

US debate fury echoes across social media

October 18 2012, by Rob Lever



A man watches the second presidential debate between US President Barack Obama and Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney on television at a bar in Silver Spring, Maryland, on October 16. As Obama and Romney traded barbs in their cantankerous second presidential debate even harsher volleys were being hurled online.

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Obama's Truth Team and Romney Response were joined on Twitter by eager partisans on both sides, as live blogs rated the candidates' performance, checked facts and turned missteps into instant running gags.

To set the tone, both sides began preparing followers on the Internet well ahead of the start of Tuesday's nationally televised debate.

Romney's team tweeted that Obama "hasn't just failed to control our mounting debt—he's accelerated it at an unprecedented pace."

Obama countered: "Don't be fooled: Americans on the street react to #RealRomney," and linked to a page in which citizens criticize Romney's proposals.

As the debate progressed, so did the intensity of the comments on Twitter.

"Romney is sounding like a dude selling reverse mortgages to old people on late night cable," one Obama supporter tweeted.

A Romney backer responded: "Basically Obama just said he fundamentally opposes capitalism."

On Facebook, one Obama supporter wrote that the president "is having a much much better debate tonight. He is back on his game. Mitt is rambling (about Libya), butchering the English language ('take someone bankrupt') and offending hispanic voters (calling some of them 'illegals')."

But someone from the other side later tweeted: "Boom. Boom. Boom. Romney swings back crisply, ticking off unkept promises of Obama from deficits to immigration."

Each side cheered as its candidate scored points.

"Gobama!! Obama blowing Romney away with facts and arithmetic," one Twitter user wrote.

Another shot back: "Romney is owning this right now. Hands down."

One of Romney's comments set off a flurry, reminiscent of his "[Big Bird](#)" remarks, when he said he had "binders full of women" when he sought to fill key jobs as governor of Massachusetts.

"We took a concerted effort to go out and find women who had backgrounds that could be qualified to become members of our cabinet," Romney said.

"I went to a number of women's groups and said, can you help us find folks? And they brought us whole binders full of women."

A Facebook page "Binders Full of Women" quickly got 138,000 likes, and plenty of comments.

"Gov. Romney clearly misspoke," one person wrote. "What he meant to say was that his platform wants to bind women to the 19th century."

On Twitter, one message said, "On Nov 6th, [Mitt Romney](#) will find out just how many Binders of Women there are."

On Tumblr, some posted images of women in binders—some clad in bathing suits, others with caricatures of female politicians imprisoned in notebook binders.

Twitter counted 7.2 million tweets by the end of the debate, less than the 10.3 million in the first presidential face-off but ahead of the four

million for the vice presidential debate.

Twitter said the conversation peaked at 109,560 tweets per minute when Romney was asked about immigration.

Twitter said debate-related mentions for Romney were 35 percent, to 25 percent for Obama.

The analytics website Social Bakers also counted tweets favoring the Republican.

In an hour-by-hour count, the site's "cheermeter" recorded 116,000 tweets favoring Romney to 94,000 for Obama and the Republican leading 111,000 to 101,000 in the second hour.

But the Obama campaign, in a paid message on [Twitter](#) using the hashtag #TeamBarack, hailed "a big win tonight because the President has the right plan to move us forward."

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