

ATTACKING ROMNEY RATHER THAN THE PEOPLE LOOTING OUR ECONOMY

This Politico story—"revealing" Obama's campaign plan to brand Multiple Choice Mitt as "weird"—has gotten a lot of attention in the twittersphere.

Barack Obama's aides and advisers are preparing to center the president's reelection campaign on a ferocious personal assault on Mitt Romney's character and business background, a strategy grounded in the early stage expectation that the former Massachusetts governor is the likely GOP nominee.

The dramatic and unabashedly negative turn is the product of political reality. Obama remains personally popular, but pluralities in recent polling disapprove of his handling of his job and Americans fear the country is on the wrong track. His aides are increasingly resigned to running for reelection in a glum nation. And so the candidate who ran on "hope" in 2008 has little choice four years later but to run a slashing, personal campaign aimed at disqualifying his likeliest opponent.

[snip]

The onslaught would have two aspects. The first is personal: Obama's reelection campaign will portray the public Romney as inauthentic, unprincipled and, in a word used repeatedly by Obama's advisers in about a dozen interviews, "weird."

"First, they've got to like you, and

there's not a lot to like about Mitt Romney," said Chicago Democratic consultant Pete Giangreco, who worked on Obama's 2008 campaign. "There's no way to hide this guy and hide his innate phoniness."

A senior Obama adviser was even more cutting, suggesting that the Republican's personal awkwardness will turn off voters.

"There's a weirdness factor with Romney and it remains to be seen how he wears with the public," said the adviser, noting that the contrasts they'd drive between the president and the former Massachusetts governor would be "based on character to a great extent."

Now, no matter how reprehensible this campaign strategy is (particularly for the way it feels like Mormon-bashing), and for all Politico probably feels it has "won the morning" by printing it, both are missing something.

This campaign has already been in place.

A significant chunk of the tweets the Michigan Democratic Party sends out, for example, focus on Romney—showing Obama leading him, playing up GOP opposition to him, dissing his fundraising, recalling his stance on the auto bailout, branding his appearance in MI his "hypocrisy tour," pitching other states' anti-Mitt swag. While it has gotten better of late, for a while the MDP focused more on Romney-bashing than on Rick Snyder-bashing—which of course meant no one was attacking Snyder's plan to tax seniors to pay for a tax cut for businesses.

Now, I understand MI may have a particularly driving reason to do this. Not only might Mitt's ties to MI give him a critical edge over Obama that could flip a crucial swing state. But even at the primary level, MI's cross-over voting might mean if Democrats support Romney, it could make a significant difference in him winning the

Republican primary.

Yet, again, this early focus on Mitt has distracted from where I would like Democratic messaging to be targeted—not only on Snyder, but on the businesses that have looted our country. I would suggest this might explain why MI Dems have such little confidence in their party right now.

Obama may feel like he needs to call Mitt names to win re-election. But if that's the sole purpose of the Democratic Party between now and then, it will leave a vacuum precisely where the most important messaging needs to be.