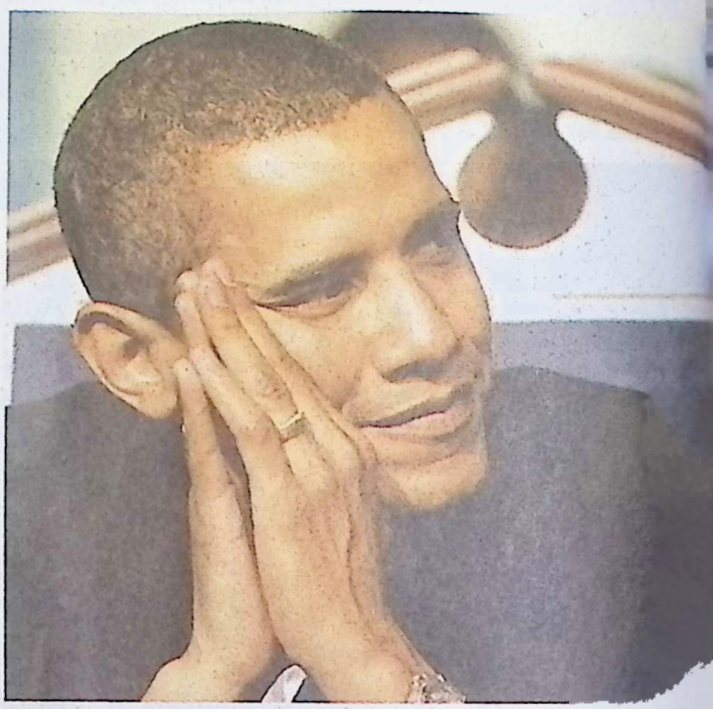


Barack Obama

BILLARY: Politics and the Woman

NEEMAN SOBHAN

THE other day, on an international women writer's chat group that I belong to, I had an interesting discussion about the current Obama vs. 'Billary' race for presidential nomination in the US. It had started days ago with most of us generally criticizing the sexist media attacks on Hillary. Then, a well known Indian writer of an older generation declared that she, as an admirer of the feminist movement, was rooting for Hillary to make all women proud by becoming the first woman to preside in the White House. "It is encouraging that America has overcome its racist bias in the person of presidential candidate Barack Obama. Now to see if the US can also overcome its sexist bias."

An upcoming Indian novelist living in the US responded: "As long as US gets rid of Bush and all that he stands for, its all the same to me whether they overcome their racial or sexist bias in their election though I'm afraid voting for a black or a woman doesn't prove either, as we all know. But symbols seem to have precedence over reality."

Then, a White-American feminist writer sent us a rather interesting document. It is a petition that was signed by a large number of feminist intellectuals, artists and professionals, explaining why they were voting for the candidate of their choice. In the email, the writer said: "Do not assume that all US feminists support Hillary Clinton and that only the boys support Obama. Many feminists, myself included, support him because of his stand on the war and because we see Hillary as a liberal hawk. Here is a petition laying out this position signed by a number of NY feminists before the primary."

The petition:

"In the coming elections, it is important to remember that war and peace are as much "women's issues," as are health, the environment, and the achievement of educational and occupational equality. Because we believe that all of these concerns are not only fundamental but closely intertwined, we will be casting our vote for Senator Barack Obama as the Democratic nominee for President of the United States.

Since the terrorist attacks of September 11, we have watched with shock and sorrow as our country has become mired in war. The resulting tragedy for our own soldiers, their immediate families and for the people of Iraq has been incalculable.

Less obvious, but no less grave has been the impact on our domestic institutions and economy. With a defense budget of half a trillion dollars and expenditures now averaging $12 billion a month for wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, resources that might have been used for health care, housing, education, repair of infrastructure, relief of poverty and community development have been drained away.

We urgently need a Presidential candidate, who understands that "preemptive" attacks on other countries and the reliance on military force have diminished rather then strengthened our national security.

And we urgently need a Presidential candidate whose first priority is to address domestic needs. We do not believe that Senator Hillary Clinton is that candidate.

We base our judgment on her seven-year record as the Senator from New York. As a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, she has carefully identified herself as a supporter of a strong, enlarged and proactive military. In 2002, she voted to authorize the "use of force" against Iraq, while voting against an amendment that would have mandated further diplomacy. In subsequent years, she expressed enthusiastic support for the war effort, objected to fixed timelines or the withdrawal of U.S troops and until last summer