

RELEASE IN FULL

CONFIDENTIAL

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For: John Martilla  
From: Sidney Blumenthal  
Re: It Now Depends On Biden

1. This is no time for excuses, looking for silver linings, or claiming that Obama won on this or that point.
2. Whatever Obama was advised for the debate and whatever his own responsibility, his advisers failed to understand the dynamics and imperatives of the debate.
3. Whatever the many opportunities Obama squandered, at no point did he communicate the gravity of the election. He utterly failed to explain the stakes.
4. Whatever detailed policies Obama cited, at no point did he offer any theme whatsoever, or explain how his policies, despite Republican resistance, have laid the foundation for recovery.
5. Obama utterly failed to understand Romney's strategic objective in the debate: to reposition himself as more centrist while emitting dog whistles to the right—"etch-a-sketch." Instead, Obama graciously conceded all that centrist ground to Romney by his elaborate praise of how Romney had enacted health care with Democratic support in Massachusetts—rather than pointing to Romney's cynical partisan hypocrisy, refusal to stand by health care in Massachusetts and dishonesty in his attacks on Obamacare. Obama could not have served Romney better.
6. For 90 minutes, Obama failed to mention even once: women and Hispanics. And he forgot that Obamacare covers preexisting conditions, women's reproductive health, young people to age 26 under their parents' insurances, and prevents bankruptcies; the Republican congressional assaults on contraception, women's rights and reproductive health; the Dream Act; his student loan bill; etc.
7. For 90 minutes, Obama failed to mention Paul Ryan and how Romney adopted his budgetary priorities, which have no known statistical basis, would destroy 100 years of progress by Democratic and Republican administrations alike, and throw the economy into recession.
8. Obama's closing statement, explaining his understanding of the nation, was bizarre in the extreme, historically false and seemingly ignorant (the point of the United States

apparently being “free enterprise”), and to the right of Romney, who at least cited the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence and political democracy (another lapsed opportunity for Obama, who failed to mention Republican voter suppression efforts, every one knocked down by the courts).

9. The political consequences of the first debate may not mean that Obama will lose the election. Its structure still favors him. But the momentum that was building for greater Democratic Party gains has been thwarted and will be difficult if not impossible to recreate. Obama’s performance has inflicted invisible damage on the party—what will not happen.
10. The responsibility for stopping the bleeding rests squarely with Biden, not Obama. Obama cannot try to redo his debate on the fly the day after. He would appear as attempting to do what he failed to do. He would underscore his failure. Biden is the next up with the vice presidential debate and should bear the burden of carrying the attack. He should attack now, today, and continue ceaselessly into the debate on October 11.
11. What Biden should say: Romney said in the debate that no one is entitled to their own facts. That begins with Romney. We cannot have an honest debate unless we deal in facts and the truth. So let’s clear away the falsehoods. Romney’s falsehoods fall into two categories: One, brazen lies, and, two, 180 degree reversals of previous positions while claiming they were his all along. Let’s go through Romney’s top ten lies...
12. Having done this for a week, Biden should open his debate with this same statement, declaring that there cannot be an honest debate until the falsehoods are cleared away. He must do this in the debate even if he’s been doing this for the previous week in order to reach the largest possible audience to define Romney as a liar, to demonstrate that his “victory” in the first debate was based on falsehoods and therefore illegitimate, and to present an aggressive, spirited case in contrast to Obama’s listless performance.
13. Biden must do this now. Democrats cannot wait for Obama’s next debate in two weeks. If Biden does this work, he will reverse Romney’s gain and establish the basis for Obama to give a very different kind of performance to project strength without having to do all the remedial labor in the second debate.
14. Biden must articulate the gravity of the election, the immense stakes. After defining Romney the liar, he must state the theme that the Obama administration has fought against relentless Republican obstruction to lay the foundation for recovery and that the administration has plans to secure and expand it, and create a new period of growth and progress. And: Romney and the Republicans are waging an assault on the rights of Americans—women’s rights, Hispanics aspiring to the American Dream, every citizen who has the constitutional right to the vote, and every citizen who now will have the right to health care. Obama will protect the rights of all Americans; Romney wants to take them away. Obama will go forward; we can’t go back.