



Written by [Ralph R. Reiland](#) on January 25, 2010

## Racist Codes and Naked Threats

I didn't know that trucks were racist.

Here's the exchange between MSNBC's Keith Olbermann and *Newsweek's* Howard Fineman on election night as they watched the Massachusetts vote come in and saw Republican Scott Brown taking an early lead.

Bringing up what he said was "not necessarily pretty," Olbermann stated that Republicans took seats in the House from Democrats in the 1960s and "most of those elections had clear racial undertones, many had overtones."



Looking for additional undertones and overtones in Scott Brown's votes, Olbermann attempted to turn the spotlight on white racism: "The Republicans and the tea partiers will tell you what happens with Scott Brown tonight, whether he wins or comes close, is a repudiation of Obama policies. And surely, one of Obama's policies from the viewpoint of his opponents, it's okay to have this sea change in American history, to have an African-American president. Is this vote, to any degree, just another euphemism, the way states' rights was in the '60s?"

He was asking if Scott Brown's votes were actually a veiled attempt to roll back the status of blacks in America.

"Well, that is a good question," answered Fineman, *Newsweek's* senior Washington correspondent and MSNBC political analyst.

After saying that he thought race was "in no respect part of the equation" for "most of the American people," Fineman said that "maybe in some places there are codes, there are images, you know, there are pickup trucks. You can say there's a racial aspect to it one way or the other."

Olbermann, picking up the scent of racism, replied, "What were the Scott Brown ads, though? Every one of the Scott Brown ads had him in a pickup truck."

"That's why I mentioned pickup trucks," Fineman responded. "I mean, my mind goes back to, my mind goes back to Fred Thompson down in Tennessee."

I'm not sure what Fineman exactly meant, but Republican candidate Fred Thompson had a 1990 red Chevy pickup truck and didn't apologize for speaking at Bob Jones University, plus he played a district attorney on television in NBC's *Law & Order*, so maybe that's somehow viewed as a triple dose of stealthy racism, something that reminded Fineman of Scott Brown's GMC truck and Obama's diminishing clout.

He might have also been connecting the dots between trucks and the Klan. You never see those guys carrying around their sheets in the back of a Prius.

Fineman concluded his analysis by saying that he didn't think it was "so much a matter of race or even very, very much a matter of race at all," but rather "a matter of people in the suburbs and people



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outside of the cities feeling themselves not paid attention to by the, quote, 'elites.' "

So maybe America's angry voters are just people out in the sticks, disproportionately white and heavily trucked, feeling neglected.

Then more numbers on the voting came in — Brown over Coakley, 54.6 to 44.5 percent — and things got even wackier.

"I want to apologize for calling Republican Senate candidate, Scott Brown, an irresponsible homophobic, racist, reactionary, ex-nude model, tea-bagging supporter of violence against women and against politicians with whom he disagrees," said Olbermann. "I'm sorry — I left out the word 'sexist.' And I left out the story of the day, Brown upset by online criticism from some student, went to that school and swore at the entire student body."

Formerly naked, and he swears? Scary stuff.

**Ralph R. Reiland** is an associate professor of economics at Robert Morris University in Pittsburgh.



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