



It's a given in political campaigns that negativity works, that it can be utilized to turn the outcome of an election by depicting a candidate as unqualified, personally shady or untrustworthy.

Negativity sends unfavorable poll numbers soaring while forcing the target into a defensive posture, helples to steer the campaign — while not crossing the line — has at the very least put one foot on it.

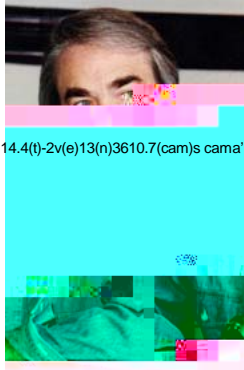
The casual use of words like "felon" and implying Romney sent millions of dollars in personal income to offshore havens to avoid paying taxes in the United States is a textbook case of negative campaigning. It is justified by the President as a challenge to the core of Romney's message that his success in business qualifies him to pull the American economy out of the abyss in which he argues the President has plunged it.

One of Obama's strengths in his three and one-half years in office has been his relatively even disposition and demeanor, generally treating those with whom he disagreed with respect and preferring to make his case with logic rather than hyperbole.

The relentless attack strategy is jarringly at odds with the President's carefully cultivated statesman image and



Daryl Cagle / msnbc.com (click to view more cartoons by Cagle)




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




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Romney to do likewise.

The American voter loses in such a scenario because the choice in November will boil down to which of the two is more despised, rather than which of the two is more capable.

The real winners will be the army of consultants and advisers who — if their man wins — can loudly proclaim vindication for the "negative ads work" strategy.

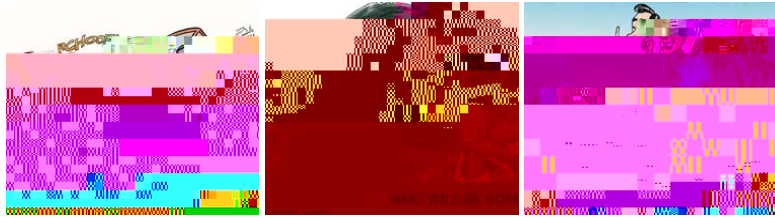
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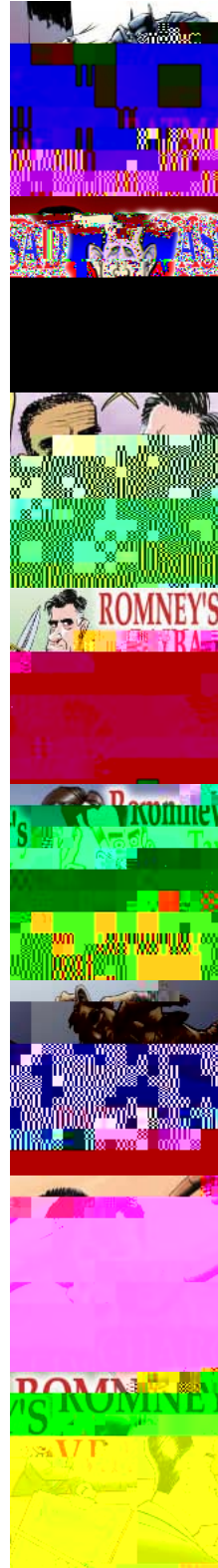
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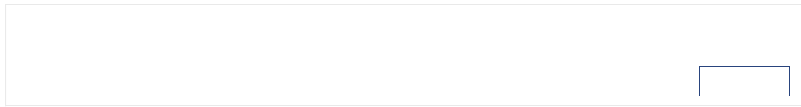
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