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Strident Anti-Obama Messages Flood Key States



American Principles SuperPAC

A billboard in Florida shows President Obama bowing to a Saudi king and blames him for soaring gasoline prices.

By JEREMY W. PETERS

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BOYNTON BEACH, Fla. — To turn on the television, open the mail or drive down the highway here is to watch conservatives test the boundaries of how far they can go to disqualify [President Obama](#).

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Obama for America, via Associated Press
A 10-year-old future president with his father.

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Along the Interstate that connects the beach towns of Florida's east coast, [giant billboards](#) show the president, whom some on the far right have falsely accused of being Muslim, bowing to a Saudi king. Another blares "Stop Obama!" and shows a nuclear warhead with "Iran" painted on it aimed at Israel, a particularly potent message with this area's many Jewish voters.

In one [commercial](#) that started running this month, a wealthy businessman and Hungarian immigrant named Thomas Peterffy laments how socialism shackled his native country. "And that's what I see happening here," he says. "That's why I'm voting Republican and putting this ad on television."

And a new anti-Obama DVD is dropping into voters' mailboxes, claiming that the president is the love child of an illicit relationship between his mother, Stanley Ann Dunham, and Frank Marshall Davis, a Communist Party loyalist. The back story of the DVD offers the latest example of how secretive forces outside the presidential campaigns can sweep into battleground states days before the election.

This summer, a group of well-financed conservative activists had an idea for what they hoped would be a last-minute game changer in the presidential race. They would

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Ed Greevy, via Associated Press
Frank Marshall Davis, the subject of the film "Dreams From My Real Father."

put out a DVD that made a compelling case against Mr. Obama in battleground states, sending it to voters through a carefully targeted direct mail campaign or as an insert in Sunday newspapers in the weeks before Election Day.

They went to the unusual length of arranging a focus group to test anti-Obama films. Conducted by Frank Luntz, the well-known Republican research analyst, a 30-person focus group looked at three choices: Dinesh D'Souza's "2016: Obama's America," which theorizes that the president's political beliefs were shaped by the radical "anticolonial" views of his Kenyan father; "The Hope and the Change," a softer critique of the president that features interviews with disaffected former Obama supporters; and "Dreams From My Real Father," which posits the implausible theory that the president's real father is Mr. Davis, and that Mr. Davis indoctrinated him with Marxist views early on.

Republicans have struggled in this election with two powerful and competing impulses: to hammer a president they dislike intensely with a strong indictment of his record, but to be restrained enough to win over independent voters, who generally like Mr. Obama. Those who commissioned Mr. Luntz's research, according to people with firsthand knowledge of their motives, wanted to determine whether any of these films would do the trick and be worth backing. Mr. Luntz declined to say who commissioned his research.

"The Hope and the Change," directed by Stephen K. Bannon and produced by Citizens United, the conservative political advocacy group, tested highest with focus groups and is running on local cable stations. It was shown here just before Monday's debate.

Many conservatives also loved Mr. D'Souza's film and wanted it to have wider distribution. It tested poorly, however, and Mr. Luntz warned his clients that it could undermine their cause.

Focus groups were revolted by "Dreams From My Real Father," with its conspiracy theory paranoia and dubious evidence. It compares photos of the president and Mr. Davis, noting that they have similar noses and freckles. It also purports to have uncovered nude photos of Mr. Obama's mother in a bondage magazine.

Mr. Luntz's clients were not surprised. Their thinking was, "I want to know if it's as bad as I think it is," Mr. Luntz said.

But even though no major Republican activists stepped forward to finance its distribution, voters in Ohio and Florida have reported receiving the DVD.

The film is the work of Joel Gilbert, whose previous claims include having tracked down Elvis Presley in the witness protection program and discovering that Paul McCartney is in fact dead.

Mr. Gilbert will not say where he received the money to distribute his movie — he claims to have sent out four million copies. "It's a private company, so we don't disclose who's part of it," he said. He also blamed the mainstream media for not looking deeper into the story he uncovered, telling The New York Times, "I hope you're not angry or jealous that I beat you to it and might win the Pulitzer Prize."

His work has already received a lot of attention in corners of the conservative media, including on the radio programs of Monica Crowley and Michael Savage.

One voter from Stuart, Fla., who received the "Dreams From My Real Father" DVD in the mail last week said she was appalled, confirming Republicans' worst fears about the film.

"I thought, well, I'll take a look and see what it is," said the voter, Judy Cindrick. The DVD was addressed to her husband, who was not affiliated with either party on his state voter registration. "But then it got to the part about the president's mother, and I was like, O.K., I can't even watch this anymore. This is just something a bunch of crackpots put together."

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