

Obama needs a second act

Barack Obama is on a roll. Every day brings fresh proof of his surge: He outperformed Hillary Clinton's vaunted machine in the early fund-raising and a new poll has him tied with her for the Democratic nomination.

If he were a stock, I'd sell him now. Until he gets a second act, Obama can only go down from here.

The burden of being different — the essence of his appeal — is starting to show on the rookie senator from Illinois. As the excitement of his entry into the race fades, it's not enough just to be the anti-Hillary, anti-Bush, anti-Washington candidate. We need to know more about him — how he sees events, how he thinks, what he would do. Like a character in a drama, we need to see him grow and develop new dimensions.

That's not happening, and so an opportunity may be slipping by. With Clinton in a rough patch of her own making — she's JFK one day, Harriet Tubman the next — Obama has picked a lousy time to show his clay feet.

Worse, he's putting them in his mouth, with his comments on the

Virginia Tech massacre certifiably goofy. He used the murder of 32 students and professors to bemoan "the degree to which we do accept violence in various forms." He linked the slaughter to radio jock Don Imus' slur against the Rutgers women's basketball team, calling it "verbal violence." Then it was outsourcing, calling it "the violence of men and women who . . . suddenly have the rug pulled out from under them because their job has moved to another country."



Michael Goodwin

Bad schools and bad neighborhoods were counted as other kinds of violence, then it was Darfur. He said we run our "foreign policy as if the children in Darfur are somehow less than the children here and so we tolerate violence there."

As Charles Krauthammer asked in these pages, "Is Obama, who proudly opposed overthrowing the premier mass murderer of our time, Saddam Hussein, suggesting an invasion of Sudan?"

No, Obama was just playing the liberal game of moral equivalency. It's a form of sloppy thinking where all bad things are equal, no matter their impact. Holding hands and singing "Kumbaya" is



Photo by John Gress/Reuters

the universal antidote to all of them.

A speech he gave Monday fell into the same trap. "In today's globalized world, the security of the American people is inextricably linked to the security of all people," Obama told the Chicago Council on Global Affairs. "When narco-trafficking and corruption threaten democracy in Latin America, it's America's problem, too. When poor villagers in Indonesia have no choice but to send chickens to market infected with avian flu, it cannot be seen as a distant concern. When religious schools in Pakistan teach hatred to young children, our children are threatened as well."

The moral equivalency came wrapped in a platitude. "Whether it's global terrorism or pandemic disease, dramatic climate change or the proliferation of weapons of

mass annihilation, the threats we face at the dawn of the 21st century can no longer be contained by borders and boundaries."

O bama did take a stab at priorities — briefly. He called the spread of weapons of mass destruction the "threat that rises above all others in urgency."

But what would he do about it? He pledged to build alliances and partnerships and, yep, work with the United Nations. First he would reform it, but not just so we could prevent wars, but also so we could stop the spread of avian flu and climate change and bring "dignity and opportunity" to the whole world.

Apparently, all those things are linked. And equal, too.

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Uncle Jimbo on Democrats

The Dems have no rationale, that withstands even mild scrutiny, for the blatant political plays they are making with our troops' lives and our nation's security. It is shameful and they must pay a price. When your party's policy goals align perfectly with Al Qaeda and Iran and are in direct open opposition to the U.S. commander in chief's, you ought to check yourself before you wreck yourself.

blackfive.net

Ben Adler on metal bats

People who are injured by metal bats, or fall ill from smoking or fatty food, cost the rest of us money. We pay their emergency room bill, their Medicare bills or their Social Security disability insurance. Only someone willing to forgo those benefits should have the right to also opt out of public health laws like those passed by the New York City Council, or preexisting ones requiring that motorcyclists wear helmets and drivers wear seat belts.

prospect.org/weblog

Jane Hamsher on abortion

I don't know for certain if the five Catholic Supreme Court justices were influenced by their religious beliefs, nobody can, but it's perfectly reasonable to speculate that their decisions . . . may have been influenced by the fact that they ascribe to a faith that thinks abortion is both murder and a mortal sin. It's not anti-Catholic bigotry and those who want to shut down the conversation by screaming that it is just don't want to argue on the merits because really, they probably have none.

firedoglake.com

Jim Geraghty on Hillary

On Hillary's Web site, she has a "wage gap calculator" that "determines how women are shortchanged by unequal pay. Enter your information into the fields, and get your reality check." . . .

I'm wondering why the calculator doesn't ask the user how many stretches of time the user takes off for maternity leave or raising children, which is a huge factor in the wage gap. It's tough to make the same amount of money over a career when you take months, or in many cases, years off to raise children.

hillaryspot.nationalreview.com

Rachel Sklar on Yale

Every since it came to light that Virginia Tech gunman Seung-Hui Cho was a terrible playwright, we had an ominous feeling that this particular intersection of academia, writing and psychopathy was inevitably going to lead to someone doing something profoundly stupid. Nevertheless, we weren't prepared for the decision made by Yale University's Dean of Student Affairs Betty Trachtenberg, who yesterday made a decision so divinely inane, so incomprehensibly nut-log, that to call it mind-boggling simply defames the notion of boggling a mind: Citing the Virginia Tech tragedy, Trachtenberg handed down a fiat that bans the use of weapons in school-sponsored stage productions.

huffingtonpost.com/eat-the-press

BE OUR GUEST

Put Bush's 'puppy dog' terror theory to sleep

Does the President think terrorists are puppy dogs? He keeps saying that terrorists will "follow us home" like lost dogs. This will only happen, however, he says, if we "lose" in Iraq.

The puppy dog theory is the corollary to earlier sloganeering that proved the President had never studied logic: "We are fighting terrorists in Iraq so that we will not have to face them and fight them in the streets of our own cities."

Remarkably, in his attempt to embrace the failed Iraqi adventure even more than the President, Sen. John McCain is now parroting the line. "We lose this war and come home, they'll follow us home," he says.

How is this odd terrorist puppy dog behavior supposed to work? The President must believe that terrorists are playing by some odd rules of chivalry. Would this be the "only one slaughter ground at a time" rule of terrorism?

Of course, nothing about our being "over there" in any way prevents terrorists from coming here. Quite the opposite, the evidence is overwhelming that our presence provides motivation for people throughout the Arab world to become anti-American terrorists.

Some 100,000 Iraqis, probably more, have been killed since our invasion. They have parents, children, cousins and fellow tribal clan members who have pledged revenge no matter how long it takes. For many, that revenge is focused on America.

At the same time, investing time, energy and resources in Iraq takes our eye off two far

more urgent tasks at hand: one, guarding the homeland against terrorism much better than the pork-dispensing Department of Homeland Security currently does the job; and two, systematically dismantling Al Qaeda all over the world, from Canada to Asia to Africa. On both these fronts, the Bush administration's focus is sorely lacking.

Yet in the fantasyland of illogic in which the President dwells, shaped by slogans devised by spin doctors, America can "win" in Iraq. Then, we are to believe, the terrorists will be so demoralized that they will recant their beliefs and cease their terrorist ways.

In the real world, by choosing unnecessarily to go into Iraq, Bush not only diverted efforts from delivering a death blow to Al Qaeda, he gave that movement both a second chance and the best recruiting tool possible.

Richard Clarke