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Educate, Don't Attack

The purpose of a campaign is for the candidates to educate voters of all ages about their political platforms, however, it is the youth of America that need most of the educating. For many, this election will be the first in which they are participating in. It is important for the candidates to send the message of why each is the best for our country, and they should do so by educating, not attacking. First-time teenagers votes can be especially impressionable, so if attack ads are where they are receiving most of their information, then they are only developing a biased viewpoint and a closed mind. A good campaign should be one that educates the voters and provides substantive information. It should not plant biased ideas in people's heads, using mindless attack ads that are nothing more than a personal assaults. Too often eople stray from what is truly important in a campaign, and they fill their heads with the junk that such attack ads feed them. If people cast their votes based on what they saw in these attack ads, they would be making decisions based on over-dramatized and unrealistic scenarios. And certainly, using attack ads is not the way to get more people to vote. Many college students like me are already turned off by the negative tone of

national politics, and pushing us with negative attack ads is not a good way to get us to the polls.

To be very honest, I do not follow politics too closely, so when it came time for the campaign I was not very educated on the candidates and their different platforms. An undecided voter, I am the kind of individual these politicians are targeting—one who is not completely set in her views, and one who wants to be informed about the different candidates. I do not think that the use of attack ads is one that is effective in educating the undecided voter. Attack ads don't teach me anything about issues or inform me about party platforms; rather they spur an immediate emotional response I don't care to take with me into the voting booth.

If these attack ads to persuade voters to choose one candidate over another, they do not help them make educated choices. As someone who is not very interested in politics, attack ads only make my disliking for politics stronger. It is frustrating to see adults are back and forth like a group of teenagers in high school. I think that it makes both parties look immature and both candidates look like bad leaders. This trend is disappointing to me, especially since we've come so far in some ways. What kind of example is being set by the candidates, especially for the youth of America, many of whom will be voting in their first election this year?

"Guess who's going to pay off President Bush's \$1 trillion deficit?" This is the message being sent in one of the many attack ads against George

Bush. Whether the deficit is an issue for you or not, there is no need to create an attack ad that has children around the age of eight to ten years old working in factories, garbage dumps, and supermarkets. Why make an attack ad that is trying to get the sympathy of people, only because cute kids are being put to work in factories. These are not the kind of ideas that need to be put into people's heads. However, although I may disagree with it, it does not mean that it is ineffective. This ad actually won an award in MoveOn.org's national contest for the best anti-Bush ad. The makers of this ad are trying to get the point across that the children today will eventually be paying off our debt when we are adults. While this may be a valid point, I am still put off by the way issues are portrayed in attack ads. While viewers of this ad will surely be sympathetic with the images put forth, it is important to keep in mind that this is not exactly reality. The reason why it is effective is because of the dramatic music playing in the background, and the little girl wearing a hair net because she is working in a factory. Images like these elicit an emotional response that only distracts people from thinking about the real issues in reasoned ways.

The ironically titled "What are we teaching our children?" is another ad featured on the MoveOn.org website. I would like to ask the same question to the makers of this attack ad. What are we really teaching people, other than feeding them with false ideas, and unrealistic scenarios? In this particular attack ad, the scene is set in an auditorium, and various children

are at the podium sharing their ideas of what they plan to do when they become president. This ad is clearly attacking Bush and the decisions he has made in the past. As the children put forth their various ideas the audience looks on with over dramatized faces of disgust, and shock. Some of the statements made by the children only seem to make a joke of serious issues that we are facing. One child, for example, references Bush's foreign policy by saying: "Our allies went from respecting us, to hating us, and I don't care!" It is wrong to put words in someone's mouth, and worse still to do so while making light of serious national issues.

Such attacks, of course, do not only come from the left. The vicious ads sponsored by the "Swiftboat Veterans for Truth" use horrifying images and questionable commentary by elderly servicemen to condemn John Kerry's service in the Vietnam War. While no credible evidence is offered to suggest that Kerry behaved dishonorably during the war, people who watch this ad might assume that his character is somehow tarnished, especially after they have been emotionally manipulated by frightening images from a violent war.

Using attack ads is wrong, and it belittles the values we as informed and participatory citizens should hold. These ads are based on dishonesty and produced out of the frustration that partisan individuals may have. While I have no problem with people speaking their opinions, there is a difference between an opinion and an attack, With this election I have been hearing

constantly how important it is to vote, and how the youth need to vote and to get more involved. The way to get the youth educated about the current campaign is not by showing them attack ads. Instead our leaders should be reaching out to the young voters, and getting them involved in current issues, and finding better ways to make them care about topics of importance. A thirty-second spot condemning a soldier's war record simply isn't working.