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May 12, 2008, 12:14 pm

# Can Actor Sway College Superdelegates?

By MICHAEL FALCONE

After [inching past](#) Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton in the official tally of superdelegates last week, Senator Barack Obama is looking to extend his lead, and his campaign is hoping a little star power might do the trick.

Actor Kal Penn, who currently stars in the movie, ["Harold & Kumar Escape from Guantanamo Bay."](#) fired off a letter today to the two remaining uncommitted college superdelegates, urging them to get in Mr. Obama's corner.

The two students, Lauren Wolfe and Awais Khaleel, the president and vice president of the College Democrats of America, are among the youngest Democratic superdelegates and their endorsements are up for grabs.

"It was indeed important to remain neutral as the candidates themselves reached out to young Americans. As representatives of a college group, I respect your decision to have waited until your constituents made their voices heard in a clear fashion," Mr. Penn, an Obama supporter, wrote in his letter. "But that time has come and gone."

Mr. Penn is one of the many prominent candidate supporters Ms. Wolfe, 25, a law student at the University of Detroit-Mercy and Mr. Khaleel, 23, a junior at the University of Wisconsin in Madison, have heard from recently. But the two of them haven't been swayed just yet. They posted [a YouTube video](#) two weeks ago asking for input from other college students on how to vote.

"Guess who might decide the leader of the free world?" Mr. Khaleel asks in the clip. "Me!"

If Ms. Wolfe and Mr. Khaleel line up behind Mr. Obama, they would be joining fellow college student and superdelegate, Jason Rae, who attends Marquette University and has already pledged his support.

Mr. Penn, who also appears on the television series "House," has traveled to dozens of college campuses for the Obama campaign courting young voters - a group that has been a major source of primary votes for the Illinois Senator. Here is the text of Mr. Penn's letter:

Awais & Lauren:

Four years ago, a friend of mine in Texas was working a

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minimum wage job so that he could one day go to college. His phone rang one evening, and the voice on the other line offered him a \$90,000 job driving a truck for a defense contractor in Iraq. He called me and asked what I thought he should do. No matter what he decided, I remember thinking, “What a sad day when the world’s richest, most powerful country can only offer 2 choices to someone who wants to go to college: minimum wage, or \$90,000 in a war zone.”

After reading Jason Rae’s note earlier this week, I feel obligated to share with you my experiences as a surrogate at colleges and community centers from Virginia to Indiana, Ohio to Pennsylvania, Wisconsin to North Carolina.

State after state, I have been meeting young people who, for the first time in their lives, are not simply voting, but volunteering for a campaign. After being told for years that their voices don’t count for much, they have risen up and joined us in securing a better world for all Americans. Many of these folks cannot afford a college education. Many lack health care. Some are caring for ailing parents. Others are first-generation Americans. Overwhelmingly, they’ve answered the challenge that Senator Obama has given them: to take responsibility and become involved. I ask you not to ignore them any longer.

Young voters are mobilized for Barack in some of the most unlikely places. I’m reminded of a very moving event at the largely conservative Miami University of Ohio several weeks back; Ranked as the 4th least diverse school in the nation by the Princeton Review, our surrogate rally drew 500 students – a large number of whom showed up with handmade “Obama ‘08” signs. The College Democrats on campus were blown away, having never seen more than small double-digit attendance at any of their general meetings. These several hundred students, a great many of whom were conservative Republicans, came to learn more about Barack Obama and left that night as supporters. I ask you not to deny them the opportunity to support the Democratic Party.

It was indeed important to remain neutral as the candidates themselves reached out to young Americans. As representatives of a college group, I respect your decision to have waited until your constituents made their voices heard in a clear fashion. But that time has come and gone. You are no doubt aware that this election season started with an increase in youth voter turnout of 135% above 2004 levels in Iowa. Senator Obama won the ‘youth vote’ by a 4-1 margin in that state, followed by 3-1 in New Hampshire, and 2-1 in Nevada.

He is the only candidate — Democrat or Republican — to have an active National Arts Policy Committee to preserve and encourage the ties between the arts and culture, education, civil/national preservation, and national & international security. He is the only candidate — Democrat or Republican — to have made a commitment to true reform and refused federal lobbyist money in his Presidential campaign. He also

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refused to stand idly by, and spoke out publicly while Senators McCain and Clinton voted to authorize a war that continues to send scores of young Americans overseas.

Perhaps three weeks ago was not the right time to pledge. But neither is three weeks from now. Your failure to pledge now risks returning those passionate, first-time voters to a political landscape of the same old games that caused them to maintain such distance from the Democratic Party before. If you are being pressured by others to wait until later in May or June to pledge, please be aware that you risk hurting the majority of folks who have made their clear choice in Senator Obama. I work with them every day. These young voters were mobilized because of a belief in their ability to change the game-playing Washington establishment politics that has failed them for so long. You may be reluctant to endorse because you are DNC officers, but you have a mandate from scores of young voters to pledge now. As the future of the Democratic Party, they look up to you. Please don't let the system fail them again. This should not be about party politics and should not be about insider loyalties. This is about the constituents you represent, and their inclusion and involvement for years to come.

Your failure to pledge now also risks denying young, first-time voters the very things for which they have supported the Democratic Party now: universal health care, access to education, freedom from war, a sustainable environment, fair, unionized jobs, and serious, long-term economic solutions. Please don't risk pledging too late and hurting their credibility.

You need to pledge your support for Senator Obama today. You need to do this for the scores of young voters who turned out in unprecedented, historic numbers. You need to do this for a college freshman I spoke with in North Carolina last Monday, who tirelessly splits his time between school, volunteer work, and helping care for his ailing father. You need to do this for the brave young men and women who are in the military, and for the young woman in Minnesota who, with tears streaming down her face, explained that she can't pay off her student loans on a teaching salary.

You need to do this for people like my friend who was making minimum wage four years ago. He ultimately turned down that job offer in Iraq. He has still not been able to afford a college education. You need to show him that the richest, most powerful country in the world hasn't forgotten him.

Best,  
Kal Penn

Surrogate/National Arts Policy Committee Member  
Barack Obama for President

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#### 75 comments so far...

- 
1. May 12th, 2008 12:26 pm What \*are\* superdelegates waiting for?  
One gets the impression perhaps they are courting good Mojo from the Clintons.  
Could there be another explanation for their delay?  
What was supposed to be an avalanche is indeed happening, but one or two or four at a time.  
Superdelegates! LISTEN! Next week is coming. By one week from now, it will be too late to have the effect your vote was designed to have.  
If you're holding out for Clinton, it's not going to happen. That ship is not leaving the port.  
Shape up! Listen to the voters and endorse the country's next nominee.  
Make it happen now. Please!  
Carole  
[www.Americans-Away-From-Home.com](http://www.Americans-Away-From-Home.com)  
— Posted by Carole
- 
2. May 12th, 2008 12:32 pm The universe tends to unfold as it should...  
— Posted by Ray
- 
3. May 12th, 2008 12:32 pm Kudus to Kal Penn for fighting the good fight. Considering Obama's overwhelming majority of support from both college students, and college graduates, it is astonishing that the College Democrats in America haven't already announced their support of Barack Obama.  
It is especially astonishing considering the Clinton's despicably divisive smear campaign against the college educated over the course of this campaign. The Clintons clearly don't understand that the way to address educational disparities in the US is by increasing educational opportunities for all, not by disparaging the educated as "elitists."  
— Posted by g english
- 
4. May 12th, 2008 12:34 pm Great letter. Spot on and 100% true! DO IT!!  
— Posted by Hinckley
- 
5. May 12th, 2008 12:45 pm Penn is a bully and his letter seeks to intimidate. How very old school politics! It is completely ironic that the far left, who allegedly seek inclusiveness, so very often practice negative, divisive campaign strategies. If I were those two college delegates, I would wave my American flag in Penn's hostile face and recite the Bill of Rights. You will lose him on the concept of due process, and he will run back to his propoganda machine.  
And my apologies to the Susan Sarandon's of the entertainment world –but the idea of young Hollywood deciding this election is terrifying.  
— Posted by Alice

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6. May 12th, 2008 12:45 pm

As someone originally from India who chose to become a naturalized citizen some 13 years ago, this is the first time in that many years that my family and I have been energized by Sen Obama's message of unity. In him we see a candidate who is good not just for this great country, but also for the world today. He will lead us into the 21st century, restore America's name and fame in the world and keep us safe and secure. America will soon become once again, a thriving economy, a beacon that has always drawn the best, brightest, hopeful and smartest from all over the world. America's education system, lower, middle and higher will soar to the highest there is, under his leadership. We are tired of divisiveness, old politics, drama and war mongering of the past administrations. We are hungry for change and Obama is the only one to offer that, at this time. The sooner we unite behind him, the sooner will be become ONE America.

– Posted by geekay

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7. May 12th, 2008 12:46 pm

Actor Kal who?

– Posted by B Flat

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8. May 12th, 2008 12:48 pm

Seriously, it is really sad when we need to turn to Hollywood to have an influence on super delegates. Especially, when they are two young people who are representing the youth voice.

If Awais and Lauren cannot see that Obama is responsible for awakining the youth, bringing the youth into the boths to vote and wanting to play a part in the government. Then these two should be removed from there duties to cast a vote!

The youth voic was clearly represented way before California & Texas primaries.

Shame on you Awais & Lauren!

– Posted by Peter NYC

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9. May 12th, 2008 12:50 pm

According to AP, Obama camp has scheduled a meeting with Christie Todd Whitman, former Gov. NJ, frmr EPA sec. Additionally, the website obamawhitman2008.com was purchased just yesterday... might be an interesting wrinkle...

– Posted by Jason S.

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10. May 12th, 2008 12:55 pm

Okay, I totally agree with Kal. I've been pondering this serious race issue you Americans have and here's what I've come up with... We have racists too in Canada but they've been relegated to the sidelines. A high quality public education system means that young kids for the past 30 years or so have been getting a consistent message of equality among races. Further, the GOP courted these racists and gave them a voice, a very serious mistake. Someday, you will be a great country like Canada, I can only hope. Please post this NY Times!!

– Posted by Brian, Canada

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11. May 12th, 2008 12:57 pm

Here's something college students should think about. After studying hard for years, (and possibly running up huge debts to do so) perhaps then going into business, law or medicine and then at the age of thirty, making a good living and thinking okay now I can afford marriage, a home, children...THINK AGAIN. Especially if you live in a big city where the cost of living is extremely high. If Obama is president he will raise taxes on those of us who fall into this category. We are not the rich. We are people who will be juggling mortgages, school tuitions, (thirty thousand dollars a years per child at some private schools in NYC and Los Angeles) and mortgages on homes that though in safe areas aren't exactly palaces. We're talking three bedroom two and a half bath with no yard. The truth is that Obama's economic policy is a disaster. He has no solutions. In his efforts to get the working class vote, which he'll lose anyway, he's willing to squeeze the middle class. He won't take on the really rich. He won't take on the really powerful. Be careful student superdelegates. Don't

be swayed by a lot of talk about a new vision because when you're being squeezed that new vision and the fake visionary who sold it to you won't be helping you pay your bills.

– Posted by KatieG

- 
12. May 12th, 2008  
1:04 pm
- In response to Alice @ 12:45pm who thinks Mr. Penn is a bully seeking to intimidate, this is exactly the problem with the current primary contest. Senator Obama and his supporters lay out common-sense and logical arguments for supporting him and the response is "how arrogant! how rude! how dare he think he can run for president! how dare he tell us who to support!" This is what both sides are doing - do we honestly think Senator Clinton and her supporters are sitting on their hands, waiting for Senator Obama to trip up? No - they are campaigning for her as vigorously. And why shouldn't they? So relax - one letter does not a hijacking-of-the-electorate by "young Hollywood" make. America Ferrera, probably a more well-known name for her work on the hit "Ugly Betty", has been campaigning for Senator Clinton vocally for quite some time. And an actress on "The Hills" supports Senator McCain. "Young Hollywood" has supporters in all camps. So far, they haven't decided a thing. Save your outrage for something that deserves it.

– Posted by Teri in CT

- 
13. May 12th, 2008  
1:10 pm
- Obamas a GREAT ACTOR, so its not surprising to see him get this guys support. I wish all these superdelegates and famous people would just butt out and let the voters decide.

– Posted by Al

- 
14. May 12th, 2008  
1:11 pm
- I don't know if he could sway the college super delegates, but I believe he did a great job volunteering for Obama's campaigning and taking his message to thousands of young voters.

I usually don't like to respond directly to other people's posts, but this made me angry:

#4: "Bully"? Have you actually seen the guy? Ever? Kal Penn is anything but a bully; he is a very nice and articulate guy who is passionate about this campaign. "Penn's hostile face"..you clearly have issues beyond this article. To label him as someone who is intimidating people is ridiculous and sad..and exactly why young people were not interested in politics for the longest time. Judgmental and hopeless partisanship. To "recite the Bill of Rights"..yeah, so can Kal. Let people express their opinions, even when you don't agree with them. Especially then.

#6: It's Kal Penn. Actor and sociologist.

– Posted by Preity, NY

- 
15. May 12th, 2008  
1:15 pm
- To # 4-Alice...My compliments for a beautiful post. My exact sentiments. Obama will never be President..The youth cannot carry him and will eventually learn that his romatci persona and rhetoric is just that..And that only. No substance there on issues. The republicans will crucify him in November..Thank you again for sharing..HRC is our only answer..

To # 8-Brian..I'm sure you are welcome to post. However our USA is just fine..We have lots to do besides aspire to be like Canada...

– Posted by kaye c.

- 
16. May 12th, 2008  
1:16 pm
- The best point Kal made is the choice America gives to its poor youth: join the Army if you want to go to college.

Isn't that a sad option? What if your set of morals or religion leads you to not want to participate in war or the war machine? Then your only choice is to not go to college?

I'm glad that Obama is thinking out of the box (although it's not that far) to give our youth an alternative to both serve our country and receive help for their tuition. Choices that don't involve our Armed Forces or having to worry about roadside bombs.

This is the sort of shift we need in American thinking. Clinton does not offer this when she talks of “obliterating Iran” or votes for the war in Iraq. I haven’t heard Clinton mention support for a similar policy. Perhaps this is because she doesn’t understand the truly crushing cost of college.

– Posted by PeterC

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17. May 12th, 2008 1:16 pm Yikes. I’m 34 and I don’t know who Kal Penn is. I feel so old!  
– Posted by Carrie

---

18. May 12th, 2008 1:23 pm Something everyone should see about McCain:  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y395Tftgz0E>

According to AP, Obama camp has scheduled a meeting with Christie Todd Whitman, former Gov. NJ, frmr EPA sec. Additionally, the website obamawhitman2008.com was purchased just yesterday... might be an interesting wrinkle...

– Posted by Jason S.

They will probably do this for any \*possible\* VP candidate on their list so that they can secure the site. The amount of money to register a bunch of sites wouldn’t be an issue. Not getting the choice of url they want would be an issue.

– Posted by BL, Cincinnati OH

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19. May 12th, 2008 1:24 pm U.S. could learn something from Canada when it comes to race relations.  
– Posted by politicojunk

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20. May 12th, 2008 1:27 pm @ Jason S:  
As a quick whois.net search reveals, here is the man who bought obamawhitman2008.com:  
<http://www.workoutranch.com/trainer.cfm?id=1154>  
– Posted by Ryan

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21. May 12th, 2008 1:27 pm IN response to Jason S:  
I think it is far too early to begin the guessing games of who will be #2. Many people who are potentials have websites that have been bought as well: McCaskill, Webb, etc... Anybody can buy a site for anything, because of anything they heard.  
As far as these superdelegates, I think that they should have declared Obama long ago if they were following the beliefs of the populations they represent. Obama won college-age votes months ago.  
– Posted by Audra

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22. May 12th, 2008 1:27 pm Jason S.,  
Wasn’t Christie Todd Whitman the EPA administrator who falsely assured people breathing the 9/11 air was not hazardous?  
Although she did seem to try to raise the alarm about global warming, only to have that report squashed by Bush, and seems to have a good record environmentally otherwise.  
Still, a moderate Republican woman who’s been working to end divisiveness, gotta like that thinking.  
– Posted by trudy

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23. May 12th, 2008 1:30 pm Mr. Penn sounds like an intelligent person, and I’m not against actors joining the sounding board. But these two superdelegates don’t actually have “constituencies,” as they pass no laws nor collect any taxes. Their group, in fact, is not about endorsing candidates. Look at CDA website and you’ll be hard-pressed to even find the names Clinton or Obama. Their purpose is to register voters and encourage

voting. A fine purpose, indeed.

So what Lauren and Awais should do is what every other superdelegate should do, which is to vote their conscience. They are not bound by anyone else's vote or opinion.

Relax people, McCain doesn't have a ghost of a chance (IMHO).

— Posted by Jeff M in Chicago

24. May 12th,  
2008  
1:31 pm

This is the richest, most powerful country in the world. There is no reason people should have to work min. wage jobs, have to pay to go to college, or have to pay for their health care.

It is the governments moral obligation to provide everyone one with health care, college and high paying jobs. You are born with these rights and we need someone who can stand up to the rich and take back what is rightfully ours, their money.

Obama is the only one who can do it. I believe he can unite all of us, against those who disagree with us. He has proven that he can change the world and we can trust him. If Obama loses, I am going to move to Venezuela, where the government makes sound policies and actually cares about the oppressed and the poor.

— Posted by L

25. May 12th,  
2008  
1:35 pm

Penn is a bully and his letter seeks to intimidate.

— Posted by Alice

How exactly anyone could find Kal Penn intimidating, I cannot fathom. It's like being intimidated by Carrot Top or Barney.

Just because someone is famous doesn't mean their opinions aren't valid and worthy of consideration. Is he trying to persuade? Yes, why wouldn't he? He's working for the Obama campaign.

I just don't understand why people are so intimidated by the famous expressing their opinions. Are they that insecure? Do they have that little faith in the electorate, to think that the election will be stolen by Kal Penn? Ludicrous! Take your paranoia and go home.

— Posted by James Foster

26. May 12th,  
2008  
1:36 pm

"If I were those two college delegates, I would wave my American flag in Penn's hostile face and recite the Bill of Rights."

Speaking of the Bill of Rights, a copy of the Bill of Rights appears in the most recent Kal Penn movie that is in theaters right now. I won't spoil it for you.

— Posted by sunshine

27. May 12th,  
2008  
1:37 pm

Great letter: it embodies the significant intelligence of many of Senator Obama's supporters — and suggest with facts and reason why he has done, and is doing, so well with his campaign.

— Posted by Daniel, NYC

28. May 12th,  
2008  
1:46 pm

#4 Alice said, "Penn is a bully..."

Clearly, Alice has her Penns mixed up. Hillary's former head strategist, Mark Penn, the one who was caught lobbying for the trade deal that she supposedly opposes for the murderous Columbian government, the one who makes a living spinning the facts for a rogues gallery of nefarious clients ranging from Blackwater to big tobacco, could rightly be called a bully.

The fact that she hitched her wagon to such a despicable character for over a decade says a whole lot about her lack of integrity.

Conversely, Kal Penn is a funny, sweet, highly intelligent person who is the farthest thing from being a bully.

— Posted by g english

29. May 12th,  
2008  
1:49 pm

Tell you what "Alice" from Post #4....Instead of waving your American flag and reciting the Bill of Rights to Mr. Penn, why don't you tell him and the rest of us NYT readers why his opinions and

comments that he articulated so beautifully in his letter to the delegates are so offensive to you?

Perhaps you can refute some of the content of his statements:

“He is the only candidate — Democrat or Republican — to have an active National Arts Policy Committee to preserve and encourage the ties between the arts and culture, education, civil/national preservation, and national & international security. He is the only candidate — Democrat or Republican — to have made a commitment to true reform and refused federal lobbyist money in his Presidential campaign. He also refused to stand idly by, and spoke out publicly while Senators McCain and Clinton voted to authorize a war that continues to send scores of young Americans overseas.”

Sounds like a pretty compelling argument to me. Why don't you put your flag down for a bit and get some rest. We want to see you out there knocking on doors for Obama come August.

— Posted by DRW

---

30. May 12th, 2008  
1:49 pm

Whitman? A failed Bush appointee? As Obama's VP? Not a chance....

— Posted by Jeff M in Chicago

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31. May 12th, 2008  
1:50 pm

Kumar! Kumar!

— Posted by David

---

32. May 12th, 2008  
1:51 pm

Kal Penn is also a visiting professor at the University of Pennsylvania (<http://www.upenn.edu/pennnews/article.php?id=1127> ). This might merit a mention.

— Posted by James

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33. May 12th, 2008  
1:53 pm

Teri in Ct:

good points about the various actors' involvement. I wasn't really outraged, so perhaps my language was a bit much. What as objectional was Penn's use of the terms "you need to...". I hate that expression. It almost always mean "you need to do what I want you to do". I also thought that he pretended to speak for all young people and he clearly doesn't. I will retract my statement about his hostile face; it was purely imaginary, as I have no idea what he looks like. But I hang my hat on not following the advice of Hollywood.

— Posted by Alice

---

34. May 12th, 2008  
1:55 pm

# 16 – politicojunk:

Oh puleese...

the US gerrymandering allows more minority members to get elected to the Congress and other representative bodies. Canada is on the reverse with this....Canadian system is not re-drawing electoral districts but more members are delivered from rural areas then urban areas. And the urban areas have more ethnic/visible minorities and new immigrants.

Even the Democratic party primary system, even though its seem to have given certain unexpected outcome this year, it accommodates minority aspirations. Imagine if South Carolina primary was slated to happen in May, along with KY & OR.

I'd say US is much democratic and representative than Canada, as far as the race relations in politics go.

— Posted by Thiru K

---

35. May 12th, 2008  
1:55 pm

People talk about the election being stolen away from African Americans or White "working class" voters if the election goes one way or the other, but no one ever talks about the youth vote in this regard.

For the first time really since Vietnam, the youth of America are rallying behind a candidate, and that candidate is Barack Obama. If

he doesn't win this nomination, Kal's right, there will be a lot of turned off young people in America come November.

– Posted by Travis

- 
36. May 12th, 2008 2:09 pm  
College voters who resisted brain washing by the Obama cult support Hillary Clinton. Hillary Clinton has the smarts, tenacity, knowledge and experience to help college students with their loans. She will reinstate programs to push science and technology forward. She understands our economic situation and she will do what she promises.

Obama will still be trying to get hands-on training in government 101 while letting Kennedy and Kerry and Co. call the shots and push sixties' style liberal politics.

– Posted by alee21

- 
37. May 12th, 2008 2:15 pm  
Rely to L (#21)  
It not the job of the government to provide health care, college educations or high paying jobs. None of these things are found in the Constitution, the law of the land. Nobody is born with any of these rights. There is no way that you can take back the money of the rich, which is rightfully ours. If you want to be rich, earn it.

Take this advice. Read the U.S. Constitution.

– Posted by Maureen Scanlon

- 
38. May 12th, 2008 2:20 pm  
To #13 (kaye c.):  
I'm pretty tired of hearing that Obama is all style and no substance. Swallow your pride and take a look at his stance on the issues at <http://www.barackobama.com/issues/>. Now, you might think that some of his proposals are far-fetched or won't work—but that, by definition, is a *substantive* disagreement, not a stylistic one.

– Posted by aristotle

- 
39. May 12th, 2008 2:25 pm  
Obama is the next president. It's time for the superdelegates to start courting him.

Live in the past or join us in the future.

We keep lists and have long memories too.

– Posted by gerald

- 
40. May 12th, 2008 2:39 pm  
The spiteful rhetoric is what is going to turn off youth voters. There are so many stubborn Hillary supporters that flat out say they will never vote for Obama, that hurts the youth again they feel marginalized and voiceless. Then the baby boomers can go back to complaining that youth never get involved in politics, that they stood up for what they believed in when they were young, and all we care about is Facebook and Myspace.

– Posted by colleen

- 
41. May 12th, 2008 2:41 pm  
Alice,  
Kal Penn's letter is not bullying.  
The letters from Clinton supporters to Nancy Pelosi which threaten to pull funds from the DNC?  
That's bullying.  
Me thinks Kal Penn has far less power to bully anyone than Billionaires like Harvey Weinstein and Robert "drop it like it's hot" Johnson.

– Posted by ldc

- 
42. May 12th, 2008 2:53 pm  
Obamas a GREAT ACTOR, so its not surprising to see him get this guys support. I wish all these superdelegates and famous people would just butt out and let the voters decide.

– Posted by Al

What? People who chose to act as a profession are not worthy to vote for president as well? Obama an actor? Sure - he's acting like he will be the best Democratic nominee for President! Famous people are voters too. C'mon! Your statement tends to give more emphasis on how Clinton supporters are divisive and entitled.

Stop the fight! Lets unite!

Obama 08!

– Posted by Roz

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43. May 12th, 2008 3:02 pm #4 Alice : Kal Penn a “bully?” “Young Hollywood deciding this election ?”

I don't think so. You're dissing the hundreds of thousands of new voters who registered to vote Democrat this year because they were inspired by the candidate himself.

And by the way, I saw Kal Penn speak a few months ago on Larry King Live along with other actors like Sean Astin about their candidate of choice. As a journalist myself who has had to listen to many celebrities prattle on about their personal lives and hair and makeup, I found it refreshing to hear these actors talk about politics in a thoughtful and intelligent way.

– Posted by Sally

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44. May 12th, 2008 3:05 pm # 9 Katie G,  
Good post. Economic policy is not one of Obama's strong points. His last speech on the matter showed that he has no real understanding of the details or a strategy forward.

# 13 Peter C,

Uh, you haven't been listening to Clinton well enough. When I heard her speak this last fall, she talked about the prohibitive cost of education along with foreclosures as part of the same problem. Also, on Iran her statement was no more idiotic than Obama's diplomatic blunder on Pakistan which resulted in moderate anti-Musharraf parties telling the US to butt out.

– Posted by LM

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45. May 12th, 2008 3:30 pm So-called Star-power might work in the US. I doubt that it will work world-wise where citizens judge with their heads, NOT their eyes.

Obama's charm lies in his non-committal attitude–It will work when things are not serious, but it will backfire in the face of real issues.

America, it is time we use our head, not our eyes. More importantly, forget about the media's biased portraits of the candidates.

Hillary Clinton for President 2008, and Obama, Vice President, to let Obama solidify his wishy washy practice and establish his track records. A non-committal inclination compounds with no track records is a leader we have to, all the time, keep our fingers crossed as crisis unfolds.

– Posted by Chicagoan

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46. May 12th, 2008 3:34 pm They have until 6/3/08 to make their final endorsement choices between Barack and Hillary. Otherwise, Kal Penn's letter was on target.

– Posted by Adrian

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47. May 12th, 2008 3:42 pm Let the Hollywood show roll on, we will see where all these voters are in local and state elections in the coming years, and how the democratic party alienated the core voters, which are Hillarys supporters, when they lose in the next coming years cause supers voted against their constituencies, because those Obama supporters were a one time deal, and now left the average democrats without support then we will really know the toll that Obama has inflicted on the party, this is the beginning of the end for the party..

– Posted by Jr

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48. May 12th, 2008  
3:45 pm

#45 No they dont, the rules are in place for a reason, not one of them have to cast their vote til the convention thats what it says.. As I have heard atleast a billion times about FL and MI, you cannot change the rules now.. Rules are there for a reason.. Well now eat those words please, ohh thats right your behind a candidate who spouts hypocrisy on a daily basis.. Cant wait for him to lose in November on a democratic year. Like it or not Obama has split the party and left no one for the future.. Sad day in America..

– Posted by Jr

---

49. May 12th, 2008  
3:46 pm

The spiteful rhetoric is what is going to turn off youth voters. There are so many stubborn Hillary supporters that flat out say they will never vote for Obama, that hurts the youth again they feel marginalized and voiceless. Then the baby boomers can go back to complaining that youth never get involved in politics, that they stood up for what they believed in when they were young, and all we care about is Facebook and Myspace.

– Posted by colleen

People can vote anyway they choose. If the youth do not turn out, that is their choice to make. People are free to do what they want when it comes to voting, and that holds true at any age. The Clinton supporters owe young people nothing in terms of how they vote. They have every right to stay with her. That is the way it works, just as Obama supporters are free to stay with him. For your information, Barack Obama is a baby boomer.

– Posted by Kevin Carson

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50. May 12th, 2008  
3:50 pm

Who cares what these kid think or do? Their votes no longer matter much. Obviously they lack the courage to take a stand, even as their “constituency” is overwhelmingly pro-Obama.

My guess is they will come out for Obama. It is now getting safe enough that those democrats without the courage to make a stand (like these kids, John Edwards, etc.) can come out and not be controversial.

It’s odd that they would solicit feedback (YouTube) and then promptly ignore the overwhelming response. Sounds like a media grab for two twenty-somethings with political aspirations.

Ignore them already. They are hardly relevant.

Jeff

– Posted by Jeff H.

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51. May 12th, 2008  
3:50 pm

Reply to #37

Republicans fail to understand that helping others to pay for health care and a college education benefits all americans, including the wealthy. When the vast majority of americans are struggling and poor, crime and violence increases. We all see what has happened in the last 8 years of the Bush administration.

Democrats need to unite; Clinton was a great fighter but the fight is over. Now everyone must decide whether they want to vote for Obama or another Bush term. My vote is for Obama!

– Posted by Wendy Harris

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52. May 12th, 2008  
3:51 pm

The average age of the Obama campaign team is I believe 32. I would like to ask a few questions of all the young people flocking to Obama.

1. Has he told you how he is going to change government?
2. Has he spelled out any of his plans for the country as President?
3. If he is not “of Washington” how will he get an experienced VP to run with.

Lofty words and catch phrases sound wonderful in the “moment”, but the actual running of the government takes much more. It takes grit. By the way, in case people have forgotten. Obama voted to extend the war by voting for funds for the war. How did that get lost in the

campaign?

Let's let it all play out.

– Posted by Susanne

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53. May 12th, 2008 3:55 pm Hey Alice, I wonder if you felt this way about the letter that 20 or so Superdelegates wrote to other Dems trying to get them to OVERTURN due process in HRC's favor??

– Posted by The Oracle in MD

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54. May 12th, 2008 4:11 pm Kal Penn - its not his real name!! To sound like American he has changed his name. The more I hear from these stupid liberals, the less I will vote for Obama. I am a naturalized citizen. The reason I would not have voted for George Bush, for the similar reason I will probably not vote for Hussien Obama. They are just two extremes - one Far right and another so much from left, sometimes I wonder when I became citizen whether I was thinking about this Liberal America.

– Posted by Bip

---

55. May 12th, 2008 4:19 pm According to AP, Obama camp has scheduled a meeting with Christie Todd Whitman, former Gov. NJ, frmr EPA sec. Additionally, the website obamawhitman2008.com was purchased just yesterday... might be an interesting wrinkle...

– Posted by Jason S.

---

Hmm, are we trying to start a rumor here?

If you are, that's a juicy one. My general reaction to the idea of Obama naming a woman as a running mate is that it might come across as pandering. It's not that he shouldn't do it at all, just that he needs to be very careful about it.

I think Whitman would be a fantastic choice, for many reasons (though she should be on McCain's short-list too).

– Posted by Brett Chandler

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56. May 12th, 2008 4:21 pm #49 Jeff H. "Who cares what these kid think or do? Their votes no longer matter much. Obviously they lack the courage to take a stand, even as their "constituency" is overwhelmingly pro-Obama."

What is your understanding of the word "overwhelmingly"? In the popular vote the two candidates are 1-2% apart. The difference is not significant, so don't copy your Master Obama using bombastic words that make no sense.

– Posted by Ann

---

57. May 12th, 2008 4:53 pm #53 There is no overturning nothing, Obama doesnt have 2025 or 2209 which will be the goal soon, as they include FL and MI. THE facts are clear with MI and FL, she will have the popular vote lead and Obama will have the delegate lead.. Like it or not this is how its going to shake down.. Even with this rush of super delegates he maintains a small lead with FL and MI.. Here is the numbers for all the states up to this point..

Delegates Supers Total  
Obama 1657.5 285 1942.5  
Clinton 1604.5 285.5 1890

This paints quite a different picture, and soon this will become reality as the DNC knows they have to include all 50 states or they have no chance in November. A virtual tie to quote Mr. Obama... This is why the supers havent elected Obama yet, and he may just lose.. This next couple contests are going to raise serious questions about his electability and reinforce what Hillary said about him not being able to carry the votes he needs in November, I keep thinking back to those 16 people who wrote that letter to the supers, they are going to seem like geniuses soon and probably will take the party power after Obama loses.. This race is far from over, if you think otherwise you are blind..

– Posted by Jr

- 
58. May 12th, 2008 4:56 pm
- Isn't it enough that this guy gets attention for being a celebrity without publishing not just a link to his letter, but the letter in its entirety?
- You can call celebrities sort of "Super" voters, because their choices get amplified beyond those of other voters. {If I sent a 958-word letter advocating for my candidate, would you give it a headline and highlight it too?} Actually, I value the judgment of superdelegates, most of whom have been elected by voters of their states to various offices, more than the judgment of the odd celebrity. [I am not criticizing celebrities for taking advantage of their forum and speaking out. Terrific that they care. I am criticizing you.]

– Posted by Lynn

- 
59. May 12th, 2008 5:21 pm
- And here is the updated map for the electoral college that shows McCain beating Obama by a good margin and Clinton beating McCain:
- <http://www.electoral-vote.com/>
- Obama 237  
McCain 290  
Clinton 280  
McCain 241
- Click on McCain vs Obama or Clinton vs McCain and you'll see what superdelegates are not coming out for Obama in hoardes.. They are tired of losing and know if they put forth Obama he will lose.. I for one am not going to be part of this terrible losing strategy.. Why is it that democrats keep doing this, with the exception of Bill Clinton.. Wake up people we need to win in November!!

– Posted by Jr

- 
60. May 12th, 2008 5:35 pm
- President Obama.  
Music to my ears.

– Posted by Martha Davidson

- 
61. May 12th, 2008 5:40 pm
- I would just like to say that while it does take "grit" to be a good president, being able to unify people is also important. Politics have become increasingly partisan, and this gets in the way of actual progress. Mr Obama's ability to speak will aid him in the presidency as it has in his campaign. What would happen if Congress and the President worked together to face the problems in this country? Also, I would like to add that many of the decisions we make today will affect my generation (I am 14) tomorrow. The decisions on how the US will pursue (or not pursue) renewable energy sources and deal with climate change will affect me far more than it will affect some of the older members of our government. The same is true with domestic issues like Social Security. When the long-term effects of these decisions hit home in 2040, 2050, and beyond, it will be my generation who has to worry about them. If you wait until these long-term effects happen to worry about them, we may not be able to do anything.

– Posted by Cecile

- 
62. May 12th, 2008 6:06 pm
59.  
May 12th, 2008 5:21 pm
- And here is the updated map for the electoral college that shows McCain beating Obama by a good margin and Clinton beating McCain:
- <http://www.electoral-vote.com/>
- Obama 237  
McCain 290

Clinton 280  
McCain 241

Click on McCain vs Obama or Clinton vs McCain and you'll see what superdelegates are not coming out for Obama in hoardes.. They are tired of losing and know if they put forth Obama he will lose.. I for one am not going to be part of this terrible losing strategy.. Why is it that democrats keep doing this, with the exception of Bill Clinton.. Wake up people we need to win in November!!

– Posted by Jr

Jr.

In the words of your favorite President (Reagan) , “There you go again”

There goes the soothsayer Jr predicting what is in peoples minds again. He does have the superdelegates ear doesn't he?

Okay jr. predict this.

2008-2016 Barack Obama  
2016-2024 Michelle Obama

And this...

You and your clones can't stop it.

And this...

Lasting peace in the Middle East

– Posted by tim tooley

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63. May 12th, 2008 6:15 pm I also support Obama and think that the super delegates should as well, but this letter is a bit much. Who cares what this actor thinks? I hate letters that tell me what I “should do.” Just make the case, and let the readers decide for themselves.

#54, Obama is a moderate on most issues, not a “far left” liberal. Commonsense and moderation seem to be his guiding principles.

– Posted by Andy

---

64. May 12th, 2008 6:19 pm Susanne,  
On Obama's web site you will find his plans in considerable detail.  
As for voting for funding for the troops, given that they are over there, and we can't get them out until Bush is gone, would you like them to be without armor, weapons, and food?

– Posted by eleanor

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65. May 12th, 2008 6:31 pm The super-delegates are waiting until that last possible moment... they want to be sure they wait long enough to guarantee that John McCain wins the whitehouse. Hillary Clinton and the democratic super-delegates have been devising this plan while watching an endless loop of the English Patient and MASH with a little Friends thrown in for good measure.

The Democrats love to help the Republicans win after all.

– Posted by democan

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66. May 12th, 2008 6:46 pm Any campaign that stereotypes these two obviously very politically aware and active college students as people who will be swayed by getting a letter from an actor needs to get its collective head examined.

I am a college student and I had no idea who Kal Penn was until reading this article, but if Obama really thinks he can convince the prez & VP of College Democrats to vote for him on the basis of an endorsement by a famous person, maybe he doesn't deserve the youth vote after all.

– Posted by College Student

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67. May 12th, 2008 7:06 pm I think those two college-age superdelegates are just trying to get attention. Everyone knows that college students are solidly in Obama's camp. If you don't want to support him, fine, but don't sit

around and ask people to convince you as if you are truly undecided and have Kal Penn write you a letter as if you are some sort of hot-shot.

– Posted by Ross in MD

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68. May 12th, 2008  
10:08 pm

Superb job Mr. Penn, not all actors are uninterested, and this one appears to be quite erudite as well.

– Posted by Samir in Pittsburgh

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69. May 13th, 2008  
11:42 am

Why would an actor think anyone cares about his politics? Maybe he'd like some acting advice from George Bush?

These super-delegates should take all the time they have to decide who to support. They should pledge for who THEY think is best and not be conned by anything or anyone else or be pressured to pledge before they are ready.

– Posted by Jamal

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70. May 13th, 2008  
1:38 pm

This is for KatieG and all who think like her. I am 60 years old and in my lifetime I have never seen a Republican except for perhaps Nelson Rockefeller ever vote for anything that helped the average American in making a living. Right now in this country 10% of the people hold approx. 90% of the wealth, 70% of Americans have no assets of value - we have in fact been under Republican rule for over half of my life and what we look at today is because of that very fact. The only time in my life time we have had a balanced budget and a surplus was under Bill Clinton, not my favorite) but he did it anyhow. Joe Sixpack has been suckered into voting against his own best interests and for Republicans for years - it started with Richard Nixons racist Southern strategy and I am quite sure John McCain will follow along similar lines. I think KatieG needs to start realizing where she really sits on the economic ladder as opposed to where she likes to think she sits.

– Posted by K.H. Ahmed

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71. May 13th, 2008  
3:17 pm

This is the richest, most powerful country in the world. There is no reason people should have to work min. wage jobs, have to pay to go to college, or have to pay for their health care.

It is the governments moral obligation to provide everyone one with health care, college and high paying jobs. You are born with these rights and we need someone who can stand up to the rich and take back what is rightfully ours, their money.

Obama is the only one who can do it. I believe he can unite all of us, against those who disagree with us. He has proven that he can change the world and we can trust him. If Obama loses, I am going to move to Venezuela, where the government makes sound policies and actually cares about the oppressed and the poor.

That is the funniest thing I have read in a while! Mostly because people actually think that it is true.

Pure comedy.

– Posted by PK

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72. May 13th, 2008  
3:33 pm

There is no such thing as the Democratic Party. You don't call Republicans, Republics either. It's called the Democrat Party...

I really get tired of correcting government educated people.

– Posted by chriss

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73. May 13th, 2008  
3:48 pm

"It is the governments moral obligation to provide everyone one with health care, college and high paying jobs. You are born with these rights and we need someone who can stand up to the rich and take back what is rightfully ours, their money."

L, are you serious? A right to high paying jobs, health care, and college? Where is this located in the constitution? I must have missed it. And the rich, which provide msot of the jobs in this country, have earned their money. Less than 2% of the wealthy in this

country have inherited their money. You must feel that income is distributed. It is not. Income is EARNED. Income that is earned is not the property of anyone but the person that has earned it PERIOD. Government coercively take income through an income tax that is inherently unconstitutional.

“Obama is the only one who can do it. I believe he can unite all of us, against those who disagree with us. He has proven that he can change the world and we can trust him. If Obama loses, I am going to move to Venezuela, where the government makes sound policies and actually cares about the oppressed and the poor.”

Obama is a marxist and apparently so are you. Please go to Venezuela and see what life is like under marxist dictator Hugo Chavez and tell me then how much he cares about the poor and oppressed.

– Posted by Mitch in TN

74. May 13th, 2008 6:43 pm

So at what point can we stop listening to Democrats whine about ‘the right to vote’? I mean how can I take the seriously when they comment on EVERYONE having A vote when in their own primaries some people have more voting power than others...who decides who is a ‘superdelegate’ and why are they chosen?

What if as a democrat I want to be a superdelegate, but I am not allowed to be, does that mean it is RIGHT, FAIR or Democratically JUST for my vote to not count as much as someone else’s?

Please spare the country with RANTS and sudden CONCERNS over voting rights for felons, illegal aliens and/or your disgust over making a photo ID a requirement at the voting booths when you don’t even have voting equality in your OWN PARTY!

– Posted by Henry

75. May 14th, 2008 3:53 pm

NYT: Can Actor Sway College Superdelegates?

If you want to know who the College Democrats ended up endorsing on May 13th...

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VARYagkoAQo>

– Posted by Preity, NY

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Comment

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