

Misogyny I Won't Miss

By Marie Cocco

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As the Democratic nomination contest slouches toward a close, it's time to take stock of what I will not miss.

I will not miss seeing advertisements for T-shirts that bear the slogan "Bros before Hos." The shirts depict Barack Obama (the Bro) and Hillary Clinton (the Ho) and are widely sold on the Internet.

I will not miss walking past airport concessions selling the Hillary Nutcracker, a device in which a pantsuit-clad Clinton doll opens her legs to reveal stainless-steel thighs that, well, bust nuts. I won't miss television and newspaper stories that make light of the novelty item.

I won't miss episodes like the one in which liberal radio personality Randi Rhodes called Clinton a "big [expletive] whore" and said the same about former vice presidential nominee Geraldine Ferraro. Rhodes was appearing at an event sponsored by a San Francisco radio station, before an audience of appreciative Obama supporters -- one of whom had promoted the evening on the presumptive Democratic nominee's official campaign Web site.

I won't miss Citizens United Not Timid (no acronym, please), an anti-Clinton group founded by Republican guru Roger Stone.

Political discourse will at last be free of jokes like this one, told last week by magician Penn Jillette on MSNBC: "Obama did great in February, and that's because that was Black History Month. And now Hillary's doing much better 'cause it's White Bitch Month, right?" Co-hosts Joe Scarborough and Mika Brzezinski rebuked Jillette.

I won't miss political commentators (including National Public Radio political editor Ken Rudin and Andrew Sullivan, the columnist and blogger) who compare Clinton to the Glenn Close character in the movie "Fatal Attraction." In the iconic 1987 film, Close played an independent New York woman who has an affair with a married man played by Michael Douglas. When the liaison ends, the jilted woman becomes a deranged, knife-wielding stalker who terrorizes the man's blissful suburban family. Message: Psychopathic home-wrecker, begone.

The airwaves will at last be free of comments that liken Clinton to a "she-devil" (Chris Matthews on MSNBC, who helpfully supplied an on-screen mock-up of Clinton sprouting horns). Or those who offer that she's "looking like everyone's first wife standing outside a probate court" (Mike Barnicle, also on MSNBC).

But perhaps it is not wives who are so very problematic. Maybe it's mothers. Because, after all, Clinton is more like "a scolding mother, talking down to a child" (Jack Cafferty on CNN).

When all other images fail, there is one other I will not miss. That is, the down-to-the-basics, simplest one: "White women are a problem, that's -- you know, we all live with that" (William Kristol of Fox News).

I won't miss reading another treatise by a man or woman, of the left or right, who says that sexism has had not even a teeny-weeny bit of influence on the course of the Democratic campaign. To hint that sexism might possibly have had a minimal role is to play that risible "gender card."

Most of all, I will not miss the silence.

I will not miss the deafening, depressing silence of Democratic National Committee Chairman Howard Dean or other leading Democrats, who to my knowledge (with the exception of Sen. Barbara Mikulski of Maryland) haven't publicly uttered a word of outrage at the unrelenting, sex-based hate that has been hurled at a former first lady and two-term senator from New York. Among those holding their tongues are hundreds of Democrats for whom Clinton has campaigned and raised millions of dollars. Don Imus endured more public ire from the political class when he insulted the Rutgers University women's basketball team.

Would the silence prevail if Obama's likeness were put on a tap-dancing doll that was sold at airports? Would the media figures who dole out precious face time to these politicians be such pals if they'd compared Obama with a character in a blaxploitation film? And how would crude references to Obama's sex organs play?

There are many reasons Clinton is losing the nomination contest, some having to do with her strategic mistakes, others with the groundswell for "change." But for all Clinton's political blemishes, the darker stain that has been exposed is the hatred of women that is accepted as a part of our culture.

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