Michelle Obama Makes Comments That Some See as a Swipe at Hillary Clinton

Barack Obama's wife, Michelle, may or may not have made disparaging remarks about Hillary Clinton, depending on how her comments are interpreted. It's a lesson on how quickly things can be interpreted and reinterpreted online.

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Transcript
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MATT LAUER, co-host:
Now to Decision 2008. The candidates' spouses have played a big role in the campaign so far. Now, some
people are wondering if Barack Obama's wife recently took a very subtle swipe at the Democratic front-runner, Hillary Clinton. NBC's Andrea Mitchell has more on that story.

Andrea, good morning to you.

ANDREA MITCHELL reporting:

Well, good morning, Matt. It did have all the makings of a sexy political story. Was the wife of Hillary Clinton's chief challenger slyly hinting at past well-known problems in the Clinton marriage? Except that from all accounts, this so-called personal attack may be chiefly in the eye of the beholder.

She is Barack Obama's secret weapon. In her standard stump speech, confiding how she and her husband balance their family life with the rigors of a presidential campaign.

Ms. MICHELLE OBAMA: (To child with ice cream) Can I have a lick?

MITCHELL: As in this Iowa stop last week, she frequently delivers a folksy lesson in Obama family values.

Ms. OBAMA: Anybody want a lemonade?

Senator BARACK OBAMA: Who wants a lemonade?

Ms. OBAMA: Her view was that if you can't run your own house, you certainly can't run the White House.

MITCHELL: It's a line she used four days earlier in Chicago.

Ms. OBAMA: In my view, is that if you can't run your own house, you certainly can't run the White House.

MITCHELL: But this time her words caught the attention of a Chicago Sun-Times columnist, who said it could be interpreted as a swipe at the Clintons. And before you could say Drudge Report, the story was an Internet headline: "Obama wife slams Hillary." When reporters raised it with Barack Obama on a conference call, he tried to point out his wife was talking about her own family, not the Clintons.

Sen. OBAMA: She wasn't making any reference to that. I think this is, you know, if you anybody who's been listening to Michelle on the stump, has talked about the importance of family, and the need for our family to make sure that we're thinking about our kids during the process of this campaign. And, you know, she's repeated that on--in every stump speech.

MITCHELL: In fact, if the Internet writers took a deep breath, they might have listened to Michelle Obama's entire thought.

Ms. OBAMA: We've adjusted our schedule to make sure that our girls are first. So while he's traveling around, I do day trips. That means I get up in the morning, I get the girls ready, I get them off, I go and do trips. I'm home before bedtime. So the girls know that I was gone somewhere, but they don't care.

MITCHELL: It's a lesson in how quickly things can be interpreted and misinterpreted online.

Mr. CHUCK TODD (NBC News Political Director): This is the YouTube election for a reason. And that is, you can take a sound byte and cut it off and splash it on YouTube and suddenly create a new version of a story.

MITCHELL: A spokesman for Obama told NBC News there was no intentional slight, saying Michelle is a first-time political campaigner, not a poll-driven candidate's wife. Some Clinton supporters still see an ulterior motive but officially the Clinton campaign is not commenting.