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Will Someone Please Make Obama Watch the McCain Version of the Katrina DVD?



By Marty Kaplan

People who want Obama to win are heartened by his post-Hawaii willingness to object to McCain's tone, and to deplore McCain's *ad hominem* attacks on his patriotism and motivation, which Obama continued on Tuesday in his VFW speech. But it ain't enough.

A few Augusts ago, what finally shook George W. Bush into pretending to care about New Orleans was a DVD of television footage hammering him for vacationing while NOLA drowned — a compilation that his alarmed staff made and forced him to watch.

I don't doubt that Obama receives reports about what McCain is saying in speeches and ads, and summaries of what the talking heads are saying about Obama's reaction to those attacks. But my guess is that no one has assembled and screened for him a clip reel of the worst-of-the-worst — the stuff that Obama's supporters, not to mention undecided voters, have been seeing.

If he actually saw that ugly onslaught, would he really stick to his I'm-doing-this-my-way high road? Would he remain content to talk policy, and to demur with dignity when McCain and his minions slime him, rather than go on the attack and set the agenda himself?

The last Democratic presidential candidate who failed to engage, who abjured ruthlessness because it wasn't consistent with the noble kind of politics he wanted America to practice, was Michael Dukakis. That misreading of what it takes to win, and not the Howdy Doody tank photo, was what sank his campaign. If Dukakis had snapped Bernie Shaw's head off when he asked him a hypothetical in the debate about Kitty's being raped, 41 might not have become president, and his black sheep son may never have become 43.

Obama thinks America is yearning for postpartisanship. Maybe he's right. But I wish something, like a forced viewing of a DVD, would make him understand another thing that Americans yearn for — a candidate so pissed off about

McSame's recycling the worst of the Rovian worst that he gives as good as he got, and then some.

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