see a[n] issue in terms of you have a Democratic party that seems to be so focused on reelecting President Obama in 2012, and they are ignoring 2009, '10 and '11?

MS. ROSS: The thing about the Massachusetts election that every politician – Democrat, Republican, libertarian, socialist, Green Party: they failed to recognize the depth of the angst of the voter. The voters have been restive well before the decision for Ted Kennedy to leave his seat. They were restive *long* before Barack Obama ran for president. The depth of it is so *deep*, that it transcends Democratic party boundaries, Republican party –

MR. TRAYNHAM: Well –

MS. ROSS: -- boundaries.

MS. FINNEY: [Crosstalk] –

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- Roland – [crosstalk]- --

MS. ROSS: They demonstrated that with fervor in Massachusetts this past week

—

MS. FINNEY: -- but it -- [crosstalk]- --

MS. ROSS: -- and it'll happen to *Republicans*. It'll happen to liber- --

MS. FINNEY: -- that's --

MS. ROSS: -- -tarians.

MS. FINNEY: -- right.

MS. ROSS: It'll happen --

MR. MARTIN: It can happen --

MS. ROSS: -- to *anyone*.

MR. MARTIN: -- to *anybody*.

MS. FINNEY: -- but, you know, there was a -- there was a message that was -- that was sent by the voters in New York 23 earlier this year, when the Republican party there tried to tell people, "Here's who your candidate's going to be," and the voters said, "No. We're" -- "You're not going to tell us who our candidate's going to be. We're going to tell *you* who we want our candidate to be." So, the lesson has been there, and the message has been there -- for *both* parties.

I *will* say that I think the Democratic Party has not done a good enough job in communicating sort of what we're doing and why it's relevant in people's lives. And I actually think it's not just the Democratic Party, but -- you've heard me say this before -- if you were someone in Columbus, Ohio, and you turned on the television in the last six months, and you saw the bickering that has been going on, on Capitol Hill under the guise of "negotiating," you -- you know, you'd be like, "Why can't we just get something

done?"

[CROSSTALK.]

MS. FINNEY: People are *hurting* out there.

[CROSSTALK.]

MS. ROSS: Every strategist out there has officially been put on notice by the American voters.

MR. TRAYNHAM: Well, you know what – [crosstalk]- --

MS. ROSS: "You can't do it the way you've been doing it all along, or we" –

MS. FINNEY: That's right.

MS. ROSS: -- "are going to jack" –

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- that's right.

MS. ROSS: -- "you up and – [crosstalk]."

MR. MARTIN: But – but that also –

MR. TRAYNHAM: [Crosstalk.]

MR. MARTIN: -- applies to this president.

MS. FINNEY: That's *right*.

MR. MARTIN: It also even applies to this president because, again, you look at the polling data. You have 34 percent of folks who say that we are "headed in the right direction," 54 percent saying "wrong track" –

MR. TRAYNHAM: Roland –

MR. MARTIN: -- when they elected – elected President Obama to – to *put* us on the right track.

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- Roland, the -- the losses in Massachusetts and Virginia and New Jersey -- Karen and I were discussing this a few moments ago -- is the gift that keeps on giving for the Democrats. Here's why. It's an enormous wakeup call for the Democratic Party that says, "Oh, my goodness! We have to fix this, and we have to fix this before the 2010 general elections and for 2012." No White House gets these -- these type of --

MS. ROSS: That's right.

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- of -- of wakeup calls. This is *great* --

MS. FINNEY: [Crosstalk] --

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- for them.

MR. MARTIN: Speaking of a wakeup call, what does that now mean for healthcare? Because I -- you have all the dancing going on. You have folks -- moderate Democrats who're saying, "Look, let's just dial it back. Let's take our time. Let's start over." But then you still have progressives and liberals who're saying, "No. We still have the votes. The guy hasn't been seated. Push this thing through." And I'll be honest with you. I think if the situation was reversed, and Republicans had 60 votes, and they were about to lose a super majority, they would *not* be having this conversation. They would be voting on a healthc- --

MR. TRAYNHAM: But you know why?

MS. FINNEY: They'd be --

MR. TRAYNHAM: But you know why?

MR. MARTIN: -- voting on a bill, pushing it through --

MS. FINNEY: -- [crosstalk]. Yes.

MR. TRAYNHAM: [Crosstalk] –

MR. MARTIN: -- because – because they have *guts!*

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- well, because they have a *spine*.

MR. MARTIN: Democrats need –

MR. TRAYNHAM: Well –

MR. MARTIN: -- political Viagra.

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- w- -- well – well, let me --

MR. MARTIN: That's their *problem!*

[CHUCKLING.]

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- let me tell you. Let me – let me tell you why. It's because they have – they – Republicans had someone in the White House – love 'im or hate 'em – that had a spine, and that they knew what – whatever –

MR. MARTIN: Oh, I *agree!*

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- he w- -- whatever –

[CROSSTALK.]

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- he – whatever he – whatever he was going to say –

[CROSSTALK.]

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- he –

MS. ROSS: So, you're saying –

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- meant it.

MS. ROSS: -- "Grow a pair"?

MR. MARTIN: There – *absolutely!*

MR. BELCHER: No, no, no. See –

MS. ROSS: You're tellin' the –

MR. BELCHER: -- you – you – you –

MS. ROSS: -- President to grow a pair?

MR. BELCHER: -- had – you had someone in the White House who was – who
– who brought those kind[s] of policies, and it divided the country. If Democrats pushed
–

MR. TRAYNHAM: That's not –

MR. BELCHER: -- through this –

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- my point.

MR. BELCHER: -- legislation right now – well, y- -- y- -- that – I – that's what I
saw as the point. If the Democrats pushed through this legislation right now, it is
politics as usual. What Barack Obama, the President, has said – has stepped back
and said, "No, we're not going to play politics as usual, because the politics as usual – it
hasn't been working."

MS. FINNEY: But it –

MR. BELCHER: So, the Democrats –

MR. MARTIN: But here's – here's the –

MR. BELCHER: -- can't play that –

MS. FINNEY: -- [crosstalk] –

MR. MARTIN: -- but here's his problem.

MR. BELCHER: -- ugly political game.

MR. MARTIN: His base i- -- his base *is the left*, and they're saying, "Wait a minute. You spent an entire year on healthcare. If you come way with *nothing*, what do you have to show for it?"

MR. BELCHER: We haven't[?] left[?] --

MR. TRAYNHAM: Roland --

MR. BELCHER: -- the base.

MS. FINNEY: But here -- but here's --

MR. BELCHER: We --

MS. FINNEY: -- the reality.

MR. BELCHER: -- haven't.

MS. FINNEY: We're -- here's the reality. I think -- we will get something, and it's going to be -- it's not going to be healthcare reform, but let's be honest. Reform has been off the table for a long time. I mean now what we're talking about is potentially incremental changes. There *are* some things that can be done that I -- where I think there *is* agreement in terms of preexisting conditions and not being -- not being forced off your insurance, if you lose your job. I mean there're some small things that I think we will get done, which we *should* get done, which, if the Democrats had any guts, they *would* put it to a vote and make the Republicans have to sit and vote *against* --

[CROSSTALK.]

MS. FINNEY: -- it.

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- the White House, bu- -- bu- --

MS. ROSS: -- the average person said, when they sat down and looked at all of this on television, when they called their congressman and --

MR. BELCHER: "What a hot mess."

MS. ROSS: -- saw the -- they said, "I" -- "I've *heard* this mess before. This has gone on before." The w- --

[CROSSTALK.]

MS. ROSS: We're a decade removed, and we're doing the exact --

MR. MARTIN: Now --

MS. ROSS: -- same --

MR. MARTIN: -- now -- now --

MS. ROSS: -- thing.

MR. MARTIN: -- here's what's interesting. You said this has gone on before. O- -- obviously, you're referencing President Bill Clinton, when healthcare failed. Who was the common denominator between healthcare failing with President Bill Clinton --

[CHUCKLING.]

MR. MARTIN: -- and President Obama? Chief of staff Rahm Emanuel. So, let me throw this question out. Is it time for Rahm Emanuel to go?

MR. TRAYNHAM: Well, look. W- -- what -- what you saw after the 1994 elections in the Clinton White House is he said, "Okay. The country is sending me a message. I have to govern from the center." And what did he do? Not only did he move to the center philosophically and politically, but he also changed his staff.

MR. MARTIN: Okay.

MR. TRAYNHAM: He brou- --

MR. MARTIN: After --

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- he brought in David Gergen.

MR. MARTIN: -- after they --

MR. TRAYNHAM: He brou- --

MR. MARTIN: -- after they lost the healthcare deal, Emanuel was out.

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- tha- --

MR. MARTIN: And so you have Democrats on the Hill saying right now, "Here's a guy who did not play it right, who blew the strategy, and it's put the President" --
[CROSSTALK.]

MR. MARTIN: -- "in a bad position." Should Emanuel stay in his job or go? Yes or no?

MR. TRAYNHAM: Rahm Emanuel is already on record as saying that the chief of staff job is about a 14-month job. If -- simple math will tell you that he - -- according to his own terminology --

MR. MARTIN: Robert --

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- he -- he will --

MR. MARTIN: -- Robert --

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- be out --

MR. MARTIN: -- I'm asking --

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- by the spring.

MR. MARTIN: -- *you*. Yes or no?

MR. TRAYNHAM: Yes.

MS. FINNEY: Time for some change in the White House –

MR. TRAYNHAM: [Chuckles.]

MS. FINNEY: -- no question.

MR. MARTIN: Should Emanuel stay or go?

MS. FINNEY: It's probably time. He's already *said* he's going to go, though, at the end of the summer, so –

MR. TRAYNHAM: Solves –

MS. FINNEY: -- it's already happening.

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- the problem.

MR. MARTIN: Should Emanuel stay or go?

MS. ROSS: Will it make a difference?

MR. MARTIN: But I'm – well –

MS. ROSS: With the cli- --

MR. BELCHER: Yes.

MS. ROSS: -- -mate we have?

MR. MARTIN: -- well –

MS. FINNEY: But – but, you know, here's the – [crosstalk] –

MR. MARTIN: -- [crosstalk]- --

MS. ROSS: -- with the climate –

MR. MARTIN: -- no, no, no –

MS. ROSS: -- that we have –

[CROSSTALK.]

MR. MARTIN: -- no, no, no, no, no, no. I want everyone to answer my question. Cornell, stay or go?

MS. FINNEY: Stay or go?

MR. BELCHER: Look. Politics is –

MS. FINNEY: [Chuckles.] If I said it, you can –

[CHUCKLING.]

MR. BELCHER: -- we're – we're –

MS. FINNEY: -- say it!

MR. BELCHER: -- no. No, he shouldn't go, 'cause I don't think he'd fi- -- I don't think that fixes the problem, 'cause –

MR. MARTIN: Okay.

MR. BELCHER: -- 'cause – 'cause it –

MS. FINNEY: I agree with that.

MR. BELCHER: -- is about poli- -- it's about politics, not about policy. The problem is we've got the politics wrong. And this sounds like crazy to me, but – but, you know, this is a – thi- -- policy – politics is about culture, not about policy. Power for governing *is* about policy. We have gotten the politics on this wrong. Democrats are *horrible* at politics. Republicans are very good at politics; however, they're very poor at policy. The policies that the Democrats are trying to put forward would actually benefit the country; however, we have handled the politics on this very wrong, 'cause Republicans have been able to define the healthcare debate in a way – with *crazy* stuff,

like death panels, which – which isn't in there. So –

MR. MARTIN: Right.

MR. BELCHER: -- we – we -- put the –

MR. MARTIN: But they beat –

MR. BELCHER: -- the politics –

MR. MARTIN: -- Democrats to the punch –

MR. BELCHER: -- out there, but it has been –

MR. MARTIN: -- and they –

MR. BELCHER: -- a debacle.

MR. MARTIN: -- actually have now defined what change is, and now Democrats are saying, "We don't even *know*" –

MS. FINNEY: Here's the problem.

MR. MARTIN: -- "what change looks" –

MS. FINNEY: Here's the problem.

MR. MARTIN: -- "like."

MS. FINNEY: Wait a second.

MR. MARTIN: -- Karen, go ahead.

MS. FINNEY: Obama came to Washington to try to do something different. If any- -- if there was a flaw in that, that was treating Congress like a group of adults, because that is not the kind of behavior that we've got in members of Congress. So, I –

MR. MARTIN: So – so –

MS. FINNEY: -- agree with what*? –

MR. MARTIN: -- so, are you saying --

MS. FINNEY: -- so --

MR. MARTIN: -- he did not exer- -- exert the leadership --

MS. FINNEY: -- no, I think --

MR. MARTIN: -- that he --

MS. FINNEY: -- he ex- --

MR. MARTIN: -- should have?

MS. FINNEY: -- I think he expected that Congress -- that Republicans wouldn't abdicate their responsibility to this country and that Democrats would be able to get their act together and help --

MR. MARTIN: But if you --

MS. FINNEY: -- get something --

MR. MARTIN: -- but -- but --

MS. FINNEY: -- back.

MR. MARTIN: -- if you have a super majority in the House, and you have the majority in the Senate --

MS. FINNEY: But even -- [crosstalk] --

MR. MARTIN: -- t- -- t- -- cou- -- can't --

MS. FINNEY: -- [crosstalk] --

MR. MARTIN: -- you get *something* through? It's part --

MS. FINNEY: You -- you --

MR. MARTIN: -- of the pr- --

MS. FINNEY: -- *should*.

MR. MARTIN: -- but is a part of the real problem here that you can't even get any kind of consensus among your own party?

MR. BELCHER[?]*: That's the issue. That is the main issue.

MS. FINNEY: But here's -- and my point -- I agree with that, but my point is the President takes some responsibility for that, but Congress takes some responsibility for that, too.

MR. TRAYNHAM: If --

MS. FINNEY: Ev- -- there is a -- like I said, plenty of blame to go around. We've spent the last year negotiating about healthcare, when we should've gotten something done. I think it is a mistake to think that it's simply a Democratic problem, or a Republican problem, 'cause I think the people are angry about not getting something done.

MR. TRAYNHAM: Roland --

MS. FINNEY: Results *matter*.

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- Roland --

MR. MARTIN: Robert?

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- I had a Democratic U.S. senator on the show a couple of weeks ago, and he said privately, "We want to be led. Just lead us to where we're supposed to go." And I think that was a signal to the White House that says, "Tell us what you want us to do. We may not agree with it, but at least lead us in a certain way. Be a leader here, and force us to make a decision."

MR. BELCHER: And, Roland –

MS. ROSS: Also, don't –

MR. BELCHER: -- we've got to bring the –

MS. ROSS: -- discount –

MR. BELCHER: -- movement back. We've got to bring the mo- -- we've got to

–

MR. MARTIN: A- -- a- -- and –

MR. BELCHER: -- bring the movement back.

MR. MARTIN: -- a- -- and I -- I want to –

MR. TRAYNHAM: [Crosstalk]?

MR. MARTIN: -- and, really – I want to – I want to –

MR. BELCHER: We've go- -- we've to bring –

MR. MARTIN: -- I want to bring up a point that –

MR. BELCHER: -- the movement –

MR. MARTIN: -- you made, 'cause I – I –

MR. BELCHER: -- back.

MR. MARTIN: -- a- -- and the White House hates when I say this, but I keep *saying* it. The Obama Movement has now turned into the Obama *Moment*. They absolutely – the people who they rolled in with – they've simply le- -- left them at the station, walked into the White House –

MR. BELCHER: I agree.

MR. MARTIN: -- remained the same, did not keep them galvanized, involved.

And then all of a sudden, when they got in trouble, it was sort of like, “We’ll turn the thing on,” and they’re back. *They weren’t there.*

MS. ROSS: -- well, don’t discount the –

MR. TRAYNHAM: Well[?] – [crosstalk] –

MS. FINNEY: Well –

MS. ROSS: -- fact that we *are* dealing with a new presidency, and this is typical of new presidencies.

MR. MARTIN: But he- -- here’s what – now, here’s my example. I speak all around the country, especially at a lot of Black college campuses. Early on, whenever you even *mentioned* President Barack Obama, [the] room erupts. Room – folks start clapping; erupts. Last six months, mention the President’s name, tepid applause, not much response. And when I begin to talk to folks, they begin to say, “I don’t really know what’s going on.” They seem to –

[CROSSTALK.]

MR. MARTIN: -- they seem to have walked away –

MR. BELCHER: [Crosstalk] --

MR. MARTIN: -- from talking and dealing with –

MR. BELCHER: -- governing.

MR. MARTIN: -- no, no. It’s governing, but that’s still the people who put –

MR. BELCHER: No, but you –

MR. MARTIN: -- you there –

MR. BELCHER: -- have to work your –

MR. TRAYNHAM: Roland –

MR. BELCHER: -- base, 'cause you know what? If those people go, this presidency is in a lot of trouble, 'cause if the base of our party s- -- begins to slip away, especially the blacker and browner and younger vote that put – quite frankly, put him over the top in a lot of these states – if that goes, this presidency –

MR. TRAYNHAM: The Obama –

MR. BELCHER: -- is in a lot of trouble.

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- Administration has tried to stoke their base *through* healthcare –

MR. BELCHER: *No, they* –

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- through –

MR. BELCHER: -- *haven't!*

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- through – yes, they *have* – through these populist –

MR. MARTIN: You know, Robert?

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- through –

MR. MARTIN: Robert –

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- these pop- --

MR. MARTIN: -- I'll be honest with you.

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- through these populist –

MR. MARTIN: I'll be honest with you. When you ta- -- when you s- -- with African-Americans, I can tell you –

MR. BELCHER: No, they haven't.

MR. MARTIN: -- you were at the very -- I --

MR. TRAYNHAM: I'm not --

MR. MARTIN: -- there were -- there were town hall meetings in Black neighborhoods that were *all-White!*

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- Roland, you're missing --

MR. MARTIN: So, I don't --

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- my point.

MR. MARTIN: -- know who they were --

MR. TRAYNHAM: Roland -- Roland --

MR. MARTIN: -- talking to --

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- you're missing --

MR. MARTIN: -- as their base.

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- my point. They tried to do it. It's not working, but the- -- th- -- in -- in their mind, they're -- they've tried to stoke their base through po- -- through populist things such as the bank reform stuff, through healthcare and through -- through some other things. The issue here is that the American people -- even their base -- are not even buying it.

MR. MARTIN: Sonya --

MS. ROSS: The Black community --

MR. MARTIN: -- So- -- Sonya, he --

[CROSSTALK.]

MR. TRAYNHAM: Massachusetts is --

[CROSSTALK.]

MS. FINNEY: [Crosstalk] –

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- a prime example of that.

MS. ROSS: -- the Black community is wracked with angst right now because of *unemployment*. It –

MR. MARTIN: Now.

MS. ROSS: -- it's far less about healthcare. We want that, yeah. Black people are like, "I can use some healthcare," but –

[CHUCKLING.]

MS. ROSS: -- *jobs!*

[LAUGHTER.]

MR. MARTIN: No, but – but – [unintelligible] – a job.

MS. ROSS: *It's about* –

MR. MARTIN: Now –

MS. ROSS: -- *jobs!*

MR. MARTIN: -- now – now – now – now –

[CROSSTALK.]

MR. MARTIN: -- now, now, S- -- now, Sonya, Robert mentioned banks. Now all of a sudden, you see the President getting tough with the banks – I think nine months late. Frankly, we did a commentary on this show where we said, "Look, time to kick some ass when it came to Wall Street."

MR. TRAYNHAM: [Chuckles.]

MR. MARTIN: Now all of a sudden, they're actually *doing* it. We see – some folks are saying that Treasury Secretary Tim Geithner is now stepping back. Pau- -- Paul Volker is stepping up. Is this president going to step out when it comes to the State of the Union, and it's going to be about economy, economy, economy?

MS. ROSS: Whatever he steps out there with on the economy, it has to be *strong* –

MR. TRAYNHAM: He's going to mention –

MS. ROSS: -- but –

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- healthcare, and then he's going to very quickly pivot to the economy, 'cause at the end of the day, the exit polling showed in New Jersey, Virginia and a little bit of Massachusetts it's about the economy –

MS. FINNEY: [Crosstalk]- --

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- it's about jobs.

MR. MARTIN: Karen?

MS. FINNEY: -- I think the President's going to have to lay out a vision – not just talk about the economy, but say, "Here's where we've been over the course of the na-"
– "in the last year. Here's where I'm trying to go," because part of the problem is there's been this disconnect from the conversation here in Washington and what people are experiencing out on Main Street. To what you just said, you co- -- travel around the country. People don't know what's going on. They don't understand what it is we're trying to accomplish back here. He's got to lay that out clearly for –

MR. MARTIN: And, Cornell –

MS. FINNEY: -- people

MR. MARTIN: -- you mentioned the policy and the politics. This president -- loath to use emotion, loath to connect with folks that way. Many people say detached, more of a technocrat. Is he going to have to use the State of the Union to bring the emotional response, to connect with the person sitting at home so they say, "He gets me"?

MR. BELCHER: Listen, I -- I've watched, you know, this presidency over the I -- over -- over the last two years. I was there when he was down 30 points in every state. No one is better at -- at -- at big moments. I -- you know, when he -- when he took over Iowa, it was a huge moment. No one is better at -- at big moments than this president. You're going to see this president get bi- -- as big, and -- and just like in the campaign, whenever we got in trouble --

MR. MARTIN: Right?

MR. BELCHER: -- it wasn't the consultants who -- who bailed out the campaign. It was Barack Obama who got bigger than the moment --

MR. MARTIN: Well --

MR. BELCHER: -- and he'll do that now.

MR. MARTIN: -- well, we've got a big moment. It's called a commercial break.

All right?

[LAUGHTER.]

MR. MARTIN: Sonya, Robert, Karen, Cornell, we certainly appreciate it. Thanks a bunch.

MR. BELCHER: Thank you.

MR. MARTIN: All right, folks. Still ahead: an eyewitness from Haiti shares the horror and the hope, but next, college students in New Orleans on how President Obama scores with them one year after taking office.

[END OF SEGMENT.]

**(SEG-
MENT 3)**

MR. MARTIN: I was in New Orleans this week, and I was speaking to students at Tulane University. I gathered a group from Tulane, Xavier and Dillard and talked politics and President Obama. They're on this week's "Obama Watch."

*[INSERT TRANSCRIPT OF VIDEO CLIP HERE – To Be Added]

MR. MARTIN: Up next, the people of Haiti persevere in the face of disaster, but more still needs to be done. We'll talk about that next with a journalist who's been to Haiti and is letting the world know what's going on.

[END OF SEGMENT.]

**(SEG-
MENT 4)**

MR. MARTIN: Money, medical aid, food and security are just some of the provisions still desperately needed in Haiti; and the best way to get them there is to donate to the Red Cross at RedCross.org. We welcome to "Washington Watch" hip-hop journalist Erik Parker, whose eye-opening accounts from the earthquake-ravaged Haiti is getting lots of hits on Twitter. He joins us here today.

Erik, how's it goin'?

MR. ERIK PARKER: Good, good. Thank you for –

MR. MARTIN: All right. Now –

MR. PARKER: -- having me.

MR. MARTIN: -- you were in Haiti on January 12th, when the earthquake hit.

First of all, why were you there?

MR. PARKER: Well, I was working on a story for *Vibe* magazine at the time, on the *restevek* conditions. These *restevek* are also sometimes called “child slaves.” What happens is people from the countryside who can’t afford to take care of their children will allow them to live with someone else, and they wind up losing touch with them, and they – the children wind up becoming indentured servants –

MR. MARTIN: Um-hum?

MR. PARKER: -- or some people say “slaves.” So, I was looking at that issue, and I was talking to a bunch of people in Haiti and looking at some families. And I think that issue was – it – it – it pretty much said everything about what – the problems are in Haiti. The countryside’s not developed. They need hospitals. They –

MR. MARTIN: Right.

MR. PARKER: -- need – they need – they need jobs. They need to develop the area. It kind of told of the story of Haiti through this – what is the problems of Haiti –

MR. MARTIN: You shot some video there. Let’s take a look at it.

[VIDEO CLIP.]

[SHOTS OF WAILING, CHAOS.]

MR. PARKER: Looks like there’re still some people trapped in homes here. I

think we should – we should probably see if we could give a helping hand here.

They're going to be fine, man. They're going to be fine.

This looks like the place that was hit. It seems like there're still people hurting here.

[PEOPLE ARE EXITING THE BUILDING, CHILDREN BEING CARRIED ON THE BACKS OF ADULTS.]

MR. PARKER: Hey – [unintelligible]. Hey, see if there's more. Ask if there's more.

INTERPRETER: [Asks a question in patois.]

MR. PARKER: Let's go. Let's go see if there's more. There's more. There's a man back here.

[SCREAMS, SHOUTS AS THE CHAOS CONTINUES.]

MR. PARKER: There's a man back here, as well. And we're gonna – let me get – lemme get – lemme get that.

INTERPRETER: We have to be careful because, you know – you know – you know –

MR. PARKER: I see. This is dangerous right here.

INTERPRETER: [Patois.]

MR. PARKER: You need help?

[BRIEF EXCHANGE IN PATOIS ABOUT THE SITUATION.]

INTERPRETER: There is people insi- -- here, inside.

MR. PARKER: Do they say they need help?

INTERPRETER: They – they need help.

MR. PARKER: Okay.

INTERPRETER: But –

MR. PARKER: I – I’m gonna be careful.

INTERPRETER: -- yeah, because, you know, it’s not done yet.

MR. PARKER: I *know*. I *know*. I’m gonna go in and out –

INTERPRETER: And I – I’m not sure –

MR. PARKER: -- really quick.

INTERPRETER: -- I’m not sure that –

MR. PARKER: I see the building –

INTERPRETER: -- those b- --

MR. PARKER: -- just seems to be dangerous, so I’m not gonna talk long. I’m just gonna go in there. Here – [unintelligible]. Hold this. Here! Here! Take this in case I don’t live through this [expletive].

[PARKER ENTERS THE RUBBLE. SOUNDS OF SCREAMING. MOMENTS LATER, HE EXITS, CARRYING A CHILD.]

[END OF VIDEO CLIP.]

MR. MARTIN: I mean certainly riveting video. We have seen so many different stories of folks being rescued, so – but – but that was the actual moment when it went down. But personally for you, how did it feel to be there at that moment, and experiencing that and seeing that firsthand?

MR. PARKER: Well, first, you[’ve] got to know I’m a journalist, so my first

inclination was two things. I have – as a journalist, I want to document, and as a human, you want to help –

MR. MARTIN: So, at –

MR. PARKER: -- at some point.

MR. MARTIN: -- which – which – at which point did the human side take over, when you said, “You know what? To hell with this. That kid needs to be saved”?

MR. PARKER: Well, the human side was there from the beginning. There were other people we actually helped out. You saw Vladimir Laguer, who was my translator during the time, working on the *restevék* story, who we were h- -- walking through the area [with], trying to see if we could help people. So, the human side kicked in immediately, and we actually helped some people earlier on, before – before I started videotaping. But then – then the journalist side kicked in and said, “I must start documenting.” So, I felt there was a[n] opportunity to do both.

MR. MARTIN: Let’s talk about documenting. You have some photos that you want to show us –

MR. PARKER: Yeah.

MR. MARTIN: -- that you shot there, as well.

MR. PARKER: Yeah. Well, just – you[‘ve] got to realize just – just three days before this happened – two days before this happened, on Sunday, there was the pre Carnivale.

MR. MARTIN: Right.

MR. PARKER: Now, people were running through the streets, having a great

time in – in Haiti at that time. We were in Port-au-Prince, and you could see this photo of people really having a good time.

MR. MARTIN: Right.

MR. PARKER: We were with this band in the back. You can see the bands – the big tuba in the back. That's the band called "Relax."

MR. MARTIN: Okay.

MR. PARKER: And then – and then just days a- -- days later, you see this – images of this. These are people pulling someone out of the rubble.

One thing to note, and I wanted to make very clear, was – because there's a lot of talk of looting, a lot of –

MR. MARTIN: Right.

MR. PARKER: -- talk of – you know, first Sanjay Gupta talked about there was a gunshot fired. But what I w- -- one thing I want to make clear was the first 48 hours, there were Haitians helping Haitians.

MR. MARTIN: Um-hum?

MR. PARKER: There *were* no authorities to be seen.

MR. MARTIN: Right.

MR. PARKER: *Anywhere*. So, you've seen images like –

MR. MARTIN: Because the author- --

MR. PARKER: -- this –

MR. MARTIN: -- the authorities were also affected by the earthquake.

MR. PARKER: -- the authorities were affected by the earthquake. So, I mean I

– what – what I’m trying to get out is that people were really compassionate and helping one another for the first 48 hours. And then, naturally, there comes to be some angst and some – some – some – some natural – some natural angst that comes out.

MR. MARTIN: Yeah, but – but al- -- but also, I mean this whole notion of looting. Look. When you’re in survival mode –

MR. PARKER: That’s not –

MR. MARTIN: -- when you don’t –

MR. PARKER: -- looting!

MR. MARTIN: -- when you don’t have food, you don’t have water, you were trying to survive. And so – and so that’s nonsense to me to say folks are “looting.” It’s different if there were supplies there and food there, but no. You were trying to survive, trying to feed your family, trying to take care of yourself. And so – and so I think a lot of journalists who keep fo- -- who – who’ve been talking about that – that’s absolutely *ridiculous* –

MR. PARKER: That’s ridiculous.

MR. MARTIN: -- focusing on that, because you’re sending out the wrong – wrong signal. *You’re trying to stay alive.*

MR. PARKER: Right.

MR. MARTIN: Simple as that.

MR. PARKER: And – and I wanted to get these images out to say that *Haitians* were helping Haitians –

MR. MARTIN: Right.

MR. PARKER: -- for the first 48 hours.

MR. MARTIN: You've also been communicating a lot from there on Twitter as well, using – using –

MR. PARKER: Right.

MR. MARTIN: -- that as a source of information, kicking it out to people.

MR. PARKER: Right. Immediately after, I walked to Karfu that night, which was – took a – maybe about a[n] hour and-a-half. When – when I came back to Port-au-Prince, where my hotel was, ROM Haiti wa- -- a- -- at – at the Hotel Oloffson was already tweeting. Daniel Morell, who I was with when the earthquake hit, got the first images out. He's a photographer.

MR. MARTIN: Right.

MR. PARKER: He got the first images out. I came back, and I started tweeting my images, tweeting my thoughts, tweeting some of the things that were happening on the ground. It was the first and best way we could get information out. There was no other way to do so at the time.

MR. MARTIN: Well, absolutely. And, again, it shows the power of the Internet. And a lot of people I talk to, they always say, "Man, I don't understand this Twitter thing," but I'll tell you, at that moment, to get a[n] understanding of what was happening – that's how social media certainly played a role by making it happen.

Erik, we certainly appreciate it. Thanks a bunch.

MR. PARKER: All right. Thank you.

MR. MARTIN: Folks, the former sitcom star turned reality TV hit, Scott Baio, is

coming under fire for mocking First Lady Michelle Obama. News One's Smokey Fontaine is up next with the story.

[END OF SEGMENT.]

**(SEG-
MENT 5)**

MR. MARTIN: Every week on "Washington Watch," News One's Smokey Fontaine joins us for "Web Watch," and he's back.

Smokey, how's it goin'?

MR. FONTAINE: I'm good, and you?

MR. MARTIN: I'm great. Let's jump right into it. What's going on? Scott Baio, First Lady Michelle Obama, racist comments – what in the *world* is happening on Twitter?

MR. FONTAINE: Well, you gotta love Twitter for some scandal, Roland. Scott Baio, the former "Happy Days" star, has used his Twitter to talk about how he loves being a Republican. He defends Sarah Palin on his Twitter. He was all ecstatic about Scott Brown the other day, and in that euphoria he posted an image of Michelle Obama that made her look kind of like a werewolf. It was – it was Photoshopped, and it looked real evil and mean, and then he said, "Wow! Is that what your president wakes up to every morning?"

Instantly, his followers responded, really criticizing him. They said, "You need to go and kill yourself," – he got death threats, and created a huge firestorm, and he had

to go off and – and call the FBI and say he’s being threatened online on Twitter.

MR. MARTIN: Now, I was reading one account where he said, “Look. I’m always joking. This is lighthearted. You shouldn’t take this thing seriously,” but it’s not like Scott Baio is a comedian.

MR. FONTAINE: No. Scott Baio’s not a comedian, but he thinks he’s funny – right? And what’s interesting about Twitter – we know that 38 percent of people on Twitter are African-American. So, it shouldn’t surprise him that he’s going to get this kind of backlash. Now, people can say he went too far, and there were legitimate death threats that were posted against him. He tried to defend himself, saying, “I’m not racist,” by posting friends of his wife – Black friends of his wife – to kind of show he’s not a racist. He said –

MR. MARTIN: Oh, come *on*.

MR. FONTAINE: -- “I’ve” – “I’ve directed episodes of ‘The Parkers.’ I’m not a racist”; but, yet, you didn’t want to pose in the picture there.

MR. MARTIN: Well, first of all, I mean look. I – I get sick and tired when somebody all of a sudden says, “I have a Black friend, so, therefore, you know, I can’t be a racist.” But did – did he at any point understand that some people viewed it as being insensitive, as being a slam criticizing her? And I actually saw the photo, and you – you know, I’m sorry. I – I just didn’t try to connect the photo and his ridiculous comment.

MR. FONTAINE: He – he did *not* apologize. He is not ashamed about what he did. He said he did it as a funny joke. He said, “Everyone, lighten up,” but if you

threaten my life, I'm gonna call the FBI."

So, on the one hand he wants to be funny. On the other hand, he wants to be taken seriously. Twitter is just a place we're going to have this all the time. Let's let Scott Baio be a – a former, unhappy – unhappy guy.

MR. MARTIN: [Chuckles.] Well, absolutely – and, hopefully, what he'll also learn is when you decide to step into politics, it's not the same as "Happy Days" or you trying to be a comedian.

MR. MARTIN: MR. MARTIN: Smokey, thanks a bunch.
Folks, now it's time for "My Perspective."

We talked on this show about Democrats are all – freakin' all out when it comes to what took place in Massachusetts. And you know what? President Barack Obama, he understands what has happened when you get your butt kicked in a political race. In 2000, he lost a congressional race to Congressman Bobby Rush. He was criticized as being too much like a professor. They questioned his Harvard pedigree, whether he could actually represent folks on the South Side of Chicago, and he had to go back and study what happened in that race, why he lost, and how he could better connect with voters.

He must use the exact, same thing when it comes to where his presidency is right now. He came in on a notion of change. Republicans redefined the word "change," and now they've used it to their advantage. What the President should be doing right now, frankly, is focusing on the economy like a laser and not again operating as a technocrat. Second of all, he has to get his cabinet members out there, speaking

on the issues and not allowing himself to have to carry the ball. We see Arne Duncan, Secretary of Education. We see Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, even Defense Secretary Robert Gates; but you've got to see Hilda Solíz, Labor Secretary. You've got to see Tim Geithner, Treasury Secretary, carrying the ball when it comes to the economy.

Also, they must use the first lady, Michelle Obama. She's strong. She's compassionate. Put her out there, talking about policy, speaking to women, to children, to youth. As long as they sit here and play the same game, they're going to lose. It's time for the President to get back to basics and to remind the American people why they put him in. This is not a real issue when it comes to the Democrats. It's not a[n] issue when it comes to the folks in Congress.

To change what is happening, it has to start with you, Mr. President.

That's my perspective. What's yours?

**(SEG-
MENT 6)**

MR. MARTIN: Now it's time to hear from you in our "Feedback" segment. Here's what you had to say about my criticism about the comments of Rush Limbaugh and Pat Robertson, made about Haiti.

Now, first up, Diane Reed of Georgia said, "Most of the people I talk to about Rush say that he is not worth talking about. Rush's ignorance behind Haiti is helping more than hurting. We are a compassionate country, and that is something that Rush can't take away, no matter how hateful he is."

Next comment comes from Drama Free, [who] says, “Rush’s new name is ‘Hush.’ He’s just a fool that I, along with many others, stopped listening to long ago, and we only hear about his stupid comments when others report on him.”

Our next response came from Patricia Taylor. She said, “My husband and I believe that race should be discussed. However, we do not think it is the President’s job to discuss race relations. We need people like you, schools, employers and churches to have these discussions.”

And, Patricia, I agree.

Folks, thank you all for your comments, and don’t stop letting us know what you’re thinking. There’s been a lot of responses on Massachusetts’ Senate race, which we discussed today. We will let you know what people are saying next week. And if you want to sound off about that story, or another, go to TVOneOnline.com and leave your comments there. You can also upload your video comments, and I would love to play them next week.

Well, that’s it for this edition of TV One’s “Washington Watch.” I’m Roland Martin. Goodbye, and have a blessed week.

[END.]