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**Sarah "Six-Pack"
This Presidential Campaign's "Culture War"
Between The Lines**

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When Sarah Palin signaled to the "Bubba" vote that she was part of the "Joe six-pack" crowd - meaning she was just an average American seeking to represent the nation on the highest ticket in the land - during her debate with Joe Biden last week, it became obvious that this presidential campaign would no longer be about the issues. Despite the fact that the American people are suffering through the worse economy in years and want answers, as well as solutions, Palin refused to answer Gwen Ifill's questions.

In the days after the debate, and despite the fact that Americans have had their fill of an average person in the White House the past eight years (and that's giving Bush the benefit of the doubt), both Palin and John McCain have begun a coded language fight with which we're all too familiar. With McCain's presidential chances fading fast and as the polls become increasing more reflective of the public's intolerance around the Republicans ticket's avoidance of the core issues about which Americans care, Palin and McCain have decided to make this presidential campaign a "culture" war over what is American, who is American and what represents America.

Speaking in codes as only extremists do, the McCain campaign has shifted the conversation away from the dominate issue in the daily news cycle, the collapsing economy, to the fear and alienation of what an Obama administration would mean to the "average" American. This engagement in cultural identity politics, or whiteness politics, without saying the word "white" is loaded with all the signs and symbolism of historical xenophobia. Starting with Sarah Palin's favorite sign, "the wink," coded signals are all through the McCain-Palin message. Palin, who started out as a hockey mom, went to hunting mom, then went to soccer mom and now is a beer-packing mom, has proven herself to be a base pick with "average" intellect about government

and governance. By "base" pick, I mean an ultra conservative right winger that will draw that segment of the party's base that wouldn't support McCain under nearly any circumstance - segments that know code language when they hear it.

Once the McCain campaign found out she had "bimbo" tendencies, they gave a script and told her to stay on message. Her message? Invigorate the base with code language like mentioning "heartland" (code for white folks) and "terrorist" (code for un-American, or threat to America) as many times as she possibly could. The ideological codification is bent on suggesting Obama is alien and his contacts are threatening. This is really where you see the campaign's desperation.

To suggest any contact with "sixties" radicals in the 1980s and 1990s, somehow makes you a terrorist, or terrorist sympathizer, is about as dumb as suggesting that associating with segregationist back in the day makes you one, or suggesting everybody who has redneck friends are comfortable with racists or racists themselves.

While we know some of this is true, guess Palin never met ex-Black Panther, Bobby Russ or former California State Senator, Tom Hayden, to know that even domestic radicals reform. And McCain has a past too, that he's obviously reformed (Keating association). McCain and Palin are unabashed about going after the redneck vote, codified as the "average Joe," because it is that vote that will not always tell you how they are going to vote. But even the Bubba vote is hurting in this election and neither McCain, nor Palin, have any answers for them.

McCain is falling in the polls because he won't address the economy. He has to give voters, any voter, a reason to vote for him, not just reasons to vote against Obama. There will be plenty of those type voters, and we know why they are really not voting for Barack. Their "cultural" upbringing will not allow them to do it. Now Palin brings this dumbed-down approach to the campaign trail and while people are coming out to hear it - the culture war is not enough to cover up the economic abyss that McCain and his party orchestrated. But at this point in the race, it's all they have.

So expect them to bang that drum, that you know he's a n_____, codified as a terrorist, an alien, not American, or simply not "one of us" drum until election day. The politics of whiteness and privilege and entitlement will not give up the presidential seat without exhausting all options. It's a cultural war Barack Obama will have to endure to the end.

It's a part of being in America and all that goes with it.

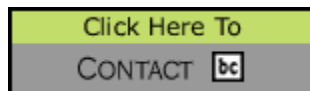
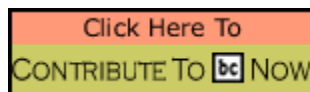
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