

Should Bush Apologize to the GOP?

Written by Ginny Grimsley
Monday, 12 November 2012 13:21

Despite Party's Best Ostrich Act, Abysmal Tenure to Blame for Romney's Defeat, Lawyer Says

As the United States prepares to inaugurate Barack Obama for a second term in office, many Republicans are still struggling to understand Gov. Mitt Romney's defeat.

Exit polls on Nov. 6, however, indicated that voters blamed former President George W. Bush for the country's economic troubles, and most believe that Obama's policies have helped the recovery.

Bush was such a poor president that conservatives no longer bother to defend the previous commander in chief, says New York attorney and political humorist Steven Sarshik.

"It has become conventional wisdom that Bush messed up so badly that pundits on both sides tend to gloss over the magnitude of his appalling legacy," says Sarshik, author of the satirical novel, "The Apology," (www.sarshik.com), a fantastical tale that begins on the day of Obama's second inauguration, when Bush gets himself into a jam in Europe.

"Conservatives won't go anywhere near Bush's eight years, except to tell liberals who blame him for the difficult recovery to stop living in the past. I mean ... the guy wasn't even invited to the Republican National Convention in Tampa," Sarshik says. "The Democrats mentioned him more at their convention."

Unfortunately, in political debate, reviewing Bush's record has become a non-starter, "but that doesn't mean his tenure didn't happen," Sarshik says.

He reviews some of the Bush policy flubs that directly contributed to Romney's defeat:

- A party of extremists: In order to compete with this season's Republican primary candidates and satisfy the hordes of Tea Party conservatives, "moderate Mitt" had to take a backseat in favor of pedal-to-the-metal, far-right Romney. The party took a dramatic shift to the far right as

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a result of Bush's expensive, fiscally irresponsible policies. After the primaries, "flip-flopper" didn't seem strong enough to describe Romney's shifting stances; his proposed policies became "Etch-a-Sketch," almost to the point of being Zen-like, Sarshik says. "Often, his answers to questions became exceedingly abstract, and I think the shifting discouraged independent and undecided voters."

- A clear and simple foreign policy narrative: A recent Vanity Fair exposé shows that Bush was given ample warning of the attacks on American soil before Sept. 11, 2001. While the 43rd president followed up with what still seems to many a non-sequitur war in Iraq, Obama oversaw the end of that protracted campaign and killed the man responsible for 9-11. Romney's foreign policy appeared to be a continuation of Bush's costly approach.

- FEMA and the "heck of a job, Brownie" gaffe: "Frankenstorm" Sandy hit the Northeast days before the Nov. 6 election, which could have devastated Obama's campaign had he handled it poorly. Instead, his cooperation with New Jersey Rep. Gov. Chris Christie was the perfect example of how to handle local and state-level emergencies. During debates, in an attempt to back up small-government rhetoric and explain away Bush's poor handling of Hurricane Katrina disaster relief, Romney said the Federal Emergency Management Agency should be dismantled in favor of state control, and "even better," be privatized.

About Steven Sarshik

Steven Sarshik has been a New York City trial lawyer for more than 30 years, handling all sorts of politically charged cases – much like the fictitious one he paints in "The Apology." He is also the author of "Wrongful Death," a novel about an NYC police shooting.