'Swift-boating' Obama

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The Obama Nation: Leftist Politics and the Cult of Personality
By Jerome R. Corsi
Threshold Editions
364 pages; $28

During the 2004 US presidential contest, a new synonym for smear campaign entered the English language. The Swift Boat Veterans for Truth, a political action committee with ties to Republican operatives, produced television ads and a book, *Unfit for Command*, which circulated innuendoes, dubious claims and falsehoods about John Kerry's patriotism and whether he deserved three Purple Hearts, a Bronze Star and a Silver Star for service in the US Navy during the Vietnam War. "Swift-boating" may well have cost Kerry the election.

The "swift-boaters" are back. In *The Obama Nation*, Jerome Corsi, a right-wing blogger and co-author of *Unfit for Command*, asserts that the Democratic presidential nominee can win only if he extends his charismatic, cult-of-personality "messiah theme to reach a new generation of voters coming of age in the music-video iPod generation" and hides his "extensive connections with Islam," radical racial politics and naive, no-nukes, anti-Israel foreign policy agenda. If a "petulant Obama" objects that he's been "swift-boated," Corsi predicts, he'll simply sound defensive.

*The Obama Nation* is, well, an abomination. Rummaging through the recycle bins and adding spit but not polish, Corsi assembles an array of allegations about Barack Obama's religious background, affinity for the ideology of black liberation, communist and socialist mentors, use of drugs and ties to indicted Chicago slum-lord Tony Rezko. Although Corsi maintains that if John McCain "sticks to the issues" he will become the next president of the United States, his sloppy and scurrilous screed sends a distinctly different signal: The politics of personal destruction will dominate the election of 2008.

Corsi's treatment of Obama's "ties to Islam" is emblematic of his modus operandi. Acknowledging, briefly and belatedly, that "there is no evidence Obama has ever practiced Islam," Corsi nonetheless spends one-third of his book suggesting that his life and lineage "predispose" Obama to the Muslim faith.

The titles of sections of chapters in *The Obama Nation* plant the seeds: "A Muslim Stepfather from Indonesia," "Barry Soetoro, Muslim" and "Islam Instruction Required." Corsi then reads into the record a blogger's baseless speculation that Obama's father, a Kenyan, followed the "prescripts of Islamic law" when he divorced his mother. He cites reports that young Barack wore Muslim garb, played in a prayer room, received instruction in the Koran at a government-run school, went to a
mosque with his stepfather and lived "in the middle of Muslims" in Jakarta.

He "wonders" if Obama recognized himself in the experiences, "including Islam" of Jeremiah Wright, his pastor at Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago. And whether Obama's support of Raila Odinga, his fellow "tribesman," includes an endorsement of the imposition of Shari’a law and equal representation of Muslims in all public appointments in Kenya.

Entertaining the possibility that Obama professed Christianity "as a front," Corsi concludes, disingenuously, that because no one can look into Obama's "heart or read his soul," Americans "must take him at his word." But he doesn't. Knowing that Obama will lose if voters perceive that he "tilts toward Islam," Corsi hopes the mud he's slung will stick.

*The Obama Nation* is animated by the audacity of mendacity. Although Obama has written that he "stopped getting high" when he was an undergraduate at Columbia University, Corsi contends that the Democrat has not yet answered questions about whether "he ever dealt drugs" and whether his use of marijuana and cocaine "extended into his law school days or beyond."

As he rehearses allegations about Obama as a serial plagiarist, Corsi adds an accusation of his own, unsullied by the facts, and repeats it a half-dozen times. Obama, he maintains, pilfered his campaign catchphrase, "change," from radical community organizer Saul Alinsky. Alinsky and Obama use "change" as "a code word." They justify ambiguity, misrepresentation and even outright lying as legitimate means to just ends. Their cause is the socialist revolution "those on the left have sought since the days of Karl Marx." Obama's proposal to redistribute income from the haves to the have-nots by raising the long-term capital gains tax to 28 percent, Corsi writes, is "proof of the point."

Corsi's deconstruction of Obama's voting record and policy pronouncements - surprise! - constitutes character assassination by another name. The candidate's support for late-term abortions, gun control legislation, progressive corporate and income taxes, government subsidies for health care and foreign aid to reduce global poverty, Corsi declares, reflect "little more than a leftist resentment traceable to his days in Hawaii and in college, smoking marijuana and drinking liquor while listening to the likes of aging communist poet Frank Marshall Davis rail against capitalism."

Verging on "fantasy and delusion," Obama's foreign policy agenda, according to Corsi, is predicated on "the power of his personality" to transform international relations. Although he'll say "whatever he has to say just to get elected," once in office he'll unilaterally disarm America, withdraw precipitately from Iraq, appease Ahmadinejad and Hamas and abandon Israel.

Promoted as "meticulously researched and documented," without intervention by "anyone in the Republican Party," *The Obama Nation* is, of course, nothing more than a book-form campaign commercial that brings new meaning to the term ad hominem.

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