

Top Stories

- President & Occupation
- If I Forget Thee...
- Pakistan & Palestine
- Suicide Lobby
- March On Washington
- Strangers in the Land
- Charlie Wilson's War
- Letters to the Editor

Special Dossier: Pres. Primaries

- Passover Primary?
- Sen. Barack Obama
- Sen. Hillary Clinton
- Sen. John McCain
- Gov. Mitt Romney
- Rep. Ron Paul

Media Watchpost

- American Smear-Artist
- Forward v. Exponent

In Their Own Words

- Michael Weinstein
- Steven Rothman

Networking Central

- Granny Peace Brigade

Community

- Demolished Shul
- Jewish NFL
- Bernard Katz
- Yiddish & Klezmer

Teen Voice

- Walking The Walk
- Jewish and Proud

Raising A Mensch

- The Good Parent

Living Judaism

- The Honey & The Sting

The Kosher Table

- Jewish Soups

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Media Watchpost

American Smear-Artist

Ed Lasky attacks Senator Barack Obama.

-- Ira Forman

Buried between traditional spam messages about get-rich-quick schemes and limited time offers, many members of the Jewish community have found despicable smear emails polluting their inboxes in recent weeks. Such [emails](#) aimed at [Barack Obama](#) (and targeting Jewish voters) have been so outrageous that leaders from nine non-partisan Jewish organizations recently took the nearly unprecedented step of signing onto a strongly worded letter repudiating these smear tactics.

But the right-wing attack machine is not just using scurrilous emails to mug their opponents. Mainline conservative have been using more "legitimate" web sites to traffic in innuendo about the Democratic candidates-- with many of their fallacious attacks landing in the discredited emails.

Ed Lasky of the conservative *American Thinker* has been a primary culprit in this endeavor. He has been writing about Obama for months and his "analysis" is to the Illinois Senator as was Walt and Mearsheimers' to the pro-Israel community: a political agenda wrapped in faulty logic and incorrect assertions.

Lasky's recent screed, "[Barack Obama and Israel](#)" offers a preview of what the GOP smear campaign would look like should Obama win the Democratic nomination. Given that similar smear campaigns have been launched against [Senator Hillary Clinton](#) and [Senator John Edwards](#), it is clear these tactics will be used by conservative operatives in the General Election against any Democratic nominee.

Lasky's piece is filled with half-truths, omission of "inconvenient facts," innuendo, deeply flawed logic, undocumented charges, hearsay, and guilt by distant association.

Before delving into a few examples of Lasky's smear tactics, it is important to note that Senator Obama is a strong supporter of Israel who is immensely popular in the Chicago Jewish community. He has never cast a vote against a pro-Israel position in the U.S. Senate and has been called pro-Israel by non-partisan analysts such as *Haaretz's* Shmuel Rosner, who [wrote](#) that Obama "is pro-Israel. Period." *The New York Sun* (hardly a bastion of support for Democrats) [editorialized](#): "At least by our lights, Mr. Obama's commitment to Israel, as he has articulated it so far in his campaign, is quite moving and a tribute to the broad, bipartisan support that the Jewish state has in America."

In bashing Obama, Lasky asks readers to ignore the Senator's voting record and strong statements of support for Israel and instead judge the man on peripheral issues, some false, some mischaracterized and some based on oddball logic.

In one bizarre passage, Lasky suggests Obama may be hostile to Israel because he spoke of a desire to see the world rid of *all* nuclear weapons (as did Ronald Reagan in the 1980's). What does this have to do with Israel, one may ask? Lasky writes that Obama's justification is "identical to arguments made in the Arab world that justify their pursuit of nuclear weapons because Israel has nuclear weapons." To any true American "thinker" such non-sequitur is akin to asking, "do you walk to school, or bring your lunch?"

Lasky pulls a similar stunt when he writes "As Barack has put it, Iraq is under occupation by America (which makes one wonder how he feels about Israeli settlements)." This ridiculous stretch in logic is reminiscent of arguments made by McCarthyites.

In another passage, Lasky tries to make Obama guilty by association because his Church denomination (United Church of Christ) has been critical of Israel. Strange that right-wing operatives take this position with Obama but don't with Bush and Cheney (United Methodist) or McCain (Episcopalian).

Lasky grudgingly accepts that Obama is Christian (while going out of his way to remind his reader of purported ties to Islam, like another conservative flack, Daniel Pipes) and then makes a ridiculous and offensive suggestion that Obama joined his church out of political expediency. This is particularly ironic given that Lasky is trying to score political points by bashing the very same church.

At another point in his article, Lasky seeks to belittle Obama for being the chief Senate sponsor of one of AIPAC's priority pieces of legislation, a bill that facilitates divestment from Iran. Lasky claims the bill is unimportant. AIPAC thinks differently, and readers will have to make their own choice whether to believe a political hatchet man instead of an institution of the Jewish community which is charged with pro-Israel advocacy.

The smear campaign launched against Obama brings back memories of both the Swift Boat attacks of 2004 and a nasty email campaign geared at Jewish voters which falsely claimed Senator Kerry's wife supported Hamas. The Big Lie about Hamas was largely confined to email, however. What is going on with Obama therefore has the potential to be far worse because mainline conservatives are gleefully participating.

As noted the '08 smears have not been limited to Obama. Moreover, when Hillary Clinton ran for the U.S. Senate in 2000 she was subjected to the same type of mudslinging. There is only one way to clear this up within the Jewish community: reject the fear mongering, demand the truth and shun those who specialize in back-alley political muggings, like Lasky and Pipes.

Ira N. Forman is Executive Director of the [National Jewish Democratic Council](#).

The NJDC does not endorse in primaries and does not have a preference between [Senator Clinton](#) and [Senator Obama](#).



Senator Barack Obama speaks at AIPAC meeting.

Shabbat times for Philadelphia

Holiday: [Rosh Chodesh Adar I](#) on Wednesday, 06 Feb 2008

Holiday: [Rosh Chodesh Adar I](#) on Thursday, 07 Feb 2008

Candle lighting: 5:10pm on Friday, 08 Feb 2008
This week's Torah portion is [Parashat Terumah](#)
Havdalah (50 min): 6:19pm on Saturday, 09 Feb 2008

[1-Click Shabbat](#)
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