

EDITORIALS



Negative campaign ads dissuade centrists

Rexly

Penaflores
Managing Editor

The 2008 Presidential election is four days away, and both Democratic candidate Barack Obama and his Republican opponent John McCain are making their final push, hoping that their long road to the White House will not be a dead end. Over the course of the past few weeks, both candidates have courted undecided voters with a flurry of radio and television advertisements.

We have all seen and heard the ads that Obama and McCain have approved. Both sides are trying to convince us that their plan is right and that their platform is best for America.

Unfortunately, in many of these ads, each candidate goes out of his way to disparage his opponent—not just his positions, but the rival's characters and personality as well.

According to the *Associated Press* (AP), over the past month, 34 percent of Obama's ads have been negative, while virtually all of McCain's spots have been pejorative. In an interview on www.mediamatters.org, Ken Goldstein, the director of the University of Wisconsin Advertising Project, provided data shows that for the duration of the campaign, 39 percent of Obama's ads have been positive and 35 percent negative compared to McCain's 26 percent positive ads and 47 percent negative ads. Even though the data clearly shows that McCain has more negative ads, Goldstein argues that Obama has outspent McCain by a huge margin on advertising.

Which brings us to cost: according to the AP, on Oct. 6, Obama spent \$3.3 million on campaign ads, and his campaign is on pace to set an all-time record for campaign dollars spent on ads. At least the majority of his ads talk about the current issues that Americans face and how he is going to fix them. Meanwhile, the bulk of McCain's ads barely mention what he will do, focusing instead on what Obama has not done or has done poorly.

Why are there so many negative ads? Do negative ads work? Goldstein said, "Negative ads are more likely to be factually accurate and more likely to be on policy than positive ads. Positive ads are a guy in khakis walking on the beach with his dog or sitting in front of a fireplace in a fuzzy sweater, and that simply doesn't have a lot of information."

Inherent in negative advertising is the notion that the American public is easily manipulated. However, recent polls indicate that this is not the case and that the public is increasingly offended by such ads. Even the conservative *Arizona Republic*, the newspaper of record in McCain's home state, has commented on the subject. In an article titled "McCain's Negative Ads Could Backfire," columnist Dan Nowicki writes, "McCain now runs the risk of blowback from his relentless attacks, which have included contested allegations

Going too far with negative commercials can turn off independents and centrists

that Obama supported 'comprehensive sex education' for Illinois kindergartners and compared vice-presidential candidate Sarah Palin to a pig with lipstick. Going too far with negative commercials can turn off independents and centrists, precisely the voters who in the past had gravitated toward McCain and the ones he is courting today."

Nowicki quotes national pollster John Zogby, who said, "Voters want authenticity this year, and this is the opposite of authenticity. It is politics as usual, and he runs a very serious risk of damaging the way he [has] always been defined, as being above that sort of politics."

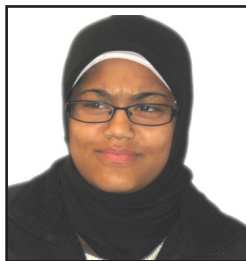
Nowicki continues: "Obama, who has been lashing out at McCain with his own barrage of negative ads, some of which likewise make dubious claims, 'runs the very, very same risk,' Zogby added.

Nowicki brings up yet another problem with negative ads. Too often, they are based on half-truths or outright lies. The candidates can deny the comments all they want, but once statements have been made, they become part of the public record.

The American public does not need more ads that feature the candidates attacking each other. Americans need to know how the future will look with either candidate, not how the other candidate will destroy their way of life. What they need to know is how each candidate plans to attack certain issues, such as the economic crisis that is affecting the country at the moment. Speaking of which, the amount of spending on ads, especially negative ads, is ridiculous considering the declining economy.

In these last few days before the election, one hopes that the candidates will give potential voters something of substance in their advertising spots, not the ugly rhetoric that we have come to expect during the campaign.

Reality television fails to entertain viewers



Uzma Ahmad
Editorials Editor

Since the advent of reality television with MTV's *The Real World* in 1992, many television networks have lowered their standards and increased the amount of unemployment benefits paid to actors and screenwriters by allowing more and more junk to infiltrate our television sets.

In the past five years, reality programs seem to have proliferated like rabbits. Despite its unbearably pathetic nature, reality television has enjoyed an explosion of popularity in the 2000s, as programmers hope to make easy money by launching low-budget, un-or-semi-scripted shows.

Such programming exploits vulnerable participants and exposes the dirt and grime of their lives simply for the audience's amusement. Not only is this cruel and degrading, but also nonsensical, idiotic and highly uninteresting. Most of these shows contain no substance and only offer viewers a display of rowdy, money-hungry contestants, brutally stepping over anyone who stands in the way of their grand prize.

In light of television networks' decline in providing quality entertainment, *West Word* offers a compilation of the Top 10 Worst Reality TV Shows:

10. *Rock of Love*

This reality television dating show features Bret Michaels, the balding, irritating lead singer from 1980s hair band Poison. The show involves 25 "rocker" girls facing challenges to earn "dates" with Michaels, competing to eventually win his heart and assume the role of his girlfriend in the narcissistic hope of gaining as much media attention as possible along the way.

9. *I Love Money*

The title says it all. Contestants on this abomination—greedy products of failures from other, unsuccessful reality shows—compete on this show in ridiculous physical and mental challenges in an attempt to win a grand prize of \$250,000.

8. *Farmer Wants a Wife*

A bachelor farmer chooses a potential romantic partner from amongst a group of 10 whiny and scabrous single city women who pitifully attempt to face the challenges of a rural lifestyle in yet another dating program. This show makes *The Simple Life* look like *Masterpiece Theater*.

Democrats make clean sweep in *West Word* endorsements

Editorial

This year's primary election season was a milestone in American history. It marked the first instance in which, regardless of the outcome of the Democratic primaries, Americans could make history, with the election of either an African-American or a female president. With New York senator Hillary Clinton now out of the running for president, Illinois senator Barack Obama distinguishes himself from his Republican opponent, Arizona senator John McCain, as an excellent leader who offers positive change for our country's future.

As president, the first issue that Obama wishes to tackle is healthcare. His plan is effective and realistic, as it includes a reform of existing insurance companies, requiring them to offer healthcare to clients with pre-existing conditions. Under the plans of Obama and his running mate, Delaware senator Joe Biden, all insurance companies will be forced to provide more affordable healthcare, thus reducing every American's average cost by about \$2,500 a year.

With the economy spiraling towards recession, Americans are worried about properly providing for their families and insuring their children's futures. Obama hopes to reduce taxes for working families, the entire middle-class and seniors earning less than \$50,000. Under Obama-Biden's economic plan, there will be the creation of more local jobs and increased wages. At the same time, he is taking steps towards boosting our economy by investing in manufacturing, science, and technology that promote renewable energy.

In 2002, most of Congress agreed with George W. Bush in promoting the war on Iraq. As we now look back on the Bush administration's decision to proceed with the war, we understand its failure as a mission, as it did not produce the securing of any weapons of mass destruction, has lost thousands of our young, brave soldiers and has completely torn apart Iraq's economic and political systems, not to mention the negative ramifications it has caused in the United States. As president, Obama's plan is to withdraw from Iraq in a phased removal in 16 months, while holding a residual force there to counter terrorism. McCain, on the other hand, has no plan to remove troops from Iraq, allowing our country to continue to get our hands sticky in foreign affairs.

7. *Celebrity Rehab with Dr. Drew*

Twenty-one melodramatic celebrities are sent to rehab for various drug and alcohol addictions, treated by shrink to the stars Drew Pinsky and his staff, unearthing the deepest, darkest secrets of over-the-hill performers who seem to have unlimited reservoirs of shame.

6. *My Fair Brady*

Centered on the lives of 57-year-old Christopher Knight, who played Peter Brady on *The Brady Bunch*, and 26-year-old Adrienne Curry, winner of the first season of *America's Next Top Model*, this show follows the absurd and ultimately futile attempts of the May-December couple to forge a lasting relationship. The program follows Curry and Knight, who met on another irritating reality show, VH1's *The Surreal Life*, tracing their steps toward marriage. The show depicts their petty arguments which often resemble parent-child tiffs, which is perhaps predictable since Knight is old enough to be Curry's father.

5. *Pussycat Dolls Present: The Search for the Next Doll/Girlicious*

The former follows a group of gallingly provocative, utterly vacuous "talent" auditioning for a position in the Pussycat Dolls (PD). The contestants are groomed by PD's founder, Robin Antin, and are judged on their vocal and dancing ability. The show was so successful that it spawned its equally odious spin-off, in which the PD choose the members of a girl group that promises to outskank the original, if that is possible.

4. *I Love New York/New York Goes to Hollywood*

Starring Tiffany "New York" Pollard, these shows follow an idiotic amateur actress and double loser on *The Flavor of Love* (see below) as she mistakenly believes that she can, respectively, find love and establish a successful and noteworthy acting career.

3. *A Shot at Love with Tila Tequila*

This cringe-worthy twist on other reality dating shows features a bevy of provocative contestants—lesbians and straight men—who compete against each other for the affection and attention of notorious, bisexual MySpace™ celebrity Tila Tequila.

2. *The Hole in the Wall*

Based on a popular Japanese program, this would qualify as a game show if the emphasis were on winning. Instead, the show takes perverse glee in making contestants look as idiotic as possible as teams of inept contortionists try to fit through human-shaped holes in a moving wall. Seriously—I am not making up this stuff.

1. *Flavor of Love*

Yet another aggravating dating show in which contestants are referred to by nicknames created by the star of the show, gold-toothed, clock and Viking helmet wearing ex-rapper Flavor Flav, from the group Public Enemy. Trashy girls and the talentless Flav (who, like Knight, is old enough to have fathered his dates) create the perfect recipe for a reality show at its worst.

Through his extremely eloquent and powerful speeches, Obama has captured the hearts of citizens all across America. He is truly a passionate speaker who has established hope and has instilled the notion of positive change in the minds of supporters. Unlike McCain, who seemingly was constantly disgruntled during presidential debates, Obama's ability to stay calm, positive, focused and clear-headed proves his leadership skills and ability to lead the nation, both politically and emotionally.

Coming from a poverty-stricken household, Obama is a self-made man out to make a difference in our world. Although his opponents argue that he has limited political experience, having served in the U.S. senate for only four years, Obama has displayed a thorough understanding of the different conflicts that affect the lives of all Americans. He believes that in order to solve these conflicts, change needs to be presented not only at the local level, but also in our federal laws and national politics as well.

For all these reasons, *West Word* endorses Barack Obama for President of the United States.

In other elections of local interest, *West Word* endorses Illinois senator Dick Durbin in his bid for reelection. In April of 2006, *Time* listed Senator Durbin as one of "America's 10 Best Senators." Durbin is a Democrat who advocates lowering tax rates for the public, saving Illinois taxpayers over \$2,200 per year. He is a strong supporter of the systematic withdrawal of our troops from Iraq. Durbin also promotes immigrants' rights and strives for affordable and quality healthcare for the public.

West Word also supports incumbent Ninth Congressional District representative Jan Schakowsky. A native of Chicago currently residing in Evanston, Schakowsky is familiar with the problems that pertain to the residents of Cook County. She is known to be one of the most liberal members of the Illinois delegation, standing up against many policies formed by corrupt politicians. She is a strong advocate for women's rights, gaining national acclaim for her work in this cause. Like Durbin, Schakowsky is also an avid supporter of Barack Obama's presidential campaign.

West Word believes that the election of Obama, Biden, Durbin and Schakowsky will produce necessary change on local and national levels as we all strive for the betterment of our nation's future.

WestWord

west opinions

Parent controlled technology invades privacy



Zoe Ljubic
Editor in Chief

As technology advances, a wide array of products has saturated the market and enticed the public to purchase the latest up-to-date gadget, program or software package. Because such advancements are not subject to Federal Communications Commission restrictions (*a la* broadcast television and terrestrial radio), young people are exposed to more and more adult-oriented material and/or are expected to discipline themselves in the use of electronic devices. With the proliferation of unregulated technology has come the advocacy of parental groups and the introduction of "parental controls" in just about every aspect of a young person's life. While such restrictions may seem protective, such monitoring is a very slippery slope.

Many cellular phone companies feature the parental control setting. Most recently, AT&T Wireless™ rolled out an easy-to-use system to manage and control his/her child's cellular device. According to www.cnet.com's news blog, the *Smart Links* service allows parents to customize controls on their child's cell phone to limit talk time, text messages, instant messages and Web downloads through a web-based system. AT&T™ is not the only company offering such features. T-Mobile™, Sprint™ and Verizon Wireless™ offer parental control programs for parents to consider, such as monitoring how their child uses the phone. They can even receive a detailed report of web downloads and websites visited.

Although the average junior is overwhelmed with school, ACTs and college pressure, they always manage to find time for socializing. Nowadays, it surprises me when I come across an individual who does not have unlimited text messaging in his/her service plan. Nevertheless, I find myself asking why students own iPhones™, Sidekicks™ and Blackberries™ with Internet access. Sure, it is great that they can go on Facebook™ during class and check their fantasy football status, but none of it is necessary. However, our generation has grown to use technology almost exclusively to socialize. This form of communication is defining our generation.

In today's society, the Internet has become a necessity. Teachers even assign homework online, and the Internet is an easy tool to access information for assignments and projects. However, many will argue that the access to despicable information online outweighs the Internet's advantages, especially when child pornography, sexual content and violent acts gets viewed by millions of teens worldwide. Parental control features are an outgrowth of such concerns.

According to www.comcast.com, Comcast™ is in partnership with McAfee Security to offer powerful parental controls to help filter inappropriate content and monitor Internet activity to help

prevent identity theft. Along with Comcast™, America Online (AOL)™ provides customers with parental controls to supervise Internet activity, decide who can communicate with children, choose the content accessible to children and set time restrictions. AOL™ and Comcast™ have put together programs in which parents can monitor their child's Internet activity to create a safe online environment.

Like the Internet parental control program, digital cable offers parents the choice of enabling parental controls. According to www.comcast.com, Comcast™ provides customers with the option of creating a PIN code to restrict certain channels not suitable for children. Also, Playstation™ and Xbox™ feature the parental control program enabling parents to restrict inappropriate game play.

The purpose of the digital cable parental control feature is to hide inappropriate channels from youngsters. Digital cable offers consumers many packages from which to choose when purchasing the products, and parents can choose to eliminate inappropriate channels if they choose to do so.

As reported on page four of this issue, car manufacturers have

Many will argue that the access to despicable information online outweighs the Internet's advantages

jumped on board to help parents test teens. Ford will release a new program for parents to monitor their child's driving starting next year. MyKey will allow parents to set limits on speed and stereo volume.

Such monitoring devices are double-edged sword. For all the protection they offer, they can undermine the parent/child bond. Parents raise their children to know what is right from wrong; at least my parents did. Implementing programs such as these not only go against the pact of parental trust with their child, but also may promote rebellion, dissent and even outright rejection of parents' concerns.

By setting Internet restrictions on certain websites, children may become curious and new ideas may arise, sometimes for the worse. While these programs are designed to allow parents to control their children's Internet content, they invade the child's privacy. In some cases denying children the access they believe that they require (or which other students have) may make these kids rebel and make a conscious effort to find such websites when not at home.

A part of growing up involves trust. Parents allow teenagers to stay out until 10 p.m., watch R-rated movies and afford other privileges denied in prior years. Purchasing parental control packages and enforcing their use break the bond of trust. Although parents may not see it this way, restricting a child's Internet use, monitoring a child's call list or setting a certain speed limit implicitly suggests distrust.

Parents should consider this when deciding whether or not to impose such restrictions on their children.

Should technology come with parental control?

Faculty



Lynne Rauser

"Absolutely - nowadays, if you do not have parent controlled technology, children will have access to too many things that they should not."

Senior



Madeline Dingis

"Yes, because [if I were] a parent, I would not want my 12 year old to look at certain sites."

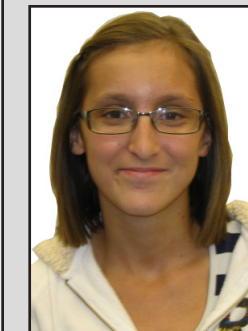
Junior



Ilya Raskin

"I believe that parental control is a good idea because some kids are not old enough to view certain content."

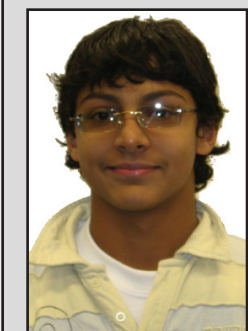
Sophomore



Adrirana Ardeleon

"Yes, because kids are immature and will do stupid stuff. We don't know our limits."

Freshman



Junaid Patel

"Yes, because it is safer for everybody."

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