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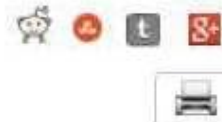
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The Democratic National "Debate" -- I just finished watching it or should I say enduring. It wasn't educating. It wasn't elevating and it wasn't, dare I say, entertaining. What it was, was five white current or former politicians lumbering (way past leaning) to the left in an esoteric effort to feel the pain of non-white, non-privileged minorities and middle class. People whose life experiences they long ago stopped sharing as they've been enjoying the rarified air breathed by these past-their-prime elected officials (4 Senators, 1 Secretary of State, and 1 Governor). I was struck by how they all talked alike and even looked alike. I was prepared to see Hillary in one of her trademarked tropical colored pantsuits, but for some reason she chose to revert back to a black square cut jacket and modest white blouse, making her look insignificant and undifferentiated in the sea of other black suits flanking her.

And the rhetoric -- it too was predictable and undifferentiated. There were nuanced subtle variations, but for the most part pretty interchangeable, sometimes awkward, like when Chafee was accused of shifting his political affiliation three times, and then still insisting on calling himself a "block of granite," which drew some chuckles from the audience.

As they went on (and on) championing diversity and inclusion, I kept LOOKING for some -- actually, ANY. Except for Hillary's repeated references to her gender, I didn't see the rainbow roster the Republicans have been displaying of late. Where was a Latino, a black, a business leader or a doctor? And while the Republicans have been jostling with one another, declaring their differences, this seasoned group of Democrats showed remarkable restraint in uniting behind a singular target, the OTHER party. Sanders even did what the less than sympathetic press has not, he gave Hillary a pass on her evolving email woes and provided the most animated moment of the evening when he shouted "I am sick of talking about her damned emails" -- making it impossible to pursue this line of questioning past Chafee's tepid criticism and Hillary's refusal to comment. No one even brought up the questionable conflict of interest surrounding the Clinton Foundation.

There were some small sparks when the candidates were asked why they flip-flopped on certain issues, but Hillary gave her colleagues a pass by saying it's what all elected officials do who have been in office a "long time." Webb looked and sounded petulant as he complained about "standing here for 10 minutes" waiting for his turn. And talk about not reading the room -- O'Malley repeatedly opined about the Glass-Steagall Bill, even when moderator Anderson Cooper made it abundantly clear that the American public had no clue and no interest in what he was referring to.

Sadly, for me the highlight of the evening, was after returning from the commercial break when Cooper ad-libbed that he was glad to see that ALL the candidates had made it back to the stage, and Hillary chimed in that it "takes some of us a little longer." I guess that was subtle "bathroom humor" which tells you where this event was going and why this debate may have been as big a flop as *Pan* is turning out to be. You know, the story of Peter and the lost boys -- speaking of which, where is Joe Biden? Maybe he could get us engaged again!!!

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