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OPINION

Insults, innuendos and accusations



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— *Editor's note: Tanya Amador-Daigle will be reporting for Florida Weekly on the national primaries until the presidential candidates are chosen this summer. She has a unique perspective on the primaries and the process for choosing a candidate, having traveled the country reporting on primaries and caucuses for the Purple States project. To learn more about Purple States go to www.purplestaes.tv.*

If you think the election process has been interesting so far, hold on to your hats because it's about to get even better. As Pennsylvania's primary is fast approaching, candidates are beginning to transition into general election rhetoric. Whilst the "ouchfest" of IIA (insults, innuendos and accusations) begins, John McCain enjoys security as the obvious GOP winner. Who the Democratic nominee will be still remains to be seen. Even as the Dems duke it out within their own party, it's obvious that both sides are beginning to warm up for the main event in November.

While the process plays itself out and Democrats struggle to overcome the delegate FUBAR with Florida and Michigan, campaign advisers are really rolling up their sleeves and digging in. In fact, because of the reality that Florida and Michigan's delegates may not get seated at the Convention this fall because the Democratic National Committee punished them for moving up their primary dates, we can anticipate things will get even nastier. And so it seems like everyday I hear of another high profile person casting their lot with a particular candidate. As advisers woo them, I can't help but be amused at how dirty they are actually willing to get when using IIA as part of their strategy.

One example is that of Harold Ickes, a Clinton adviser. Ickes recently said that he is using the Reverend Wright

issue to win over superdelegates and it seems to be working for him. The concern for Democrats seems to be not who ends up being their party's "chosen one" but rather that the party wins. It's about electability. The Democrat that gets chosen has to be able to beat McCain and even though the Wright issue may not be important to some Dems, Republicans will almost certainly use it later on down the line to win the general election.

Another thing that has me fascinated lately is Chelsea Clinton's new role in her mother's campaign. Does anyone else see what I see? A future politician perhaps? The 28 year old has been canvassing colleges across the nation spreading the word about her mother's virtues. She recently said that the world will "breathe a sigh of relief once President Bush leaves office." Particularly Al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden, I'm willing to bet. Nonetheless, I do have empathy for her. She keeps getting questions about her errant father's naughty behavior with Monica Lewinsky. I wonder if Slick Willy ever gave much thought to how his affairs would impact his daughter, never mind his wife.

What really keeps me amused is how much the candidates lie and exaggerate. These people have more stories than Mother Goose. Hillary Clinton recently had to back-pedal when she said she had dodged sniper fire on a 1996 trip to Bosnia when she was First Lady. When CBS found the old footage and aired it, it showed Clinton calmly walking across the tarmac with Chelsea, greeting dignitaries and even chatting with a small child. The Senator had to address the issue and claimed she had "misspoke." But the damage has already been done and her opponents will continue to point out that every time Hillary tells a story, the fish gets a little bigger.

Like most people, I like to watch Senator Obama speak. He is a brilliant orator. He loves to tell crowds over and over how McCain wants to keep us at war in Iraq for 100 years. Sounds really awful, doesn't it? Of course it does, when you leave out the rest of what McCain actually said: "President

Bush has talked about our staying for 50 years, maybe 100. We've been in Japan for 60 years, in South Korea for 50 years or so. That would be fine with me as long as Americans are not being injured or harmed or killed." Yet Obama decided to leave some of the statement out, obviously because it supports his agenda.

Those are some of the accusations and innuendos. But what about insults? One of the most disgusting things I've heard is the recent vulgarity laced rant by Air America host Randy Rhodes at an appearance in San Francisco March 22. Her tirade against Hillary Clinton and one of Clinton's supporters, Geraldine Ferraro was downright frightening. In her stand up routine, she called Ferraro "David Duke in drag" and Clinton a "whore".

Rhodes' apparent angst towards Ferraro was incited by Ferraro's recent comments about Barack Obama in which she said that Obama would not be in the unique position he is in today if he was not black. Rhodes asserted that this made Ferraro an anti-Semite and used words that would make a sailor blush to drive her message home. It seems to me that she could have gotten her point across with a little more class. Someone needs to wash that lady's mouth out with soap.

More recent insults include Hillary Clinton calling Obama's campaign a "fairy-tale" and James Carville calling Bill Richardson a "modern-day Judas," which was kind of clever because he said it on Good Friday.

What takes the cake for me is this recent little known paragraph in a story on FoxNews.com:

"And presumptive GOP nominee John McCain seemed to get away with his lofty and lengthy Internet ad in early March that interspersed his own speeches with those of former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and former President Teddy Roosevelt."

But there is one hole in that historical comparison.

According to a recent study from the New England Historic Genealogical Society, Churchill is actually a distant cousin to Obama.

Hah! The irony. ■

MOMENTS IN TIME

- On April 9, 1939, black contralto Marian Anderson gives a free open-air concert at the Lincoln Memorial. She had been scheduled to sing at Washington's Constitution Hall, but the Daughters of the American Revolution denied her the right to perform because of her race.

- On April 10, 1963, the USS Thresher, an atomic submarine, sinks in the Atlantic Ocean, killing its entire crew. One hundred and twenty-nine sailors and civilians were lost when the sub unexpectedly plunged to the sea floor 300 miles off the coast of New England.

- On April 11, 1917, composer Scott Joplin, the "King of Ragtime," dies in

New York City. His "Maple Leaf Rag" of 1899 launched a national craze for ragtime music, and he composed many other popular ragtime songs, including "The Entertainer."

- On April 12, 1954, Bill Haley and his band, the Comets, record "Rock Around the Clock." Two years later the song became a hit when it was used as a theme for the movie "Blackboard Jungle," becoming the first rock 'n' roll song to reach No. 1.

- On April 13, 1970, disaster strikes 200,000 miles from Earth when oxygen tank No. 2 blows up on Apollo 13, the third manned lunar landing mission. Mission commander Lovell reported

to mission control on Earth: "Houston, we've had a problem here."

- On April 14, 1912, just before midnight in the North Atlantic, the RMS Titanic hits an iceberg, rupturing five watertight compartments along her starboard side. Hours later the massive vessel sank, and more than 1,500 people died in the icy North Atlantic waters.

- On April 15, 1927, Douglas Fairbanks, Mary Pickford and Norma and Constance Talmadge become the first celebrities to leave their footprints in cement at Grauman's Chinese Theater. The future Hollywood landmark was still under construction at the time. ■