

Obama aide calls Hillary 'monster' off the record


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2008-3-7

When is 'off the record' not off the record? Obama aide [Samantha Power](#) called rival Hillary Clinton 'a monster' in a conversation with a reporter from the [Scotsman](#). Here's how they [reported](#) the chat:

*"We f***** up in Ohio," she admitted. "In Ohio, they are obsessed and Hillary is going to town on it, because she knows Ohio's the only place they can win.*

"She is a monster, too – that is off the record – she is stooping to anything," Ms Power said, hastily trying to withdraw her remark.

I think that ultimately there is no such thing as 100% off the record. If Gordon Brown told me in confidence that he was a mass killer then I would be obliged to mention this  to the police and I have to say I would be tempted to try to write something in public, too. But if someone does establish at the beginning of a conversation that it is off the record then the assumption has to be that it will stay anonymous and unattributed. If you betray their trust then your ability to garner confidential information in the future will be undermined. And your readers or audience will not be impressed if that is how you behave.

But on this occasion it is clear that Powers had made no such pre-interview deal and that her attempt to conceal her remark only makes her look more silly. She was peddling her book rather than acting as an official Obama spokesperson anyway. Her indiscretion is hardly crime of the century but it was valid to report what was an revealing insight in to the real state of feelings among campaigners in America's tightest primary race for decades. ♦

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