

A listless Obama is still better than Romney

Written by Julianne Malveaux, NNPA Columnist
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Somehow, the body snatchers came last Wednesday and took the fire (as in fired up, ready to go) out of President Obama, leaving a rather listless shell of a man who never truly engaged the audience or his opponent. He looked down at his notes, fidgeted, and let Mitt Romney get away with multiple lies.

The body snatchers didn't stop there. They also took Mitt Romney, the greedy venture capitalist who likes to fire people, and turned him into a facsimile of a human being. Of course, with Romney's disrespect for both President Obama (interrupting him several times) and moderator Jim Lehrer (who he simply ignored), the faux human being turned out to be one that was rude, arrogant, overbearing, and clearly rehearsed.

Romney threw out a line that he had five boys, thus he was used to hearing the same thing said over and over as if it were the truth. President Obama could not ask Romney who taught the little liars, but that's what went through my mind. Before the debate was over, it was clear that Romney behaved in just the way he said his sons did, repeating lies about taxes, Medicare, and employment several times, as if there was any truth to them. He had another line, where he said President Obama was entitled to his own house and his own plane, but not his own facts. I might have said something snarly to the faux human being along the lines of you've got your own billions, your own SuperPACs, but you can't buy your own facts. While President Obama does not to be as sarcastic as I usually am, he surely could have given Romney a better run for his money.

Still, anybody who can do arithmetic knows that Romney has a penchant for mathematical fiction. How can you cut the taxes on the wealthy (which is done if the Bush tax cuts are not allowed to expire), cut tax rates by 20 percent, and end up with a revenue-neutral solution? He says by cutting spending, and he cites Public Broadcasting as one of the cuts he would make. Public Broadcasting represents less than one-thousandth of 1 percent of the entire federal budget, so cutting it won't make much difference to the deficits he is quick to rail against.

President Obama was right to push Romney on specifics to some of the plans he said he had. There were no specifics, just the frequent exhortation that "I have a plan to deal with that." What plan? Voters can't judge unless we know, but Romney behaves like a student who hasn't started on a term paper and fumbles about its contents when asked.

Too often, Romney ignored the president's questions about specifics, trading bluster for facts and getting away with it. Jim Lehrer totally lost control of the debate, failing to push either participant on specifics. He was not even effective as a timekeeper, letting both debate participants run over their allotted time, although he decreed time lines.

President Obama really needs to toot his own horn. When Romney says, "You have been president for four years," our president needs to respond with his list of accomplishments, many of which blunted the effects of the Great Recession inherited from George Bush. The intervention in the auto industry that Romney opposed has made a real difference in states such as Ohio and Michigan. A research paper that was reviewed at the Rainbow/PUSH automotive summit found that for every 2,000 jobs created in automobile manufacturing in an urban area, another 5,200 jobs were created. While there are not enough jobs to go around yet, there are

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more jobs than there would have been had the economy been allowed to drift.

The question about who won the debates turns out to be a question of policy versus performance. Too many pundits talked about Mitt Romney's "performance" indicating that he performed well. The United States is not a stage looking for a leading actor, it's a nation, looking for a leader who can make a difference. We are not looking for a contender who thinks that bluster means leadership. We are looking for a leader to finish the work he started. Those who were mesmerized by the body snatcher's version of Mitt Romney fail to understand that a listless Obama is 10 times better than an arrogant and overbearing Romney.

It's not over 'til it's over. There are two more debates, and many of the undecided will be swayed by these debates. Others will make their minds up as they walk into the voting booth. In the next debate, President Obama must be a stronger advocate of the policies he has embraced, and we who watch must not be fooled by a glitzy performance that is devoid of both truth and substance.

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