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MAKING HER CASE FOR WOMEN IN CHARGE

While Dee Dee Myers will be signing copies of her new book, ``Why Women Should Rule the World,'' Tuesday night, Hillary Clinton will be closely watching primary results out of Texas and Ohio to see if she can bring Myers' thesis closer to reality.

``It's funny how this all works out,'' says Myers, who served as President Bill Clinton's first press secretary and has since gone on to TV jobs at CNBC, MSNBC and as an adviser on ``The West Wing.'' ``It's definitely a do-or-die moment for her. She was the first woman to win a presidential primary, which is a major accomplishment. She just happened to run against this phenomenon named Barack Obama.''

Myers admits that her book is far less polemical than its title, which is meant somewhat tongue in cheek. Still, her book examines reams of research that discovers that the female management style -- which is encouraging and nurturing -- is infinitely more successful than the typical Type-A male brand of hectoring bossiness.

She just hopes that her book's message doesn't get lost in the national conversation even if Clinton does.

``It will depend -- having a news hook always helps a book,'' says Myers by cell phone from Washington, as she takes care of her children at home, then hits the road and arrives at a TV studio.

``There's still a conversation to be had about this afterward. If she gets out (of the race), we can ask, what did we learn from that? We can shine some light on her campaign and offer some ideas and explanations for what did and didn't work.

``She's better than her campaign,'' Myers continues. ``She's shown how it can be done and revealed the obstacles that still exist for women in getting to this position.

``There are subtle and not-so-subtle barriers that keep women from succeeding at a certain level. There are a lot of women who are taking this really personally. They remember the time in their own lives when their qualifications were not taken as seriously or when they were called the B-word.

``Not all of Hillary's problems are gender-related, but a lot of obstacles were unearthed, revealing the degree to which they're still there, and, as far as my

book is concerned, I hope that there's still a context for continuing that conversation.'

Myers' book recalls her own time in the White House, when she served as the first female press secretary in American history.

Despite her achievement, she was chagrined to find herself underpaid in relation to the men in the Clinton administration, not to mention kept out of the loop of many high-profile meetings with the president.

Though Myers cops in her book to plenty of self-inflicted errors, she also notes that such casual sexism in the White House -- the thought that she wouldn't be able to offer as much to the conversation as the men -- became a self-fulfilling prophecy, precisely because she was denied full access to information.

'There are things I wish I'd been better at,' Myers admits. 'Sometimes, I didn't help myself. But I wanted to talk about that, what I experienced. That's what got me interested in this topic. I wanted to let women know that it happens, and that when you have more responsibility than actual authority, you can survive; you needn't despair.'

And Hillary Clinton, she says, has been a victim, to a certain degree, of this same sort of prejudice.

'Men are assumed to be qualified; women have to prove they're qualified,' she says. 'She had to prove how you can be tough enough to be in charge and show those elusive qualities of leadership, yet soft enough not to be called a bitch.'

Myers cites Tina Fey's now-famous commentary on the Feb. 23 'Saturday Night Live,' in which the comic declared of Clinton, 'She is (a bitch). And so am I. ... Bitches get stuff done. That's why Catholic schools use nuns instead of priests. ... At the end of the year, you hated those bitches, but you knew the capital of Vermont.'

'When she was done, I wanted to reach through my TV screen and hug her,' Myers says.

Asked if she now wished her book had been titled, 'Bitches Get Stuff Done,' Myers laughs heartily and says, 'Yeah! That would be great!'

Myers agrees with pundits who have observed that Obama has run a campaign that, in its nurturing and inspirational aspects, can be classified as more 'feminine' than Clinton's.

'He can be soft,' she says. 'Partly, it's due to their personalities. There was a void out there, and his personality filled it. If (as novelist Toni Morrison famously stated) Bill Clinton was our first black president, maybe he'll be the first female president.'

