

**THE BLOG**

McCain: MLK and RFK Were Dumb Blondes

By Marty Kaplan

08/01/2008 10:12 am ET | Updated May 25, 2011

And the people who went to their rallies calling for an end to the war and for social justice were airhead-worshippers.

It took me long enough, but I think I've finally figured out what those McCain ads about Paris and Britney — and, yes, the Summer of Love — are saying. As always, with Republicans in general, the most reliable way to understand their thinking is from the perspective of the culture wars of the '60s, and in the case of McCain in particular, the perspective of his Vietnam experience.

McCain is saying that the people who believed in Bobby Kennedy, the Americans who made him a star, were just as ditzy to believe in his message about ending the war and reducing inequality as they were to worship Marilyn Monroe. The people who rallied on the Mall in amazing numbers to hear Martin Luther King, Jr.'s dream, the people who wanted to follow him out of Vietnam, were naive starf**ers; by turning their backs on Nixon and Kissinger, by putting joy ahead of sacrifice, they were undermining America in the world and our troops in Southeast Asia.

Those McCain ads are as much about you as they are about Obama. If you believe in all that global warming and gay marriage stuff, you're as dumb as a Lindsay Lohan fan. If you cheer a guy who talks up negotiation as part of our national security arsenal, you probably went to San Francisco and put flowers in your hair instead of being tortured in Hanoi. If you think this economy hurts the middle and the bottom and favors the rich, you're as dumb as a plank, or as Paris, or as Britney.

To the movement conservatives in charge of McCain's campaign, and to the movement conservative that McCain himself has settled in to being, Obama is just the most recent leader of a series of children's crusades — spoiled children's crusades. No wonder they want to paint him as elitist and effete; after all, a couple of generations ago, these were the Nixonians who depicted the anti-war mobilization not as a principled political groundswell, but as a bunch of Ivy Leaguers indulgently parented by Dr. Spock.

Obama often said in the primaries that he feels as though today's Washington conflicts were actually reruns of campus skirmishes of the '60s, and that he wants to get beyond that. It's an admirable sentiment. But the paleo-conservatives running against him are determined to refight and win those culture wars, just as that movement's "intellectual" parents are forever rerunning the '30s battles of the City College of New York cafeteria in their heads.

Don't forget: the people behind McCain loathed Bobby and Martin at the time. Today, they'll do anything they can to make it feel embarrassing to imagine that those leaders might have an heir in Obama. The message of McCain's ads is that change is for chumps, belief is for boobs, fame is for charlatans, and that the calendar in America will be forever set on Groundhog Day 1968 until all the war protesters, uppity women, tree-huggers, faggots and dirty f*****g hippies finally go back to the places where they belong.