

I posed this question in an article written back in December 2007. I left it “open ended”. Lately, now that there is another presidential race going on interested people are starting to uncover this old article and make it contemporary. This is troubling to me so I guess I should put closure to the whole matter. First, let me answer the question: No, Mitt Romney is not a racist. As I researched history, over the years I have come to find that the opposite is the case. The Romney Family has a legacy of pro-civil rights, progressive activism and an understanding of how poverty and inequality can hurt people.

Stunned? Let me run it down and I believe you will find this story to be a great American success story. The Romney bloodlines are of immigrant English, Scottish and German descent. Mitt’s grandparents, Gaskell Romney and Anna Amelia Pratt were natives of Utah but moved to Mexico

, Chihuahua State

, and settled in one of the few Mormon colonies. They had six sons and one daughter. Mitt’s father, George W. Romney had a simple life in the beginning. Then, in 1910, the Mexican Revolution started and Mormon colonies came under severe attacks and constant threats.

The Romney’s arrived in the United States, near El Paso, as Mexican refugees. They were treated with scorn and became penniless. Soon they moved again to outside of Los Angeles

. The Romney children were teased by other kids who labeled them “Mex”. Soon after that they journeyed to Idaho

to try farming. They raised potatoes; sold most of them and ate the rest for substance. Finally, they arrived in

Utah

and settled in with the predominant Mormon community there.

Early life was rugged for the senior Romney but it instilled in him a strong work ethic. He passed that along to his children including Willard Mitt Romney whom we all know today. George Romney eventually started working for Alcoa Aluminum and the Aluminum Wares Association as a lobbyist and, thus, his political career was about to take off. He was also a genius business executive and would rise to the CEO position of American Motors. When Mitt was born in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan in 1941, George had gone up the “ladder” and would gain wealth that would be passed onto to his children and their families.

George joined the Republican Party and let it be known to all that he was a proponent of civil rights and would fight for equal opportunity especially for the “Negro”. He soon became Governor of the state of Michigan and he used his authority to help integrate the state. He demanded new, integrated subdivisions to be built near new auto plants like the Ford Willow Run facility so that Blacks could easily access the jobs that were provided. In 1963 he stated, “It was only after I got to Detroit that I got to know Negroes and began to be able to evaluate them and I began to recognize that some Negroes are better and more capable than lots of whites....Michigan’s most urgent human rights problem is racial discrimination – in housing, public accommodations, education, administration of justice, and employment.” He thus created the state’s first civil rights commission.

George not only supported Dr. Martin Luther King and the Civil Rights Movement he actively cheered it on. When the Selma to Montgomery March went down, he organized a “solidarity march” in Detroit to show his belief in the values being preached. Keep in mind, he was Governor of the State. People noticed and on his last re-election as Governor he won over 30 percent of the Black vote. He stood tall for justice. When Barry Goldwater ran for President on the Republican ticket in 1964, George refused to support him as the candidate was opposed to the Civil Rights Act.

During all of this advocacy, his son, Mitt, was evolving as a man. He idolized his father and emulated his legacy. Mitt Romney lived amongst Blacks in metropolitan Detroit. He went to the prestigious Cranbrook School. One of our board members, Claude McDougal, is a fellow alumnus of the school.

Perhaps the greatest thing Mitt’s father did as an example to his son came in 1969. He became Secretary of HUD (Nixon Administration) and he quickly implemented Section 3 of the HUD Act (Equal Opportunity and Employment Program). It gave President Nixon fits but he did it successfully and it stands today.

Let me close with a quote from Mitt that shows the “fruit” doesn’t fall far from the tree: “I do not support quotas in hiring, government contracting, school admissions or the like. I believe our nation is at its best when people are evaluated as individuals. I do support encouraging inclusiveness and diversity, and I encourage the disclosure of the numbers of women and minorities in top positions of companies and government – not to impose a quota, but to shine light on the situation. We should always strive for the broadest representation of people, from

all walks of life, at all levels of our companies, schools, and government.” Hmm, sounds like a plan.

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