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Hailing Barack Obama's "Command Performance"

"It was extraordinary. And it was a command performance by the President. In fact, some Republicans are wondering if they made a mistake by allowing TV cameras in the room.... The President demonstrated intimate knowledge of the issues.... Here at the White House, some believe this could be a game-changer for the President. As one official put it, this is the best thing the President has done in a very long time."

— White House correspondent Chip Reid on the January 29 *CBS Evening News*, talking about Obama's televised meeting with House Republicans.



"Most Conservative" Obama: Ready for Mount Rushmore

"If presidential leadership were only about giving speeches, the jackhammers would already be at work on Mount Rushmore. I thought the guy dominated the room, used humor, occupied the middle ground.... In many, many ways, this is one of the most conservative speeches that a Democratic president has given since, I think, the middle of Bill Clinton's time."

— *Newsweek's* Howard Fineman on MSNBC after President Obama's State of the Union address, January 27.

Like a Stimulus Package for Our Brains

"President Obama is so much better when he takes a heated, knotty issue, like civil rights or banking reform, and talks to the country like adults. He is so much better at making us smarter than angrier."

— *The New York Times's* Thomas Friedman in a January 27 column.

CBS's Jeff Greenfield: "This was very much like he was in the campaign. He went five or ten minutes without a single applause line. He said 'let me tell you how we got into this mess,' he reached out and said to people 'I'm not giving up my idea that we can change the tone of politics.'..."

Katie Couric: "Well, as Tom Friedman said, 'He's better at making us smarter than making us angry.'"

— From CBS's live coverage following the State of the Union, January 27.



"On this much, President Obama's friends and foes could agree: He eludes simple labels. Yes, he's a liberal, except when he's not. He's antiwar, except for the one he's escalating.... In a world that presents so many fast-moving and intractable problems, nuance, flexibility, pragmatism — even a full range of human emotions — are no doubt good things. But as Mr. Obama wrapped up his State of the Union address on Wednesday night with an appeal to transcend partisan gamesmanship, he was plaintively testing a broader proposition: Is it possible to embrace complexity in a political and media culture that demands simple themes and promotes conflict?"

— *New York Times* political editor Richard Stevenson in a January 31 "Week in Review" item.

NBC: Keeping Hope Alive

"'Never More Hopeful': Obama's Renewed Message of Hope for America."

— On-screen headline January 28 during *Today's* coverage of the previous evening's State of the Union address.

Finally, An Hour When Chris Isn't Focused on Race

"You know, I was trying to think about who he was tonight, and it's interesting: He is post-racial by all appearances. You know, I forgot he was black tonight for an hour."

— MSNBC's Chris Matthews during live coverage following the State of the Union address, January 27.

How Would Teddy Feel About You Destroying His Dream?

“Massachusetts requires that all residents purchase health insurance. You voted for that plan. So why doesn’t it make sense that all Americans have health insurance? Why isn’t what’s good for Massachusetts good for the whole country?... How do you think that Senator Ted Kennedy would feel about your election? Do you think he’d be disappointed?”

— ABC’s Barbara Walters to Massachusetts Senator-elect Scott Brown on *This Week*, January 31.



Sorry Scott Brown, You Have No Chance

“Well, we’re almost here, aren’t we? The end of a long, arduous, four-month campaign for a Senate seat that you have approximately the same chance of filling as you did the pilot’s chair of the Starship *Enterprise*.... The notion that Massachusetts would elect a Republican to fill the seat left vacant by Edward Kennedy was the property of people who buy interesting mushrooms in interesting places. You might as well expect the House of Windsor to be succeeded on the British throne by the Kardashian sisters.”

— The *Boston Globe Magazine*’s Charles Pierce in a January 10 column addressed to GOP candidate Scott Brown.

Court Decision = “Murder of Democracy”

“This is a Supreme Court-sanctioned murder of what little actual democracy is left in this democracy. It is government of the people by the corporations for the corporations. It is the Dark Ages. It is our Dred Scott. I would suggest a revolution, but a revolution against the corporations? The corporations that make all the guns and the bullets?”

— MSNBC’s Keith Olbermann on the January 21 *Countdown* reacting to a Supreme Court decision saying it was an unconstitutional abridgement of free speech to ban independent groups from advertising prior to a federal election.



Spanking Obama With His Own Olive Branch

President Obama at State of the Union: “We face big and difficult challenges, and what the American people hope, what they deserve, is for all of us, Democrats and Republicans, to work through our differences.”

MSNBC’s Dylan Ratigan: “If the President thought that meant Republicans would start jumping onboard his boat, he thought wrong. They’ve taken his olive branch [begins menacingly swinging an olive branch back and forth] and are now using it to hit back against his agenda.”

— MSNBC’s Dylan Ratigan during his 4pm ET *The Dylan Ratigan Show*, January 29.

Need to Make Republicans “Pay” for “Being Against Everything”

“What they need to do, in my personal view, is they need to ditch all of this talk of bipartisanship, of post-partisanship. That hasn’t worked for them. What they need to do is start calling Republicans out on this, and he [President Obama] started doing that on Wednesday night.... He needs to, perhaps, bully Republicans into doing that, rather than doing this careful walk around them.”

— *Newsweek* White House correspondent Katie Connolly on *The Chris Matthews Show*, January 31.

“How you do get a guy like [Senate GOP leader] Mitch McConnell, who sits back there pompously laughing at him, and John Cornyn and those guys — how do you make them pay for being against everything that tries to solve the country’s problems?”

— MSNBC’s Chris Matthews on the February 2 *Hardball*.

Today’s GOP = “Cambodian Re-Education Camp”

“What’s going on out there in the Republican Party is kind of a frightening, almost Cambodia re-education camp going on in that party, where they’re going around to people, sort of switching their minds around saying, if you’re not far right, you’re not right enough.”

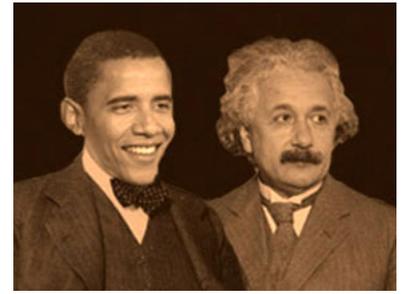
— Chris Matthews during an MSNBC primetime special about President Obama’s Q&A with House Republicans, January 29.



Touting Brilliant Obama's Theory of Legal Relativity

"When he turns to solving problems through policy, he reveres facts, calling for data and then more data. He looks for historical analogues and reads voraciously. 'This is someone who in law school worked with [Harvard professor] Larry Tribe on a paper on the legal implications of Einstein's theory of relativity,' said senior adviser David M. Axelrod. 'He does have an incisive mind; that mind is always put to use in pursuit of tangible things that are going to improve people's lives.'"

— *Washington Post* reporters Anne Kornblut and Michael Fletcher in a January 25 front-page story about Obama headlined "The Seeker as Problem-Solver."



Selfish Massachusetts Voters Squelched Health Care for Rest of America

"My fellow Americans, the state of our union is, well, quite wretched at the moment....Massachusetts, which for nearly half a century proudly sent a senator to Washington to fight for social justice and universal health care, has chosen as his replacement someone who campaigned in effect on the slogan 'We've got ours, so the hell with everyone else.'"

— *Washington Post* business columnist and former business reporter Steven Pearlstein in a January 27 piece detailing the speech he wished President Obama would deliver that night.

Twisted MSNBC: Does "Conservative" = "Birther"?

"When you say conservative, I know you know that much has been made of this conservative litmus test to be a true conservative in this country. For example, one of the questions was, do you think the President was born in the United States? Is that your definition of conservative, or is it in the perimeter of a conservative?"

— MSNBC 11am ET anchor Tamron Hall to Illinois Republican Senate candidate Patrick Hughes, February 1.

Blame Bad Deficit on Failure to Pass ObamaCare

"As for these deficit projections, these are just that, projections. And it's assuming the economy is continuing to recover. If it does not, these deficit projections that we see today — 1.6 billion [sic, trillion] this year, 1.3 billion [trillion] next year — those numbers could go way up. And if health care doesn't pass, because this budget assumes health care will pass, that's yet another \$150 billion that would be tacked on to the deficit."

— NBC's Chuck Todd on the February 1 *Nightly News*.

"Absurd" to Say Government Health Care Is Worse

"I'm on Medicare. People who've been in the military are on a government health program. And yet the Republicans were able to make the idea that being on a government health program is terrible. How absurd."

— Longtime ABC News correspondent Sam Donaldson on *This Week*, January 24.

Pro-Life Tebow Could Have Been "Rapist Pedophile"

Whoopi Goldberg: "A commercial scheduled to air during the Super Bowl has women's groups outraged. It's about a mom who ignores recommendations for her to abort her baby, and how that baby grows up to be a Florida Gators football star, Tim Tebow...."

Joy Behar: "He could just as easily become some kind of a rapist pedophile. I mean, you don't know what someone's going to be. In this case, he turned out to be great, but it's not an argument about abortion or not abortion, it's just, this particular case, this particular woman decided not to do it, and this is the wonderful result. There are others who decide to do it, and they're glad that they did it."

— Exchange on ABC's *The View*, January 26.



Notable Quotables

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