

# DEAN: IS MCCAIN A PUPPET ... OR A RACIST?

I taped a MI political talking heads show this morning—if I don't suck too badly, I should have a link to it tomorrow (just as a preview, though, the cameramen were apparently upset that I said "pissed" so often, six times ... and here I was congratulating myself I avoided "fuck"). One of the Republicans was "pissed" that I brought up that McCain, a guy who married into a \$100 million fortune, suggested that our economic problems were "psychological" so often.

One regret I have, though, is that we didn't start talking about the NC Republicans' race-baiting ad until **after** the cameras had stopped rolling. NPR had done a story on it while I was driving—and they credulously, sheepishly, accepted McCain's and the RNC's claims that they had asked the NC GOP not to run the ad. "Chumps!" I said to myself in the car. "Only chumps would believe the presumptive head of the Republican Party couldn't get the NC GOP to withhold the ad if he wanted to." Digby says it better:

St McCain has written one of his patented sanctimonious letters saying that he doesn't approve of these awful ads. He's very upset and wants them to take them down. (Isn't he awesome?) Sadly, they told him no. It's really too bad the presumptive head of the Republican party he really can't control what those terrible people are doing. C'est la vie! At least we all know where St. McCain stands on the issue and that his heart is totally in the right place.

So I was glad to see Howard Dean channeling Digby:

This is a test of leadership for John McCain. If he can't pick up the phone and make members of his own party stop

airing a television ad he claims to oppose, how can he lead our country through an economic crisis or the war in Iraq? After shifting his positions on gun control, immigration and tax cuts throughout this campaign, McCain should not equivocate on this issue. Making a show of releasing your emails to the press is not leadership. If he is serious, he will get this ad pulled.

And the DNC piles on, noting all the people involved in the ad that McCain has direct authority over.

While the McCain campaign made a show of protesting the ad, McCain made no mention of the fact that key officials in the North Carolina GOP are members of McCain's state steering committee and McCain donors.

Nor did he mention the fact that the state chair who is bucking his leadership is a member of the arrangements committee of the Republican National Convention. Given his ties to state Republican leaders, if McCain is serious about making sure this ad never airs, he should have no trouble making it happen. If not, McCain should return their contributions, remove them from his campaign committees, and strip the state chair from her role on the GOP's convention committee.

We need to hammer this hard. As Digby rightly predicted, McCain will try to have it both ways throughout this campaign, playing dumb with the very party he's auditioning to run, all the while benefiting from its hate-mongering. As Dean points out, it's quite simple. Either McCain is an impotent leader. Or he must pull this ad.