

Lexington

莱克星顿

The Ben Carson mirage

海市蜃楼般的 Ben Carson

Why some Republicans think a charismatic brain surgeon can win the White House

为什么一些共和党人认为才华横溢的脑科医生能入主白宫

BETWEEN now and the presidential primary season, expect to hear more about Ben Carson. Though unknown to many Americans, the retired brain surgeon is a conservative pin-up. He was raised by a black single mother in Detroit, almost flunked out of school and nearly stabbed a teenage rival to death, before finding God, heading to Yale and becoming a paediatric neurosurgeon. He has written several books about his life—one became a TV film (Dr Carson was played by Cuba Gooding junior).

从现在到美国总统预选的日子里，很期待听说更多关于 Ben Carson 的消息。尽管对于很多美国人来说还很陌生，这位退休脑外科医生是保守党的招牌人物。Ben 在底特律长大，母亲是位单身黑人妈妈，在皈依基督之前，他快要被学校退学，有过前科，将一位青少年对头几乎刺死，后来去耶鲁深造成了一名儿科神经外科医生。Ben 已经写了好几本关于他生活经历的书——一本已被改变成电影（Carson 医生由小古巴·古丁扮演）。

Political celebrity came in 2013 when the doctor used a speech to a National Prayer Breakfast to lecture a stony-faced Barack Obama, sitting a few feet away, about the national debt, those who treat poverty as an excuse for failure and the “horrible” menace of political correctness. A Fox News TV contract followed, and many invitations to address conservative gatherings.

他的政坛名望来自 2013 年，当时他在全美祈祷早餐上致辞批评奥巴马对于国债的无动于衷，以及那些将预算不足当作失败的借口、对政治前途有“可怕”威胁的人，当时奥巴马坐在几英尺开外。Fox 新闻台以及很多邀约随后都邀请 Ben 给保守党聚会做演讲。

Fans want to draft Dr Carson to run for the presidency in 2016. They call him a citizen-statesman for an anti-politics age. They praise his philanthropy (he runs a scholarship fund for star pupils in poor schools), and his appeal to churchgoing, socially conservative voters of all races. Their idol has said that he might run “if the Lord grabbed me by the collar and made me”. Some are willing to try more earthly interventions. According to official filings, the recently-formed National Draft Ben Carson for President Committee (slogan: “Run Ben Run!”) raised \$1.2m dollars in the last two months of 2013. The committee, which operates without sanction from Dr Carson, boasts that it has raised another \$1.6m since. The committee’s co-founder, Vernon Robinson, makes an unblushing, race-based pitch. Democrats have scooped about 90% of the black vote in presidential elections since 2000, helping to offset a consistent Republican lead among whites. In 2016, argues Mr Robinson, Dr Carson has only to take 17% of the black vote and “Hillary loses every swing state in the country”.

支持者们想提名 Carson 医生竞选 2016 年总统，称他为反政治时代的平民政治家。他们颂扬他的慈善心（他设立了专为穷困小学优秀学生提供的奖学金），而且他呼吁人们去教堂，全种族的社会性投票。他们的偶像说如果上帝勒住他的领子、命令他，他可能会去参选。一些人则愿意尝试世俗性的干预。根据一些官方文件角料，2013 年最后两月，最近组建的全国性 Ben Carson 竞选委员会（标语：“竞选 Ben 奔起来！”）筹集到 120 万美元。Carson 医生没有认可这个委员会，而他们还吹嘘道自那时起又筹集到 160 万美元。创始人之一的 Vernon Robinson 还做了一个不要脸的、基于竞选的促销活动。民主党人应经抢先夺取从 2000 年来总统选举中的 90% 黑人选票，用于对抗民主党一如既往的白人支持率。Robinson 说 2016

年，Carson 只夺了 17% 的黑人选票，就让“希拉里输掉了全国所有持观望态度的州选票”。

At the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC), a three-day shindig attracting big-name Republicans that ended on March 8th, Dr Carson was given a prominent speaking slot. He drew cheers with a talk that delivered partisan attacks (eg, Obamacare is a “massive” government power-grab) in a paediatrician’s mild tones (a favourite Carson insult is to call foes “dummies”). CPAC attracts a young crowd with a libertarian bent: think students in blazers and bow-ties, and pamphlets headed “How to debate your teacher (and win!)”. Still, Carson fans were excited when their man came third in a presidential straw poll of CPAC-goers, behind Senators Rand Paul and Ted Cruz but beating heavyweights such as Senator Marco Rubio, Governor Chris Christie and Representative Paul Ryan. It was a revealing moment, but not because Dr Carson can win the White House. To be clear, he will not even win the presidential nomination. His rise is interesting because of what it says about Republicans today.

3 月 8 号结束的，连续举办三天，吸引了众多共和党大人物保守党政治活动会议（CPAC）上，Carson 医生成为重要的致辞者。他在宴会致辞时，以一个儿科专家的温和音调，将党派攻击呈现出来（例如，奥巴马医改是“显著的”政府权力滥用）（Carson 最喜欢用的轻蔑语是称对手为“傻瓜”）。CPAC 吸引了爱好自由的年轻群体：他们认为学生是开拓者，宣传册上写着“怎样与老师辩论（而且是胜利！）”。Carson 的支持者们还在为民调中他取得第三位好成绩而兴奋，仅次于 Rand Paul 议员和 Ted Cruz，击败了重量级选手 Marco Rubio 议员，Chris Christie 州长和 Paul Ryan 代表。这是有启迪性的一刻，但不是因为 Carson 医生能入主白宫。甚至，很明确的是，他将不会赢得总统提名。因为谈论了共和党人的事情，他的威望提升才变得有趣。

Republicans have flirted before with self-made men from outside politics. Remember Herman Cain, the pizza tycoon whose folksy manner and populist tax plans propelled him to giddy heights in 2011, before sex scandals dragged him down and out of the presidential primaries? Dr Carson is no Herman Cain. Before the 2012 election Republican activists looked at a string of odd-bods and firebrands, casting about for someone, anyone, who thrilled them more than their eventual nominee, Mitt Romney.

共和党人层和政坛外部的成功人士接触过。还记得 Herman Cain，披萨巨头，行事随和，计划推行平民税收促使他在 2011 年排名让人眼前一亮，后来性丑闻将他从竞选圈内排除。Carson 医生不是 Herman。2012 年的选举之前，共和党活动者们聚焦了一串“临时工”和“煽动者”，寻找一些人，任何人，能让他们比推出最终提名者 Mitt Romney 更兴奋。

This time Republicans seem more sober-minded. A bit unexpectedly, their current mood takes Lexington back to early 2004, and to (cold, snowy) memories of covering New Hampshire’s Democratic presidential primary. Back then it was fractious Democrats who were united by their loathing of the sitting president—seeing George W. Bush as not just wrong-headed but un-American and dangerous. Yet even as Democrats told themselves that they represented America’s true values, they were troubled by doubts about their ability to win overall majorities in a country that was stubbornly hostile to their arguments.

这次共和党人看起来意识更加清醒。有点出乎意料的是，他们现在的心境将莱克星顿专栏带回 2004 年初，（冰冷，大雪）那时是 New Hampshire 的民主党总统预选。那时是不好对付的民主党人联合起来反对在位总统——因为小布什当时不仅仅是错误领导国家而且是反美国式、危险的领导。虽然当时民主党人自称他们代表美国的真正价值，但他们因质疑自身能力而陷入麻烦，质疑他们无法取得全国大多数选票以至于遭到评论的顽强抨击。

Their first response was to blame their opponents and the media for sowing division and fear (just

as Republicans do today). Their second response was to fret about their bench of White House contenders—a line-up of lightweights, shrill partisans and ponderous elder statesmen.

他们第一个回应就是指责对手和媒体散布离间和恐怖（就像共和党人今天做的）。第二个回应就是为他们的白宫之主竞争者而烦恼——那是一排小人物，打游击的，沉闷的老去的政治家。

Democrats sought a quick fix: candidates with sterling military records to reassure a nation at war. In the end that meant picking John Kerry, whose war service proved less helpful than hoped. But for a period, notably around New Hampshire's primary, wild hopes were pinned on Wesley Clark, a retired four-star general with no political experience.

民主党人寻求了快速法：选一批有纯正军方背景的候选人让战时国家安心。最后选了 John Kerry，但是他的战争经历没有像预期那样提供足够帮助。但有一段时间，尤其是对于 New Hampshire 预选，狂热的希望寄托在 Wesley Clark 的身上，他是一位没有政坛经历的退休四星上将。

The myth of the heroic outsider

圈外英雄传奇

A decade on, Republicans seem equally unconvinced by their likely presidential contenders, and Dr Carson has the makings of a new Wesley Clark: a successful man, unready for the blowtorch scrutiny of politics. Some of his views might startle his party: for example, he favours stiff tariffs on manufactured imports. And he is already proving thin-skinned. At CPAC, he accused the press of distorting what he had meant when he called Obamacare the worst thing to happen in America “since slavery”, or when he seemed to equate gay-marriage advocates with child-molesters.

十年的时间，共和党人看起来同样不信他们可能的总统竞争者，而且 Carson 医生由成为新 Wesley Clark 的潜质：一个成功的人，还没准备好迎接政治喷灯式审查。他的一些观点可能让党派眼前一亮：例如他在制造业进口方面秦翔宇固定关税政策。而且他已被证实脸皮很薄。在 CPAC，当他说奥巴马医改是从奴隶制度后发生在美国最糟糕的事，指责新闻界扭曲他的意思，或是当他将同性婚姻和猥亵儿童等同起来。

Republicans are bullish about November's mid-term elections, when turnouts are usually low and the electorate skews whiter, older and more conservative. However, the more thoughtful know that the race for the White House in 2016 will be far harder. Swelling ranks of non-white and younger voters have never enjoyed the American dream of rising living standards. Their pessimism poses a test for Republicans whose creed is that hard work leads to success, if government will only get out of the way. Alas, too many conservatives—like Democrats in 2004—are too blinded by dislike of the president to grasp the limits of their own popularity. Hence their desire for quick fixes, as represented by folk like Dr Carson. But quick fixes seldom work.

工很当人对于 11 月中期选举斗志昂扬，选区里有更多白人、老人、保守派时，结果同城都会很不乐观。然而，对于 2016 年白宫选举考虑得越多、越全面，事情 就会更困难。非白人、更年轻化的阶级膨胀起来，他们从未享受到提高生活标准的美国梦。他们的悲观主义会是共和党人的一道测试，因为他们宣扬如果政府不干预，努力工作就能通向成功。哎！更多的保守派——像 2004 年的民主党人——被总统的反感蒙蔽了双眼，控制他们支持者的底线。因此他们更喜欢快刀斩乱麻，如同 Carson 医生这样的代表。但是欲速则不达。