

Written by Atty. Lope Lindio

Saturday, 19 April 2008 02:08 - Last Updated Saturday, 19 April 2008 02:23

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Adding to the environmental problem that is facing the world today, is the political garbage that is traveling the cyber sphere at the speed of light and polluting in its wake, the U.S. electoral atmosphere.

I'm referring again to the e-mails being circulated around that are questioning the patriotism of Senator Barack Obama. But the posting that's most insulting to the intelligence of sensible people is the one showing him not putting his right hand over his breast and just standing at attention during a pledge of allegiance ritual, while others at the same ceremony, like, Senator Hillary Clinton and Governor Bill Richardson of New Mexico, were seen dutifully covering their hearts. The contrast sought to be portrayed by the sender is artful and malicious. The ulterior motive could be made out from his ideological anxiety and "body language." Certainly, he has no use for Ms. Clinton and Mr. Richardson, more so, as paragons of patriotism, if it were not politically useful and starkly convenient, to drive home the point that Mr. Obama is unconventional, unpatriotic, and downright undeserving to run for U.S. President.

Some "paragons of patriotism" point out (wrongly) that Mr. Obama is unconventional, unpatriotic, and downright undeserving to run for U.S. President.

As I have pointed out before, I'm for Senator Clinton in her primary fight for the Democratic nomination against Senator Obama because I believe it's now a woman's turn to become President, among others. And I'm not trying to defend Mr. Obama, either. He can very well take care of himself. But I'm just finding this e-mail personally offensive because I feel I am taken for a fool. This tactic of outraging the public by appealing to their love of country in order to destroy Mr. Obama is a desperate effort of those who are obsessed with stopping his candidacy by any means.

Perhaps, they are really scared of his becoming President for reasons they cannot let us know. They don't want to be embarrassed being identified for what they are. Bigots, maybe, but very

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likely, they are just religious conservatives concerned about the waning days of an administration that is scared of them. Or perhaps, they have calculated that Mr. Obama is a more formidable Democratic candidate against the nominal Republican nominee, Senator John McCain.

I can very well understand the paranoia. Imagine the scenario of John McCain, all 72 years of him showing, and he's pointed out as the man involved in a supposedly brewing love triangle with a young pretty lobbyist, as recently exposed in the *Washington Post*. He will look every inch a dirty old man as against a clean young-man image of Barack Obama, whose youthful license to succumb to temptations of the flesh has yet to be unearthed, if indeed, there's any secret that can be uncovered.

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The issue of age is a powerful one. Less than two months ago, for example, Mr. McCain was fumbling his facts and figures, obviously during some senior moments. Despite his admittedly vast knowledge and experience, the confusion makes him look too old and worn out for the most difficult job in the free world. In this press conference he called during a trip to Iraq, he had a problem differentiating and identifying who did what, Shiites or Sunni, or was it Iran or Iraq, that his trusted friend Senator Joe Lieberman of Connecticut had to come to his rescue.

This is a sure sign of debilitating old age, which is entirely understandable to most of our readers who are past 60 years old. The young, on the other hand, have a bias against the old. Any McCain partisan should be fearful of this generational ganging-up of an elderly candidate. It could undermine the best of presidential campaigns, especially if the opponent is vigorously

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youthful, equally knowledgeable, but stronger and better suited for heavy lifting in the White House.

These concerns must have prompted these numerous underhanded e-mails intended to torpedo Mr. Obama's campaign. But like this pledge-of-allegiance controversy, they are distractions that sideline the real issues which, in the words of candidates McCain, Clinton, and Obama, are the war in Iraq, the economy, health care, etc.

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But to my mind, the sad part about this e-mailed picture is that many are being taken by its misleading message. The picture is so well captioned by a commentary suggesting that while all others were showing love of country by putting their hands over their breast, Mr. Obama kept his down. This set in motion patriotic convulsions to those vulnerable to such antics, even among those never known for caring much about what's going on in this country, or observing the protocol of doing the hand-act during pledges of allegiance.

The occasions when the pledges are recited are a lot fewer than singing the national anthem. In both cases, it is indeed a pretty sight doing the hand-act. But truly, how many really bother to do it? Military men, for one, have developed the habit. But for most people, including presidents, governors, and other high officials, they don't routinely do the hand-act during such occasions. But they are making a big deal out of Mr. Obama not doing it!

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How is it that the hand-act is now equal to love of country? After all, it's just a whim or a choice. To most people doing it, it's just showcasing of their knowledge of proper social decorum, especially to those known for dramatics, demonstrativeness or exhibitionism. In the Filipino-American community, for example, where Mr. Obama's no hand-act is being censured, less than 10% of those attending social gatherings do the hand-act when the national anthem is sung. Yet, you're hearing them exclaiming or rolling their eyes, at the audacity of Senator Obama not doing the hand act! Hypocrisy? No. Antipathy against Mr. Obama? Yes. They are making up excuses to cover-up their inability to accept a Black candidate. They'll look less sexy, too red-neck, miseducated, or unkind, for saying the real reason.

Is the Obama bitter treatment is coming full circle?

When the hand-act will become the litmus test of good citizenship, there might be a massive witch hunt for those who have not been following this protocol for years. I hope that their loyalty to this country will not be compromised just because there are pictures showing them not consistently doing it.

This could very well happen if Uncle Sam really wants to get them very badly, for some reason or another, like questions involving national security matters, and Uncle Sam cannot find something else to pin them down. The government can play gotcha and show pictures of them not placing their hands on their breast, every time the national anthem is played or the pledge of allegiance is recited. They are disloyal to this country!

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Now, the Obama bitter treatment is coming full circle. # # #

Editor's Note: The author is a practicing lawyer in Houston, Texas, and is licensed also to practice law in Illinois. He is a community leader, who presently heads the Texas chapter of the National Federation of Filipino-American Associations. He is one of the pillars also of the Filipino-American Community of South Texas.

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