

NEGATIVE CAMPAIGN HIT NEW LOW: BLAMES ROMNEY FOR WORKER'S WIFE'S DEATH AND OBAMA POLICIES FOR 593 DEATHS



The relentless negative ad campaign has taken an ugly and rather immoral turn with Priorities USA, the super PAC backing President Obama releasing an advertisement that actually goes to the extent of holding Mitt Romney morally responsible for the death of a steelworker's wife. The ad named "Understands," has the protagonist Joe Soptic, a former employee at GST Steel in Kansas City, Mo., recollecting how he, following his company's take over and subsequent closure by Bain Capital, suffered triple setbacks – he says, he first lost his job, then his health benefits and tragically, his wife. Speaking into the camera he says, "I don't know how long she was sick, and I think maybe she didn't say anything because she knew that we couldn't afford the insurance, and then one day she became ill and I took her up to the Jackson County Hospital ... and that's when they found the cancer and by then it was stage four," Soptic said, speaking to the camera. Soptic's wife died 22 days later. The insinuation is that she died because he was unable to provide health insurance for his family and hence Romney is morally culpable. The video has many clips of the closed steel plant and newspaper headlines accusing Romney, turning closure of manifold American businesses, into profit earning ventures for himself. Soptic casts aspersions on Romney's ability to identify with and have compassion for the turmoil that the average Americans have to face. "I don't think Mitt Romney understands what he's done to anyone, and furthermore, I do not think Mitt Romney is concerned," he says, as the ad ends. Romney's campaign, called the ad a "discredited and dishonest" attempt by Obama and his camp to camouflage and divert attention from the "administration's deplorable economic record." Moreover, they add, that Soptic's claim that she died soon after is wrong, she actually passed away months after the closure. Such negative ads are risky and could backfire and there are already critics panning the ad and calling it "a new low," but from a strategic viewpoint that ad is well worth the risk, in fact it is extremely clever. The biggest handicap for the Obama campaign is they cannot raise as much money as the Republican SuperPACs, but a controversial ad like this will create enough media buzz, that will get miles of free discussion on television and drive debate and discussion about a variety of things. There will be people who will say that Obama should not have stooped so low, but it will also invoke discussion about Romney's record at Bain. It is also a tough ad to retort to or defend and beyond the, "it's not fair" and "its hitting below the belt" and "wild conjecture," any other response would be falling into the clever trap set up by the creative's. The ads tripwire is the health care policy. Logically Romney can say, and he would be speaking the truth, he had left Bain when the plant where Soptic worked shuttered down, but the truth is, no matter who is responsible for Soptic losing his health insurance Obama has a health care plan for future Soptic's and Romney doesn't. This is not the first time that Soptic has featured in a pro-Obama advertisement. He earlier appeared in another one saying that the closing of the GST Steel plant, during Romney's tenure cost workers their pensions. In all likelihood, the Republicans will accuse the Democrats of being personal but recent polls have shown that the unremitting spotlight on Romney's tenure at Bain Capital has connected with voters in swing states. Unfortunately, the Romney camp failed to see the trap and in their haste and understandable indignation surrendered the moral high ground by making similar unprincipled allegations. After calling the ad as hitting "a new low" they went to apply the same illogical yardsticks saying that the economic policies of President Obama and his administration could be held responsible for 593 deaths. Such counter attacks will only provide the Obama camp with more media coverage. It seems that the best course of action for the Republicans is one of quiet indignation and hurt. They should say that they will let the voters decide who is right and who is wrong and come November they will stand vindicated. The Priorities attack does call for some sort of response, but the payback should not be of similar kind, for that will only invite more unfounded and amoral attacks. It's time that either of the two parties behaves a little more maturely. For the moment it seems that Obama and his men have abdicated that responsibility – the Republicans should not squander the high moral high ground that this crazy spot has given them.