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In Miami, on the Radio

The Reformed 9/11 Truthers Who Keep Asking Powerful People About the "Kill List"

Is "Dreams From My Real Father" Backfiring?

By David Weigel | Posted Wednesday, Oct 24, 2012, at 3:14 PM ET

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When I heard that director Joel Gilbert was mailing millions of copies of his anti-Obama documentary to swing states, my response was a #slatepitch. Maybe the movie would irritate voters who weren't inclined to think that Obama had been sired by Communist poet Frank Marshall Davis. There's some precedence for this, for voters getting so annoyed by an alien message that they go for the other candidate.

Now comes Jeremy Peters with a grim, funny examination of the right-wing messages independently hitting Ohio and Florida and the rest. A group of conservative donors (they're not identified) got Frank Luntz to convene screenings of three anti-Obama films. We know that "The Hope and the Change" tested well, and became the basis for a passel of "I used to support Obama, just like you, and now I've given up" commercials. We didn't know that Luntz also tested this movie.

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.

I've been asking voters to tell me if they got the movie, and have yet to find one who's been convinced by it. "I kept the unopened DVD as a political souvenir but don't intend on watching it," says Mark Murray, an independent in Ohio. "I live in Denver, am a white, relatively liberal, registered independent and I got 'Dreams from my Real Father' in the mail," says Dan Bush, a Democrat in Denver. "I didn't open it because I think the whole birther thing is racist trash."

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