

# Web-Surfing the Candidates

BY MARNI SOUPCOFF

**O**n the "Presidential Field" section of its website, the *Washington Post* points out that "the 2008 presidential race is expected to be the first in decades that won't include a sitting president or vice president in the field of candidates vying for the White House." For some reason, the site fails to mention that the 2008 presidential race will also be the first in decades that won't include a single individual you'd trust enough to valet park your car — even if you drive a used Pinto.

Rep. Ron Paul may be the exception. But seeing as his campaign has only raised enough money to buy a used Pinto, it's hard to take much comfort there. And anyway, it seems overly optimistic to expect the American people to endorse a guy who wants to return to the gold standard. Half the country considers an American Express Gold Card too right-wing for its taste.

Am I being too negative? I took a tour of the candidates' websites to see if there's some cause for hope about this crew, but the results were far from encouraging.

On *HillaryClinton.com*, I watched a *YouTube* video of Maya Angelou endorsing the senator. "I know her as a woman," Angelou declared of Mrs. Clinton. Angelou then assured the former first lady that a lot of people have had "profound affection for you ever since you stood up as a woman and said, 'Yes, I'm a woman.'"

Did I miss something? Had someone accused Hillary of being a man? Are the short haircuts and pantsuits causing confusion on the campaign trail?

Having established the sex of Bill Clinton's wife, I moved on to John McCain's site. I should tell you that, unlike the bulk of his campaign staff, the site was still there. And the website tells visitors that McCain (whom, I will point out, for Maya Angelou's benefit, is male) has taken a bold stand on the issue that he terms "human dignity." It turns out that he's all for it.

Over on Mitt Romney's site, "Issue Watch" lists his most important policy positions. Number one is "Defeating the

Jihadists." That should put to rest all those rumors that Mormons have a soft spot for militant Islam.

None of the other candidates had much more to offer.

My visit to vegan Dennis Kucinich's site ended shortly after I learned that he plans to create a Department of Peace.

I lingered over at *www.Brownback.com* only a little longer, eventually scared off by Mary Brownback's creepy invitation: "Will you be a part of my [25th wedding anniversary] gift to Sam?"

Meanwhile, Barack Obama proclaims on his website that he will fight poverty by raising the minimum wage. You can just imagine how happy poor Americans would be if his plan comes to pass. "I may not be able to get a job anymore, but man, I'd be making a *load* of money if I could!"

John Edwards is different. According to his website, he doesn't just want to fight poverty, he wants to end poverty — and to do so by the year 2036. That should give him and his fellow "poverty law" attorneys enough time to line their pockets with plenty of cash before having to find a new specialty. I should point out that, no matter how popular Edwards turns out to be, some other schmuck will be

running the country in 2036. So it'll be *that* guy's fault if the entire population isn't eating *foie gras* and driving a Lexus by then. Hey — Edwards will be able to say with a shrug — *I did all I could. Now, tell me, have you or anyone you know been injured in an automobile accident?*

The '08 candidates are a pretty sorry lot. All of them want to stick their noses in our business one way or the other: Rudy Giuliani wants to keep up George W. Bush's domestic surveillance program. Joe Biden wants to surge military forces in Afghanistan. And Fred Thompson wants to require all Americans to watch reruns of *Law and Order*. (OK, I made up that last one, but power does strange things to people.)

None of these candidates have what it takes to make Americans believe in them and follow them unquestioningly. And, come to think of it, that may be a bright spot for Campaign 2008.

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