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**OPINION**

**Voting for McBama**



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— *Editor's note: Tanya Amador-Daigle is reporting for Florida Weekly on the presidential election. 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.purplestates.tv.*

With only a week left until the presidential election, the last year has been a political whirlwind of smears and recycled campaign speeches. This election has given us two tickets for the history books; an African American man and a Republican woman, on two opposing tickets, at the same time, both jockeying for the same spotlight. It's a political pundit's dream.

As the deadline grows near, I'm asking myself this: Other than making history, does either of these teams bring us anything worthwhile? With the economy in the tank, two ongoing wars, and the Constitution being discarded like an old shoe, I find myself wishing for something miraculous. Perhaps I'm looking in the wrong place, or maybe, toward the wrong people.

As early voting polls open, each American has to ask himself: Who will be the best leader for my needs, the needs of my family and in the best interest of this nation?

I'm of the school that our economy is our national security. Without funds, we cannot secure our borders or arm our troops to protect ourselves. This is

the issue that is most important to me, and when I see both Sen. Barack Obama and Sen. John McCain fail so miserably with regards to the bailout, I want to run and hide under my bed.

The global economy is experiencing an unparalleled crisis of which no expert can know the outcome. And what does McBama do? These guys scurry about, or dramatically suspend their campaign and run to Washington, as McCain did, virtually making it a race to see who can claim they saw it coming first. Suddenly, these two men, who eagerly took money from Wall Street for their campaigns, declared that they had been "warning" us that this would happen for years.

Initially, McBama was unsure about the \$700 billion "bailout." They couldn't approve of anything that the taxpayers would have to pay for. But then, in an incredible twist of fate, McBama valiantly championed the "rescue plan," again, for the sake of the taxpayers. Only, of course, AFTER all of the experts had weighed in and stated that the economy was in a state of emergency.

So, which one of the two men showed leadership and courage in the face of economic collapse? My answer: neither.

The most important foreign policy issue at this moment is the war in Iraq. Sen. Obama and Sen. McCain claim that their positions on Iraq are extremely, or fundamentally, as Sen. Obama puts it, different from each other. But are they? I mean, how can they be? Both candidates have no choice at this time but to keep troops in Iraq, at least for the time being. The situation on the ground will dictate that, not McBama.

And what about Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran? McBama agrees that more boots are needed on the ground in Afghanistan. Which leads us to Paki-

stan. What exactly is McBama's policy there? No one really knows. The only thing I've been hearing is how they are going to go after the Taliban and Al-Qaeda. We've heard that song before.

And Iran? McBama swears eternal loyalty to Iran's archenemy, Israel, calling Ahmedinejad everything from an evil dictator to a Holocaust denier. Gee, ya think? Tell me something I didn't know! When are they going to address the root of the problem? Could it be Palestine, perhaps? The assertion from McBama is that they back a two-state solution for Palestine, but they offer no real plan to do so.

I'm sorry to be repetitive because I know I've said this before, but Sen. Obama seems unable to decide what kind of public stand to make on his own. He proved that during the primaries with Sen. Hillary Clinton. If you pay close attention, you will see that Sen. Obama waits for Sen. McCain to come forth on an issue, and then he follows suit. The only difference is that he dresses it up with pretty speeches.

Even when Sen. Obama has an independent or original idea, he quickly changes it when his adversary speaks bluntly, or if it's politically expedient for him. This was the case in the Georgia/Russia conflict in South Ossetia. First, Sen. Obama spoke out against the violence and played the diplomat, not really taking sides. Then after Sen. McCain condemned Russia, giving us flashbacks to the Cold War days, Sen. Obama changed his stride and jumped on the Sen. McCain bandwagon.

I could go on and on about taxes and health care, but I think I've made my point. I could just say, "Well, that's just how politics works. No one would ever get elected if they spoke the truth." But for me, that's like condoning bad behavior. I liken it to being the enabler of a drug addict. And, you know what? It's our own fault. If we keep giving the politicians their crack, they'll never quit. ■

**GUEST OPINION**

**The world catches up**



**danRATHER**

Special to Florida Weekly

A little more than two weeks ago, when Barack Obama and John McCain met for the second presidential debate, Sen. Obama spoke up for his alternative-energy plan by invoking perhaps this nation's greatest achievement: "Now, when JFK said we're going to the moon in 10 years, nobody was sure how to do it, but we understood that, if the American people make a decision to do something, it gets done."

This week, India, which started its space program in the same year that Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin planted the U.S. flag on the lunar surface, launched its own mission to the moon. Unlike Apollo 11, the Indian Chandrayaan spacecraft that lifted off from an island in the Bay of Bengal last week was not manned, but it does reflect a national spirit that our country once possessed, and which we will fail to reclaim at our own peril.

How to define that spirit?

Some inside and outside of India have been critical of the Chandrayaan moon

shot, saying that even at its relatively modest \$78 million price tag, the cost of the mission represents an expenditure that the country can little afford, given the fact that millions of its inhabitants still live in conditions of crushing poverty. But the mission's advocates point to Chandrayaan as a first step toward scientific goals that are worthy of the expenditure. Some of these goals are of a practical nature, such as determining the prevalence of helium-3, a rare isotope that could be used as an energy source, and constructing a three-dimensional map of the lunar surface, which could facilitate future missions for mining lunar resources such as this. And some of these goals serve pure science, such as experiments designed to learn more about the moon's origins.

They also point to the burgeoning space programs of China and Japan, and emphasize India's need to prove itself worthy of a share of the growing market for launching private satellites.

All these goals, poetic and prosaic, add up to vision — long-term, beyond-the-immediate-horizon vision. This is the kind of vision that is given much lip service in our own political rhetoric. But when it comes to practice, some in America have said in recent years that we can't afford it, just as some are still

saying that now — not in the midst of a Global War on Terrorism, not as we face the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression, not as we In 1962, President Kennedy called upon America to put a man on the moon and return him safely, among other goals, "not because they are easy but because they are hard." In the years that followed, our nation fought the Vietnam War and launched, in the Great Society, one of its most ambitious social programs. We saw our society divided over issues of race and war. And yet, in 1969, president Kennedy's goal saw fruition.

The lesson is not only that we as a nation can achieve great things even in difficult times, but that our ambition to achieve great things is a necessary engine of progress. Despite what we might like to tell ourselves, America has never had a monopoly on this kind of forward-looking spirit. But there was a time when we surely had the world's largest supply of it. India's own reach into space serves as a much-needed reminder that, at the start of this new century, the rest of the world is catching up. And if America wishes to stay great, we need to discover once again the ambition to not only survive the present but also capture and define the future. ■