

HOME PAGE MY TIMES TODAY'S PAPER VIDEO MOST POPULAR

My Account Welcome, wmlieslie Log Out Help

TIMES TOPICS

The New York Times Wednesday, December 5, 2007

Politics

U.S. All NYT Search



WORLD U.S. N.Y. / REGION BUSINESS TECHNOLOGY SCIENCE HEALTH SPORTS OPINION ARTS STYLE TRAVEL JOBS REAL ESTATE AUTOS

POLITICS WASHINGTON EDUCATION

Search This Blog [input field] Search

All NYTimes.com Blogs »

The Caucus Front-Runners

- [The Candidates' Tough Stances, on TV](#) (4 comments)
- [Romney Fires Landscaping Company](#) (34 comments)
- [We're Just Kidding!](#) (102 comments)
- [Blogging NPR's Democratic Debate](#) (143 comments)
- [Romney, Politics and Religion](#) (38 comments)

OPEN CAUCUS

The Voters Speak

The Times's virtual round table of voters discuss the Republican debate.

About Open Caucus »



ON THE ROAD

Holiday Travel

The Romneys in New Hampshire, the Clinton campaign in Iowa, and Rudolph Giuliani's new bus.

More On the Road Features »



Get a FREE magazine subscription and stay informed.

ON THE ISSUES

Where They Stand

Compare what the



INTERACTIVE FEATURE

Candidates on the Trail

View a

Back to front page »

DECEMBER 4, 2007, 9:27 PM

Mum's the Word for Student Who Asked Clinton Question

By JEFF ZELENY

GRINNELL, Iowa - Remember the story of the college sophomore who asked a planted question to Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton?

There she was, standing a stone's throw from Senator Barack Obama at a rally here tonight at Grinnell College. When it came time to take questions from the crowd, Mr. Obama smiled as he made a reference to the incident, assuring his audience that his questions were not prearranged, predetermined or planted.

It's the same applause line he's been using across the state for a few weeks now, hoping to keep the matter fresh in the mind of Iowa voters. Little did he know that the woman, Muriel Gallo-Chasanoff, was standing directly in front of him, waving her hand in the air in an attempt to be called upon.

As several students pointed her direction and she broke out laughing, Mr. Obama finally realized who was standing in his midst. "I didn't know she was going to be here," he declared.

He did not, however, call on Ms. Gallo-Chasanoff. Yet she clapped, cheered and chanted along with the rest of the crowd when Mr. Obama's delivered his traditional closing speech: "Fired Up, Ready To Go!"

As he shook hands along the rope line, he paused to talk briefly with her. In a quiet voice, she asked about the

trajectory of his political career. Leaning close, he said, “I lucked out,” before ticking through his path: long-shot Senate candidate, keynote speaker at the Democratic National Convention and, now, a presidential candidate.

After she shook his hand, Ms. Gallo-Chasanoff told a campaign worker that she was not ready to sign a supporter card for Mr. Obama. As she turned to walk away, she found a small gaggle of reporters waiting for her. She waved off questions, declining to say what she thought of Mr. Obama or whether she intended to support a candidate in the Jan. 3 caucuses.

After giving the cameras the slip, Ms. Gallo-Chasanoff was reprising the incident with a handful of friends who surrounded her. In a brief conversation with The Caucus, she insisted that she had no interest in talking, saying: “I’m just back to being a student.”

She did, however, join hundreds of supporters, as they did the traditional Obama chant, “Fired Up, Ready To Go!” Does that offer a hint of her feelings? If it did, her lips were sealed.

[LINK](#) [E-MAIL THIS](#)

THE CAUCUS, BARACK OBAMA, IOWA

RELATED

- [2008 Like It's Today](#)
- [A Case of Political Counter-Programming](#)
- [Clinton Steps Up Attacks on Obama](#)
- [Battered by Poll, Clinton Hits Back](#)

71 comments so far...

1. December 4th, 2007 9:51 pm What a story! Let’s recap. Muriel Gallo-Chasanoff approaches the Clinton staff saying she wants to ask her a question, they oblige with some suggestions, she gets called on and asks the question they suggested.

Now, she could have asked a different question when called on, but she didn’t. Also, she wasn’t on the campaign payroll, she was absolutely without constraint, so she herself wasn’t a “plant” but somehow the question was still a “plant”.

2008 candidates have said on [Iran](#), [Iraq](#), [Health Care](#), [Climate Change](#), [Abortion](#) and [Immigration](#).



[calendar](#) of the 2008 candidates’ coming appearances and an [interactive map](#) of their past travels.



Candidates

DEMOCRATS

Joseph R. Biden Jr.



[Posts](#)
[Topic Page](#)
[Video](#)

Hillary Rodham Clinton



[Posts](#)
[Topic Page](#)
[Video](#)

Christopher J. Dodd



[Posts](#)
[Topic Page](#)
[Video](#)

John Edwards



[Posts](#)
[Topic Page](#)
[Video](#)

Mike Gravel



[Posts](#)
[Topic Page](#)

Dennis J. Kucinich



[Posts](#)
[Topic Page](#)

Barack Obama



[Posts](#)
[Topic Page](#)
[Video](#)

Bill Richardson



[Posts](#)
[Topic Page](#)
[Video](#)

REPUBLICANS

Rudolph W. Giuliani



[Posts](#)
[Topic Page](#)
[Video](#)

Mike Huckabee



[Posts](#)
[Topic Page](#)
[Video](#)

Duncan Hunter



[Posts](#)
[Topic Page](#)

John McCain



[Posts](#)
[Topic Page](#)
[Video](#)

Ron Paul



[Posts](#)
[Topic Page](#)

Mitt Romney



[Posts](#)
[Topic Page](#)
[Video](#)

Tom Tancredo



[Posts](#)
[Topic Page](#)

Fred Thompson



[Posts](#)
[Topic Page](#)
[Video](#)

Monthly Archives

Select Month

Popular Tags

2008 [abortion](#) [barack obama](#) [bill clinton](#) [bill richardson](#) [blogs](#) [California](#) [campaign](#) [cash](#) [chris dodd](#) [cnn](#) [Congress](#) [CONSERVATIVES](#) [debates](#) [Democrats](#) [dick cheney](#) [Florida](#) [fred thompson](#) [fund raising](#) [G.O.P.](#) [George W.](#)

Instead of exercising her freedom, she asks the “planted” question and then she writes a little exposé to make herself a famous student journalist and accuse the Clinton campaign of something far worse than helping to frame questions for a supposed supporter.

Now, oh surprise, she’s an Obama supporter! Who would have guessed.

Why isn’t anyone asking the obvious question: was she coached by Obama’s campaigners to go to Clinton’s event and be coached by them? Even if not, she looks like as much a phony to me as any candidate in this race.

— Posted by ItsFreedomStupid

2. December 4th, 2007 10:20 pm I just bet that Obama campaign devised this whole scenario to make Hillary’s side look bad. This is no coincidence. Obama keeps showing that he is a dirty player. He’s got no character at all. Obama is at the point where he will say and do anything to try and destroy Hillary. I am sure that student is a “plant” by Obama’s people.

I would like more information on what he says is his past drug use—cocaine and pot. He wants to uphold the laws of this nation after already breaking them. How do we know that it is in the past? It is a fair question. If Obama wants to be president, citizens have the right to know that his drug use is definitely in the past. He is a criminal drug offender like any other criminal drug offender, many who are in prison. I would never vote for Obama for many reasons, including what he says is past drug use. Why is he getting a free pass on this very important issue of criminal activity?

— Posted by Debra Garson

3. December 4th, 2007 10:21 pm 2nd attempt : Why, pray tell, do we need an update on this student’s current adventures? She is doing fine on her own. And already knows how to play the media - wow ! Impressive - give her to the corporate media.

— Posted by Leticia P. Carlos

4. December 4th, 2007 10:31 pm ItFreedomStupid, Let’s see... if Hillary’s campaign coached her to ask a question, placing her in the center of a reasonably important scandal, don’t you think she MIGHT not support Hillary anymore?

— Posted by ItsTheTruthStupid

Bush **Harry Reid** **health care** **Hillary Rodham Clinton** **House** **immigration** **Internet** **iowa** **Iraq** **joe biden** **john edwards** **john mccain** **mark foley** **midterm elections** **mike huckabee** **mitt romney** **Nancy Pelosi** **new hampshire** **political advertising** **polls** **primaries** **Republicans** **ron paul** **rudy giuliani** **sam brownback** **Senate** **South Carolina** **sunday shows** **terrorism** **White house** **YouTube**

Recent Posts

- December 5 2 comments **Lawmakers Propose Campaign Reform**
Members of the U.S. House and Senate try again to push for overhauling the public financing system for presidential campaigns.
- December 5 39 comments **Obama Issues Call for Public Service**
The Democratic candidate offers proposals that would offer incentives and rewards for those who volunteer.
- December 5 6 comments **The Candidates’ Tough Stances, on TV**
A strict policy, but with regards to watching television
- December 5 31 comments **Giuliani Ad Focuses on Iran**
The new Rudolph W. Giuliani ad evokes Ronald Reagan and calls for toughness in confronting “dictators” and “terrorists.”
- December 5 21 comments **The Early Word: Immigration and Iran**
The candidates may be moving on to other issues, but topics like immigration and Iran continue to simmer out there on the trail.

About The Caucus

[Kate Phillips](#) and The Times’s politics staff on the 2008 presidential elections and other political news from around the country.

[Who’s Who on the Political Desk](#)
[Caucus Chatter: A Q&A on reader comments.](#)



5. December 4th, 2007 10:33 pm
 freedom,
 You're kidding, right?
 Obama's people found out a girl was going to see Hillary Clinton, so they got ahold of her and told her to go trick Hillary's people into making a list of questions they wanted to plant in the audience, and then had her trick them into asking her to ask a question from the list of staged a questioned she tricked the Clinton campaign into writing?
 Yeah, you're right. That is the "obvious question".
 [sarcasm]
 – Posted by julie

6. December 4th, 2007 10:37 pm
 He is so classy! Who else — Democrat or Republican — comports himself so well in every situation?!
 President Obama will transform this country and change the world!
 – Posted by Suzanne F.

7. December 4th, 2007 10:40 pm
 She was not the only person that accused Hillary of planting questions.
 – Posted by VAmom

8. December 4th, 2007 10:41 pm
 It's the kind of 'coincidence' which makes one wonder if Ms. Gallo-Chasanoff is manipulating us all for her own diabolical ends.
 Sen. Obama certainly would have been a fool to call on her and invite much debate over whether her question was staged this time or not.
 – Posted by Dan Stackhouse

9. December 4th, 2007 10:42 pm
 ItsFreedomStupid: I count four factual errors in your "recap":
 1) The Clinton campaign approached her, not vice versa.
 2) The Clinton campaign suggested a question; she did not ask for one.
 3) She never "wrote an expose;" she told the story to a friend, who told the student newspaper, who buried the story on page 6 of a campus newspaper with a circulation of 2000. The national media picked it up from there.
 4) As the story makes clear, she is not committed to any candidate, let alone Obama.
 Your logic and Garson's is laughably flawed.
 "Coached by the Obama campaign to be coached by

Roll"

Also in Theater:

[Listen to a clip from Edward Albee's "Peter and Jerry"](#)
[What makes "Cyrano de Bergerac" a critic's pick?](#)
[The Piano Teacher is also a critic's pick](#)

Feeds

the Clinton campaign”?? How is that even possible?

Admit it — as Clinton’s campaign did — Hillary’s staff planted a question and was wrong to do so.

— Posted by Grinnellian

-
10. December 4th, 2007 10:44 pm So now the Hillary supporters are claiming Obama sent her to Hillary’s campaign event where the planted question was given to her? Are you people serious? This is even funnier than Kindergarten-Gate. You people truly are funny.
— Posted by Chima
-
11. December 4th, 2007 10:46 pm All this shows is that Obama can bring people together. The first commenter is right, this is no coincidence. It’s common sense: as Hillary’s support falls her former supporters are going to Obama.
— Posted by Adam
-
12. December 4th, 2007 10:49 pm This is just a little to cute to believe anything this young lady says. The first comment says it all.
— Posted by lylepink
-
13. December 4th, 2007 10:57 pm You’ve had nothing but negative Clinton articles all day.
What’s the deal?
— Posted by stuart
-
14. December 4th, 2007 10:58 pm ItsFreedomStupid #1: I see the Hillary Youth are still as paranoid Stalinist as ever. It’s never Hillary’s fault for anything! Everyone who accidentally makes her look bad is a traitor and a Trotskyite and should be executed for ruining Her Royal Highness’s good name!
— Posted by Its a Democracy Stupid
-
15. December 4th, 2007 11:01 pm The first comment says what most of us Hillary supporters have suspected all along.
— Posted by Don
-
16. December 4th, 2007 11:05 pm I thought the answer Obama gave to Muriel Gallo-Chasanoff question was on the mark about him lucking out.
Opportunities come and go, very few people can recognize them and go for them - Obama happens to be one of them and by acknowledging that he “lucked out”, he is basically admitting that fact.
I don’t think it’s unavoidable to not to report on

something about Muriel Gallo-Chasanoff, especially since she is a student there and was at the center of the CNN Event dispute, a while back.

Considering that she is at an Obama event - how can any journalist resist not following this bit of trivia pursuit?

— Posted by Ned

-
17. December 4th, 2007 11:13 pm Re: #1 - Your theory is that Obama's campaign was clever enough to train her in counter intel, successfully at that, and then invited her to the front row of his speech at Grinnell? Yeah, that seems probable.

Re: #2 - See Re: # 1, again, plus consider that it is your candidate who got busted manipulating public questions. Who's dirty? As to drug use, he's admitted it and moved on. I haven't heard Hillary address that yet, but I doubt she could honestly deny it either. Maybe the rational thing to do, then, is consider their respective positions rather than being spun by the media stories.

— Posted by Chris

-
18. December 4th, 2007 11:14 pm I'm on the mailing list for all three leading Democratic campaigns: Hillary, Edwards, Obama. Today, Hillary's website HillaryHub.com posted a notice that the dirty tricks in Iowa have started. Some Obama supporters berated Hillary supporters on the phone, and some bogus polls have been calling people with questions slanted against Hillary.

Then I just received an e-mail from the Edwards campaign, and guess what? They're also being hit by dirty tricks, including bogus pollsters asking questions slanted against their candidate.

If the Obama campaign is behind this then we're in big trouble. It's one thing to have our differences among leading candidates and make our choices, another to have someone so charismatic playing dirty to divide the party for his own ambition. Wouldn't surprise me at all if the Hillary "planted-question" girl was an Obama double-agent.

— Posted by Chris Corbell

-
19. December 4th, 2007 11:15 pm "Why isn't anyone asking the obvious question: was she coached by Obama's campaigners to go to Clinton's event and be coached by them? Even if not, she looks like as much a phony to me as any candidate in this race."

"ItsFreedomStupid," you must have not read this

part:

“After she shook his hand, Ms. Gallo-Chasanoff told a campaign worker that she was not ready to sign a supporter card for Mr. Obama.”

If you don't have anything substantial to say, please refrain from commenting.

As to Debra Garson's comment of:

“I would never vote for Obama for many reasons, including what he says is past drug use.”

Since you yourself are so incredibly “righteous,” you may be familiar with this verse:

“But when they persisted in asking Him, He straightened up, and said to them, ‘He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.’” John 8:7

And the funniest part of all is that you're actually attacking Obama's character in defense of Hillary???

I've heard it all now.

— Posted by Chandler

-
20. December 4th, 2007 11:16 pm What's with the bizarre accusations in #1 and #2? Ms. Gallo-Chasanoff has done nothing to merit derogatory comments, and there is no evidence Sen. Obama had anything to do with plantgate.
- Take a deep breath, people.
- Posted by Rachel

-
21. December 4th, 2007 11:21 pm The first two poster here must be either paranoid, die-hard Hillary fans, or HRC staff.
- The Obama campaign planted the plant? What non-sense!
- Go away HRC shills!
- Posted by Oscar

-
22. December 4th, 2007 11:26 pm It's obvious the student is just shopping around and listening to different candidates and going to various events.
- she is not a plant of the Obama campaign. She probably was invited by her friends and went. But, declining the card to sign up says she is still looking around at the candidates before choosing who to support.
- Lighten up on the young woman. She, like the guy with the video of Macaca, is a student getting her feet wet in politics and trying to take a mature route to find who to support.
- It is not her fault she was approached by the Clinton

camp. The fact that she did ask the planted question is more a young person feeling like she should in the face of more adult staffers or wanting to find out what the whole thing was about, out of curiosity.

– Posted by vvcats

-
23. December 4th, 2007 11:26 pm My my, BHO you are a wily and smart one, eh!The man will be the next president of the USA, for sure. He show foresight and cunning!

– Posted by Antoine

-
24. December 4th, 2007 11:37 pm There have been so many assumptions on this thread thus far, and I am only the fourth poster. Stop making so many assumption ie: Just because you don't know if Gallo-Chasanoff is a plant by the Clinton campaign does not make her a plant by the Obama campaign... and by the way, it's true, setting your individual policy apart from your opponents and claiming it's better is not "mudslinging."

– Posted by RTRaf

-
25. December 4th, 2007 11:40 pm I lean Repub so I'm not vested in Clinton or Obama... BUT If Obama's team coached the girl why would they have her in the stands and have Obama notice her.

Puleeze...this is not a conspiracy.

– Posted by Barc

-
26. December 4th, 2007 11:44 pm Leave the poor woman alone. If a link can be proven between her and the Obama campaign, by all means, show one. If not, pointless conjecture is simply ignorant and divisive.

– Posted by RTH

-
27. December 4th, 2007 11:55 pm As an independent (voted for Kerry in 2004), it does not matter to me how Clinton people planted the question or being juvenile on attacking Obama kindergaten foreign experience. At the end of the day, Obama and Edward are so liberal and weak on protecting this country from the terrorist that disqualify themself as the president of the United State.

– Posted by Tu Anh Le

-
28. December 4th, 2007 11:56 pm Surely we can have more relevant journalism?

– Posted by Vivek

29. December 5th, 2007 12:02 am Debra Garson (@ 10:20):
I feel your pain. Hillary seems to be melting down like that famous character in Wizard of Oz. But please don't blame it on Obama. She's defeating herself by just being Hillary.

Now if you don't like Obama because he is a Black Man (never mind his White mother and grandparents who brought him up), people will respect you for your honesty, even if not for your values.

But, by the standards you are using to judge him, Obama is far cleaner regarding drug use than the last two presidents - Bush and Clinton. Obama admitted openly, in a book (Dreams From My Father) he wrote years before he ever even entered politics, about EXPERIMENTING with common drugs AS A TEENAGER. He reached a sober conclusion about the ills of drug use before becoming an adult. And, he has never tried to hide that fact of his teenage indiscretion even on this campaign trail.

Now, contrast that with Clinton, who used pot as an adult in grad school, but could never muster the moral courage to say the truth, opting instead to use the now famous "I did not inhale" defense. This should have alerted us to his penchant for being untruthful to the public, which climaxed with his still more famous "I did not have sexual intercourse with that woman" line!

George Bush, to his credit did admit to alcohol abuse well into his adulthood, although he never did admit to the rumors of cocaine use at the same time.

Now, given all these facts, would you still say that Obama, who is perhaps the most inspiring candidate for the presidency to have come around in most of our lifetimes, is any less morally qualified to lead this country?

Here's hoping you don't let irrational hatred eat up your soul.

— Posted by Dave Kelly

30. December 5th, 2007 12:07 am It is almost unbelievable to someone my age, nearly 70, that a supporter of Senator Clinton would try to fabricate a reason to excuse the Senator's campaign from staging a question. They staged it and a young woman went along. She obviously learned a MSM lesson and is now checking out Senator Obama. It is fine for you to support Senator Clinton and me to support Senator Obama. They are both bright and competent. Don't diminish either of them by

contriving such nonsense.

– Posted by SFT, Elgin, IL

-
31. December 5th, 2007 12:08 am amazing story, powerful. I think that Obama was God send.
– Posted by Louis Simpson

-
32. December 5th, 2007 12:16 am Actually in response to the first response, Muriel was a Clinton supporter. She was asked, because she was one of the few students who went to the Clinton speech (because class was not in session at the time), to write an overview of what her experience was. She truthfully wrote about her experience and it turned into a media frenzy.

She was not an Obama supporter to begin with and went to the speech because she had the freedom to do so. She also went to the Biden, Edwards, and Richardson speeches that occurred at other times on campus. The only reason she was noticed was because she was in the very front.

– Posted by Grinnell College Student

-
33. December 5th, 2007 12:27 am I gotta admit, I found this hilariously ironic:
“There have been so many assumptions on this thread thus far, and I am only the fourth poster.” - RTRaf, #21

My conspiracy theory, that Gallo-Chasanoff (a code for ‘French chasing off’? Reference to Sarkozy’s divorce?) was playing all of us for saps, was a joke. But you guys coming up with theories about one or the other Senator using this girl like some sort of Mission Impossible spy are outrageously funny.

Look, Giuliani had his OWN staffer pop up from the crowd and ask a softball question, and that tops all of this by a lot. Can’t we Dems admit that we can all get along because we MUST get along, since we MUST win. Either that or give up and wait for the GOP’s proposed armageddon.

– Posted by Dan Stackhouse

-
34. December 5th, 2007 12:29 am Chris Corbell @ #17:
That was a very irresponsible post. Why are you implying Obama is behind those alledged calls? That’s irresponsible.
– Posted by Chima

-
35. December 5th, 2007 As a student at Grinnell College who attended this rally as an undecided Democrat, I was greatly

2007/
12:37 am impressed by Senator Obama. There was a world of difference between his speech, which was clearly given with his audience in mind and John Edwards' speech (who was here about a week ago), which was offensively generic.

Just for clarification Muriel Gallo-Chasanoff raised her hand as a joke, Obama had been scanning the crowd for questions for a second and her hand wasn't raised. Only when he acknowledged that she was standing right in front of him and said something like "well I'm not going to call on her then" did she raise her hand. It was a good moment, a well-timed joke. Everyone laughed.

As far as what people have been saying on this blog about Muriel being planted by Obama... I don't think there is any way for me to express how ridiculous that is. Everyone on Grinnell's tiny campus with a passing interest in politics was at this event, obviously she was going to be there too.

Also, comment #2, I guess, was written by Jesus Christ himself, or just someone else who has never done anything wrong in their life. Wow. I don't even think I can say what I want about that comment and get the rest of this stuff posted. Alas.

– Posted by anykid

36. December 5th, 2007 12:41 am Amazing. Rightwing conspiracy theorists accuse Obama to cover up Hillary's bungling dishonesty. When will people learn that HRC is the Democratic Mitt Romney? She would spin any which way the wind blows to boost her polls, evades her past incompetence and dishonesty, and now her "supporters" have to create the most ludicrous conspiracy theory to justify her planted questions. HRC - wrong on Iraq, wrong on Iran, wrong on the ethics of her own campaign. Don't waste a vote on the Romney Democrat.

– Posted by nick

37. December 5th, 2007 1:21 am I have watched the Obama campaign closely, knowing that he would never live up to the nobility status the media gave him. Obama is the dirtiest campaigner in the Democratic field, and he will bring the party down. This incident reeks of filth from the Obama people to make Hillary Clinton look like the dirty player. As I see it, he is snowing a bunch of sheep while he lets others do his dirty work. Noble he is not. The Republicans must be enjoying the Democrats self-destruct. This girl is a set-up by the Obama campaign.

Hillary Clinton is accused of everything under the

sun by Barack supporters, but when Hillary Clinton supporters smell dirt, they are crazy. Hillary is not the divisive one. Obama is incapable of bringing people together. He is dividing them right now.

Re: #2 - See Re: # 1, again, plus consider that it is your candidate who got busted manipulating public questions. Who's dirty? As to drug use, he's admitted it and moved on. I haven't heard Hillary address that yet, but I doubt she could honestly deny it either—

Posted by Chris #16

W

— Posted by Paul Koplan

-
38. December 5th, 2007 1:37 am Oh Debra Garson—How do we know his drug use is in the past? That's a serious question? Do you think he takes bong hits between cloture votes? Clinton's supporters, much like the Sen. herself, from my Great State of NY, (via Ill. and Ark, with a brief layover in Washington) are grasping at straws while Sen. Obama is slowly taking over the lead in Iowa. Her campaign has gone from flawless to laughable in a month's time. I expect more from Sen. Clinton, after all she is representing NY. Do you think Rudy would put out a press release with a Mitt Romney Kindergarten essay? Give me a break. This is unreal. Can any undecided voter look at this and think that Hilary is the best person to lead our nation?

— Posted by Ed

-
39. December 5th, 2007 1:49 am In response to Chris Corbell #17
Ben Smith at Politico requested the calls reported by the Clinton campaign and didn't find much. Two of the three calls he investigated were from Obama volunteers who likely went off script; one of them apologized before hanging up. The third call was from a company, and the person couldn't remember its name.

There are several Obama phone volunteers at the Politico writing that they have been instructed to say nothing negative about the other candidates.

The report is here:

http://www.politico.com/blogs/bensmith/1207/Obama_calls_in_Iowa_and_NH.html

— Posted by Rachel

-
40. December 5th, 2007 2:09 am I fully support Sen. Clinton AND I highly doubt Sen. Obama's camp planted her at the Clinton Q&A. It was a big mistake on the Clinton campaign's part. However it doesn't make me doubt Sen. Clinton's abilities to lead our nation back into it's greatness. I

will be happy when the childish bickering between our great Democratic party will end. We need to be behind whomever wins the nomination. Im just hoping its Sen. Clinton!

– Posted by nateinaz

41. December 5th, 2007 2:11 am I can't believe how incredibly paranoid some of these Clinton supporters are. I just got done reading another thread where one of them accused *Obama* of *setting up* kindergate by bringing up the long-term plans of Hillary and Bill on Saturday specifically so his campaign could hit her with the "in second grade he flip-flopped to being an astronaut" line. Right.

Anyway, it sounds like the student in question is an uncommitted voter. Why in the world would Obama go through all that skulduggery to get the Clinton campaign to plant a question with her (and that IS what they were doing), then put her up front, point her out, and talk to her afterwards at another appearance?

I guess when your campaign is coming apart, it seems like everyone's against you and involved in some incredibly complex scheme. If Hillary goes any farther into crazy land, this could be over by the end of the week.

– Posted by John M,

42. December 5th, 2007 2:21 am Re: #2 - See Re: # 1, again, plus consider that it is your candidate who got busted manipulating public questions. Who's dirty? As to drug use, he's admitted it and moved on. I haven't heard Hillary address that yet, but I doubt she could honestly deny it either.—
Posted by Chris #1

Wrong, Chris. You do not admit to drug use and move on. You do time in jail. You will excuse Obama for using illicit drugs, but not everyone will, and I certainly won't. No matter what I have read about Hillary Clinton, to my recollection, she has never been tied to illicit drug use.

As to Debra Garson's comment of:

"I would never vote for Obama for many reasons, including what he says is past drug use."

Since you yourself are so incredibly "righteous," you may be familiar with this verse:

"But when they persisted in asking Him, He straightened up, and said to them, 'He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.'" John 8:7

And the funniest part of all is that you're actually attacking Obama's character in defense of Hillary???

I've heard it all now.

— Posted by Chandler #18

Chanler, you can quote the Bible all you like. As I write this, Obama's drug use is still illegal in this country. It goes right to his character. We have prisons for a reason. To put criminals away. There is nothing self-righteous about not wanting a former drug user as president. You people will let Obama slide on everything. I've heard it all now when crimes can be committed, and we must forget about them in Obama's case and only Obama's case. He is not above the law. D. Garson brings up an excellent point. What assurances does anyone have that his drug use is in the past? What guarantees can he give us? None.

Obama should be prosecuted for his illegal drug use. He has not paid his debt to society for breaking the law. My own opinion is that anyone who is known to have engaged in any crimes should be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law and be barred from public office for life.

#17 Chris Corbell,

I got the same e-mail from the Edwards campaign, and I saw the message on Hillary's site about being hit by dirty tricks. I signed up with Edwards, Clinton and Biden. The Clinton and Edwards campaigns are saying they are being hit by virtually the same type of dirty tricks, and they are Obama's main rivals in Iowa. Obama is not putting out any such messages at this time. I just know Obama is behind it, and the only possible way that I would be convinced differently is that there is independent, verifiable evidence that his campaign is not hitting Clinton and Edwards. It is definitely very suspicious that his two main rivals are facing the same problem in Iowa, and he is not.

If he gets the nomination, I will vote for the Republicans. He has neither the experience nor the character to be president. This no time to have a novice in office who is devoid of character.

As far as I am concerned, Barack's nobility never existed. I never believed it. He will crash. If he were the nominee, as long as the Republicans have a candidate with no history of drug use, they will use that against him, along with every dumb thing he has said. There is nothing like the Republican dirty tricks. Ask McCain about the 2000 primary against Bush. Obama could never take on the Republicans. Some people have ruled out the Republicans. That is

a big mistake. The Republicans have an excellent record of winning. Nobody can prove at this time that Bush has destroyed them.

– Posted by Paul Koplan

43. December 5th, 2007 2:59 am ItsFreedomStupid, your comments are extremely offensive to my classmate and my community. As the first Grinnellian posted on this forum, your facts are fundamentally flawed and your tone needlessly accusatory. Additionally, virtually everyone on campus went to this event (the first question was from one of the 10 or so campus republicans, who still almost unanimously showed up), as we are Iowans proudly and seriously considering our candidates. Grinnell is a politically active campus, and after this week every Democratic candidate except HRC will have visited. Attendance does not imply allegiance or conspiracy.

– Posted by 2nd Year Grinnell Student

44. December 5th, 2007 3:04 am It's pretty ridiculous the way this is being blown out of proportion by so many. It's so easy for everybody to say what Muriel SHOULD have done, but of course hindsight is 20/20. I'm willing to bet a significant number of college students and otherwise would have done the same thing in her position. It makes it pretty easy for someone to twist a story when there are reporters waiting for you at every turn, so cut her some damn slack.

– Posted by Other Grinnellian

45. December 5th, 2007 3:31 am Is any of this useful? Is there any real gain to be had from Democrats pointing fingers at other Democrats, spewing off unsubstantiated accusations and innuendo? The fact is, Clinton and Obama stand for essentially the same political positions, and outside of the insanity of this primary, they are natural allies. Ultimately, the choice between them is based on style and electability. In the end, if you truly believe in the policy positions of Obama, then you should be prepared to vote for Clinton if she comes out ahead in the primary- or vice versa. To point at Obama and call him a schemer, or to point at Clinton and call her a robot- is getting more personal than it needs to be. Whatever you think of them on a personal level (and I can guarantee you probably don't have enough facts to really "know" either of them) you need to realize that both of these candidates are on our team. So for God's sake, leave them both alone. And if you really need to be irrationally mad at someone, save your vitriol for the GOP.

– Posted by Ben

46. December 5th, 2007 4:06 am Why is this story relevant to anything?
– Posted by Brian

47. December 5th, 2007 7:01 am Obama’s dirty tricks in his Illimois campaign are legendary. Right out of the Republican’s play book. I agree he is more divisive than any other candidate. The only people more ruthless are his impassioned fans who don’t want to know any facts that would taint his rock star celebrity. Not what we need in the executive branch. George W. Bush all over again.
– Posted by margerie

48. December 5th, 2007 7:13 am I was wondering what difference it makes how long Hillary or Obama have had aspirations to be President? Isn’t that one of those “American Dreams” that any little boy (or girl) can grow up to be President)? And it seems like again a double standard if it is okay for a man to be ambitious where as it is manipulative or too calculated for a woman.

I do not work for the Clinton campaign, or the Obama campaign — so please do not malign me...I am just curious as to the thinking of those who cite this as a campaign issue. There are more important things.
– Posted by undecidedstill

49. December 5th, 2007 8:19 am # 10 - Chima - I love your way of thinking...lets you and I coin a new word....”KINDERGATE”...LOL
– Posted by Keith318

50. December 5th, 2007 8:34 am As one who attended Grinnell in the late 60s-early 70s I take a moderate amount of personal interest in this story. Remember, this student is still a fairly young person, not a professional political operative. The reverse conspiracy theories spun above (i.e., she was already supporting Obama at the time she was asked to pose particular questions to Ms. Clinton at one of her events) are not persuasive. That said, I am so interested in the bickering between Clinton and Obama, I am interested in John Edwards, the other top tier candidate who continues to hammer on basic issues confronting the American people (Iraq, universal healthcare, environmental and energy policy, government corruption and improper influence, etc) and putting forth the most consistently progressive policies to address them. Perhaps the stump speech he gave at Grinnell

addressed these issues in a methodical way (making it “generic”) in one student’s eyes. I call that clarity and consistency. Many students seem drawn to Obama, and, having attended Grinnell, I know why he would appeal to many of them. But with a bit of age and experience since graduation, I realize that Edwards is the candidate who would be better able to campaign in all regions of the country, and bring the largest number of Democratic Senators and Representatives to congress along with him.

– Posted by grinnellian

-
51. December 5th, 2007 8:40 am Barack Obama is Mr. Clean, himself; all he lacks is the earring. He has never engaged in dirty politics, never made outrageous claims for himself or against his opponents, never broken any laws, never done anything whatsoever to be criticized for. He is the nearest thing to Jesus Christ or Mohammed that you will ever find.

Oh, I forgot: Go, Obama!

– Posted by judy kilgore

-
52. December 5th, 2007 8:53 am I see three comments and posted one myself and did not see anything until around an hour ago when I find 45 posted at 4:06am, it is now 8:53am eastern time.???

– Posted by lylepink

-
53. December 5th, 2007 9:00 am Obama is just playing this the way he should. Good for him. I wouldn’t vote for him, but you’ve got to give him credit for knowing his way around the political minefield.

– Posted by ttj

-
54. December 5th, 2007 9:14 am Some are in the news temporarily because they have said or done the wrong thing on behalf of someone who is in the news all the time. Others are in the news because a campaigning politician has said quite the wrong thing to them. My interest in political campaigns arises in part from the incidental insight they provide into the ways of human nature.

– Posted by Candadai Tirumalai

-
55. December 5th, 2007 9:15 am Hey Dave Kelley at #29, what makes Obama “the most inspiration(al) candidate for the presidency to have come around in most of our lifetimes...”? Would that be his admitted drug use, his shady real estate deals with political allies, or the fact that Oprah Winfrey is endorsing him...? What makes this

guy so special for you? As far as I care, the dispute between Hillary Clinton and Obama is a toss up...or rather, a toss down...

– Posted by ttj

56. December 5th, 2007 9:34 am To me this is significant in one way. I don't care so much that Hillary planted the questions. What concerns me is that when she was caught she lied about not knowing that this girl had been planted. If she is willing to lie about something so small & insignificant, what will she do when it comes to telling the truth about the big issues. As far as her saying she did not know... pleaseeee give me a break!

– Posted by JP

57. December 5th, 2007 9:50 am As these two continue to duke it out, all I have to add is, "Go, John, go!"

– Posted by Charlotte K

58. December 5th, 2007 9:57 am To "ItsFreedomStupid" at post #1:
The reason no one is asking the "obvious question" is because it's actually an idiotic question.

The heart of the matter goes to the pseudonym you've chosen to hide behind–It's a free country.

The young woman is interested in the race enough to get involved.

That's something to be applauded–not investigated.

But really, I think all of this is just so much of a distraction from what we all ought to be doing–which is focusing on the issues–and what each of the candidates proposes to do about them.

If the standard is what do each of the candidates believe are the top five–or ten–issues facing the country–and what are their proposals–in detail–for tackling the problems–then the use of planted questions–and how campaigns choose to get their messages out becomes irrelevant.

Let's keep our eyes on the big picture folks–and not get caught up in the minutia.

– Posted by Doug Johnston

59. December 5th, 2007 10:13 am WE all know it was a setup. I agree "2.December 4th, 2007 10:20 pm I just bet that Obama campaign devised this whole scenario to make Hillary's side look bad. This is no coincidence. Obama keeps showing that he is a dirty player. He's got no character at all. Obama

is at the point where he will say and do anything to try and destroy Hillary.”

It’s all good. More and more people are coming into the light..... Clinton 08.

– Posted by Jimenez

60. December 5th, 2007 10:40 am No one played the “dirty tricks” game better than the late Lee Atwater. Do not be surprised if the tricksters are part of Clinton campaign. Do not be surprised if the “push-polls” supposedly against Clinton are conducted by Clinton. Trailing in the polls in Iowa, falling in the polls in NH and her aura of “it will be me” inevitability tattered, Clinton has nothing to lose.

If what Chris Matthews suggested yesterday is true (that Hillary’s internal polls show things much worse than what is reported in the media) all of the flailing makes sense.

OBAMA ‘08

– Posted by jade7243

61. December 5th, 2007 10:54 am I do not think any of the candidates would plant a question themselves or knowingly allow a worker to do it either. Don’t forget there are hundreds of workers out there and no one could possibly know what each of them are doing.

– Posted by lylepink

62. December 5th, 2007 11:11 am This is a classical example of the “news” media feeding on trivial nothing, and look at the trivial responses in this blog. In a world where the electorate is starving and hungers for solid and reliable policy direction, “where’s the beef”, this story focuses on the nature and quality of bird seed.

– Posted by rger miller

63. December 5th, 2007 11:37 am I think the Obama campaign should stop this attack on Clinton. It is so obvious he is promoting his own campaign by using dirty tricks and certainly we know that with the way the republicans did to Kerry. On the other hand, the main issue such as world poverty, US economy, World Peace, terrorism and diplomacy, is being ignored by the media for some reason. Obama is no good a candidate compared to Hillary. She always makes her position known to the own country and world on critical issue, but the very ambitious Obama, looks for a way to travel to another state during a crucial senate vote and comes up with the now famous line, “I would have voted

against it” how come he is never present to vote? Obama and his campaign should get him to start taking issues seriously, Americans want true leadership and not history makers. Obama will spend 4 years of his Presidency dreaming and learning. We cant afford another mistake again!

– Posted by Ty Akobo

64. December 5th, 2007 12:17 pm Re. Post #47: As a long time resident of Illinois and one who is knowledgeable about local and statewide politics, your comments make no sense. You state that “Obama’s dirty tricks in his Illinois campaign are legendary” with no backup to support your scurrilous statement. Rather than “legendary”, the word used should have been “IMAGINARY”. In his eight years in the Illinois Senate, Barack Obama was highly regarded by both Republicans and Democrats with whom he worked, as he is by the preponderance of voters in the state. Barack Obama has an inclusive, aboveboard personality and style of operation which is delightful and a breath of fresh air in the contemporary political arena.

– Posted by JoAnn

65. December 5th, 2007 12:57 pm RE: Paul @ #42 - That’s just a silly rant, all of it. You’ve made your point, you won’t be swayed. Good for you. Nevertheless, the candidate honestly addressed the issues. HRC, or any other candidate Republican or Democrat, who is beyond suspicion for their own past could have called him to the carpet. How many did? How many even claimed their own absolute innocence in comparison? Aren’t you curious why?

History indicates your conclusion is off base - both Bill Clinton and George W. admitted experience with illegal drugs. Despite that, and their other shortcomings, they both got elected, twice.

p.s. - I’m not an Obama supporter or a Hillary hater. I simply reject blind zealotry.

– Posted by Chris

66. December 5th, 2007 1:41 pm I bet Obama has been planning this plant since he was in kindergarten! We will soon find out what he dirty tricks he planned when he was in the third grade! Oh the suspense is killing me!

Don’t tell Mama that I’m voting for Obama!!!

– Posted by Maggie Now

67. December #51 judy - You mentioned Jesus and Mohammed,

5th,
2007
2:02 pm but forgot how Obama is also on a par with Krishna, Zoroaster, Moses, Buddha, and Confucius 😊 Just kidding, of course. As Mike Huckabee might say, all of those other men were too smart to run for public office.

– Posted by corinne

68. December 5th,
2007
2:13 pm #69: Chris Matthews is a “Clinton Hater” from way back, and I can assure you he will trash either of the Clintons every way he can. Obama has been the “Darling and Rock Star” of the media and when any of the supporters of Hillary, like myself, brings up FACTS about him, we are called everything but a milk cow, as the old saying goes. His missing votes and then to criticize Hillary for her vote is a tad over the top, IMO. I have said from the beginning, IMHO, Obama has ZERO chance of being elected in 2008, and nothing has changed my opinion, but from reports of some Repubs changing their registration and giving money to his campaign in an effort to stop Hillary only reinforces my opinion that the Repubs “FEAR” Hillary the most, for they know they cannot beat her in 2008.

– Posted by lylepink

69. December 5th,
2007
2:17 pm I personally am not a fan of the December 4 “Itsfreedomstupid” comment. This is the same sort of mudslinging that could come at any candidate. I see no reason why a person can’t have their own political opinion without being thrown into the wall. Does Obama really need to be blamed because this girl chose to be a supporter after the Clinton incident?
I think Itsfreedomstupid really has a case of Catcher in the Rye syndrome. Should this girl be deemed a “phony” I feel the public should truly look at this situation for who the term phony can actually apply to.

– Posted by skuskalusa

70. December 5th,
2007
3:25 pm IOWA Slams Hillary:
It seems that Iowans are NOT impressed with Hillary’s ultra negative DEFCON-1 blitzkrieg against Obama. The Des Moines Register posted a devastating cartoon of Clinton on the front page!!!

Here’s the link to the story on the Campaign Diaries:
<http://www.campaigndiaries.com/2007/12/more-polls-comin-g-in-with-iowa-all-tied.html>

RE: Iowa all tied up, but should Clinton start worrying about second-choice preferences?

Clinton is starting to be hit in the state for her overly negative campaign against Obama. Take a look at this new cartoon published on the front page of the Des Moines Register. It appears to sum up what Iowa's Democratic voters are starting to think:

<http://www.campaigndiaries.com/2007/12/more-polls-comin-g-in-with-iowa-all-tied.html>

Now, the main danger for Clinton is that this makes her look desperate and vulnerable and lowers her favorable ratings even more. A key factor to consider in Iowa is the second-choice number: Caucus-goers have to realign with a new candidate if their first choice fails to get 15% in their caucus-place. Most polls have shown that Clinton lags behind Obama and Edwards in this, which could create some big distance on caucus night and get Clinton stuck at third. This is what happened to Dean in 2004 and what explains Kerry's stunning victory 20% above Dean.

If Clinton is perceived as mounting too negative a campaign, that will likely lower her second-choice preference more than anything else; but that is enough to doom any campaign in Iowa. Clinton coming in third would be terrible enough; but coming in third, as I noted above, probably means lagging far behind, not just a few percentage points.

However, we have to note that the new Zogby poll released today has a major caveat to this analysis (see below for Zogby's horse race numbers). Zogby writes, Clinton "wins the lion's share of support among those who make Biden their first choice, and she does well among those who would first choose New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson." Zogby also says that Edwards and Obama voters choose the other as their second choice.

If true, this would explain why Obama and Edwards beat Clinton in second-choice totals — and it would make that totally useless. Obama and Edwards are both likely to meet the 15% threshold pretty much everywhere, so they have nothing to gain from being the second choice of the other candidate. What they want is to be the second choice of Richardson, Biden, Dodd and Kucinich voters. And here is where Clinton can have some hope: People voting for Biden and Dodd are presumably less swayed by the "change" or "anti-establishment" argument made by Obama and Edwards, and thus perhaps more likely to go for Clinton as a second-choice. That could give Hillary a much needed boost and perhaps save her in Iowa.

This requires her, naturally, to do a good December

campaign and erase the impression that she is going too far. That DMR cartoon is truly devastating.

— Posted by Kendra

71. December 5th, 2007 3:28 pm zzzzzzzz, huh...oh, i'm sorry...is there REALLY a story here? — Posted by dougk

Add your comments...

Name Required

E-mail Required (will not be published)

Comment

Comments are moderated and generally will be posted if they are on-topic and not abusive. For more information, please see our [Comments FAQ](#).

[Home](#) | [World](#) | [U.S.](#) | [N.Y. / Region](#) | [Business](#) | [Technology](#) | [Science](#) | [Health](#) | [Sports](#) | [Opinion](#) | [Arts](#) | [Style](#) | [Travel](#) | [Jobs](#) | [Real Estate](#) | [Autos](#) | [Back to Top](#)

[Copyright 2007 The New York Times Company](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Search](#) | [Corrections](#) | [RSS](#) | [Help](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Work for Us](#) | [Site Map](#)