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**Lawyer Lawyer Hero Hunter**

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Barack Obama rode the End of Politigation to the Democratic nomination for President. Skillfully recognizing that Americans were tired of the Clinton-Bush Age of Politics-as-Knife-Fight, Government-as-Grievance-Procedure, Legislation-as-Legal-Maneuver, Obama prevailed over Hillary Clinton by extolling his personal style of conciliation. But a lawyer he remains. Yes, he was a community organizer, but he is no Saul Alinsky. Looking every inch the editor of the Harvard Law Review and University of Chicago law professor, Obama has only two modes of dress: with the tie and without the tie.

Since he locked up the nomination Obama has, perhaps unwittingly, cemented the "Lawyer" as the "brand" of the Democratic Party. He picked Joe Biden, another lawyer, as his running-mate. A six-term U.S. senator and Chairman of the Judiciary Committee, Biden is famous for attacking Clarence Thomas, plagiarizing Neil Kinnock, and pompous, prolix, public performances. And so, the Democratic ticket is Lawyer, Lawyer: Corporate Attorney (Obama) and Politigator (Biden).

Problem: Americans hate lawyers. A Harris Poll reveals that only 19% of the public views the law as a prestigious profession. A Florida survey shows that 44% of our fellow citizens have little or no respect for lawyers. And an American Bar Association study conducted by M/A/R/C Research indicates that only 14% of Americans are very confident or extremely confident in lawyers, while a whopping 42% are only slightly confident or not at all confident. To make matters worse, in the past year, five of the most prominent lawyers in the country, William Lerach, Melvyn Weiss, Terry Christensen, Richard Scruggs, and, of course, Client Number 9 (Eliot Spitzer) have been indicted or convicted.

In Denver, Obama, Obama, & Dean, more than a little tone deaf, apparently decided that the nation longed to hear from even more attorneys. Endorsing the Lawyer Lawyer Ticket, the prime time lineup featured Michelle Obama, Harvard Law; Mark Warner, Harvard Law; Al Gore, Vanderbilt Law (Gore did not get a degree, but he sure does play one on TV); Bill and Hillary Clinton, Yale Law. The Democrats would have yielded center stage to John Edwards, University of North Carolina Law, and perhaps even to Elizabeth Edwards, University of North Carolina Law, had Mr. Edwards not pled nolo contendere a few weeks before the party faithful descended.

By contrast, in St. Paul, the Republicans took a different tack and adopted a different tone. Following the un-lawyer tradition of Dwight Eisenhower and Ronald Reagan, two of the most popular presidents in American history, the Republicans nominated John McCain and Sarah Palin, a hero and a hunter. To most observers, including us, the choice of Palin seemed like a risky gambit.

But in the Age of Infotainment and Celebrity Culture, where issues are subordinate to images, it could turn the election of 2008 into a red, white, and blue battle of icons. Two "personalities," the patriotic prisoner-of-war and the earthy "frontier" governor are trying to appropriate "change" as their theme - and run against The Firm, headed by an empty suit and a bloviating senior partner.
The Hero and The Hunter present themselves as underdogs, flawed like me and you with pregnant kids, ugly divorces, and brothers-in-law from hell - but plain-spoken, decent, independent, and un-corruptible. The McCain Campaign's "Paris Hilton" ad baited Obama as a "celebrity" and snookered him into saying so-long to the arousing, audacity of hope oratory that had brought him to the dance. Instead, he stuck to the "issues" in his acceptance speech.

By contrast, John McCain's remarks were broader - and more thematic. To be sure, he recounted his POW experiences. But he then told the GOP Convention delegates that after he refused a deal to send him home, his captors "worked me over harder than they ever had before. For a long time. And they broke me. When they brought me back to my cell, I was hurt and ashamed, and I didn't know how I could face my fellow prisoners."

Having humbled himself, McCain brought the house down with three memorable lines: "I'm not running for president because I think I'm blessed with such personal greatness that history has anointed me to save our country in its hour of need. My country saved me. My country saved me, and I cannot forget it."

Sarah Palin played the victim card, even as she performed to perfection the role of pit bull. She made a meal out of media mendacity in mocking her resume as the mayor of Wasilla and governor of Alaska. Folks in small towns, she claimed, with confidence, "are the ones who do some of the hardest work in America...who grow our food, run our factories, and fight our wars." Images of the Gateway to the West and a lonely American flag were burnished in the background. Palin may be Paleolithic; she may be headed for a fall. But one thing about her high-wire act: it isn't boring, and she may well make it to the other side.

McCain and Palin are now swinging around swing states having fun, kind of the way it's supposed to be done after a convention. Their (old and new) "personas" give them an opportunity, golden in an age in which Americans are fascinated - and repelled - by celebrity politicians, to exploit their own rock star status, convince voters they're just plain folks, and pin the Hollywood tail on the (Democratic) donkey. In the Warholian Era of Infotainment, Obama may be overexposed. And, of course, the Republicans are trying to instigate a McCain Mutiny among women and working-class voters after eight long months of Barack vs. Hillary.

Democrats, it appears, still have not learned the lessons taught by political psychologist Drew Westen. Elections, Westen reminds us, are won and lost in the marketplace of emotions. All of us - not just the less-knowledgeable - evaluate "ideas" in the context of the feelings they elicit. These feelings prevail when they clash with attitudes toward specific policies. Successful candidates "manage" (okay, they manipulate) positive and negative emotions with master narratives about themselves and their opponents.

At the moment, as nuts as it sounds, McCain is Bono and Obama is, well, pro bono. The Republicans have sent The Hero and The Hunter into battle, and the Democrats want you to believe that change will come from a mediator and a politigator. If they want to win in 2008, the Democrats have to get out of the courtroom. This time, for a change, they must act on the knowledge that even if all the issues poll in their favor, they may not prevail. In 2008, more than ever before, the candidate voters perceive as the most "authentic" will win.

Presidential elections in the United States are basketball games, not soccer matches. So, even if the Republicans have scored a goal, there's still time for a Democratic master narrative. One that connects the principles, values, and policies of the candidate to his personality, passion and character. One that makes Americans forget that the choice is Lawyer and Lawyer or Hero and Hunter.