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## Special Edition: Still Slobbering Over Barack Obama

*Any other President with Barack Obama's record — high unemployment, record deficits, and scandals such as Fast and Furious and the leaking of our nation's intelligence secrets — would face withering scrutiny from the press. But since Obama was elected, journalists have continued the adoring coverage that marked the 2008 campaign. This special edition of Notable Quotables documents the media's continuing love affair with Barack Obama.*

### Ecstasy at the Great One's Victory

"Some princes are born in palaces. Some are born in mangers. But a few are born in the imagination, out of scraps of history and hope.... Barack Hussein Obama did not win because of the color of his skin. Nor did he win in spite of it. He won because at a very dangerous moment in the life of a still young country, more people than have ever spoken before came together to try to save it. And that was a victory all its own."

— *Time's* Nancy Gibbs, November 17, 2008 cover story.

"You've seen those videotapes of Walter Cronkite the night that man landed on the moon for the first time, when Neil Armstrong stepped out and he could just barely get out monosyllables. Politically, that's what this is. This is man on the moon."

— MSNBC's Keith Olbermann during live election night coverage, November 4, 2008.

### "Even the Seagulls Must Have Been Awed"

"We know that wind can make a cold day feel colder, but can national pride make a freezing day feel warmer? It seems to be the case because regardless of the final crowd number estimates, never have so many people shivered so long with such joy. From above, even the seagulls must have been awed by the blanket of humanity."

— ABC's Bill Weir talking about Obama's inauguration on *World News*, Jan. 20, 2009.



"It may take days or years to really absorb the significance of what happened to America today.... When he [Obama] finally emerged, he seemed, even in this throng, so solitary, somber, perhaps already feeling the weight of the world, even before he was transformed into the leader of the free world.... The mass flickering of cell phone cameras on the Mall seemed like stars shining back at him."

— NBC's Andrea Mitchell on the January 20, 2009 *Nightly News*.

### A "Visionary Leader" Demoted to the Drudgery of the Oval Office

"I like to say that, in some ways, Barack Obama is the first President since George Washington to be taking a step down into the Oval Office. I mean, from visionary leader of a giant movement, now he's got an executive position that he has to perform in, in a way."

— ABC's Terry Moran to Media Bistro's Steve Krakauer in a February 20, 2009 "Morning Media Menu" podcast.

### Gushing Over Obama's "Stupendous" and "Spectacular" First 100 Days

"The legislative achievements have been stupendous — the \$789 billion stimulus bill, the budget plan that is still being hammered out (and may, ultimately, include the next landmark safety-net program, universal health insurance). There has also been a cascade of new policies to address the financial crisis.... 'In a way, Obama's 100 days is even more dramatic than Roosevelt's,' says Elaine Kamarck of Harvard's Kennedy School of Government. 'Roosevelt only had to deal with a domestic crisis. Obama has had to overhaul foreign policy as well, including two wars. And that's really the secret of why this has seemed so spectacular.'"

— *Time's* Joe Klein in the magazine's May 4, 2009 cover story on Barack Obama's first 100 days as President.

## Mr. President, Why Are You So Amazing?

“You’re so confident, Mr. President, and so focused. Is your confidence ever shaken? Do you ever wake up and say, ‘Damn, this is hard. Damn, I’m not going to get the things done I want to get done, and it’s just too politicized to really get accomplished the big things I want to accomplish?’”

— CBS’s Katie Couric to Obama in a clip shown on *The Early Show*, July 22, 2009.



## No President Has Been “Dealt a Tougher Hand”

Host Charlie Rose: “How is he doing overall in your judgment, the President?”

ABC’s George Stephanopoulos: “Solid. I mean, it’s hard to imagine — I’m trying to think in our lifetime if anybody has been dealt a tougher hand coming into the White House. And given that, I think he has done remarkably well.... I think people respect him even more than they like him.”

— Exchange on PBS’s *Charlie Rose*, July 12, 2011.

## America’s Version of Nelson Mandela

“While it took 27 years in prison to mold the Nelson Mandela we know, the 48-year-old American President seems to have achieved a Mandela-like temperament without the long years of sacrifice.... Whatever Mandela may or may not think of the new American President, Obama is in many ways his true successor on the world stage.”

— From *Time* managing editor Richard Stengel’s introduction to his new self-help book, *Mandela’s Way: Fifteen Lessons on Life, Love, and Courage*, quoted by *Politico*’s Mike Allen in a March 30, 2010 Web posting.

## No Appreciation for His “Amazing” Accomplishments

“People from all over the world, frankly, say to me, here comes a President with a huge mandate, a huge reservoir of goodwill, huge promises to change, and, with all of that, his popularity is down. People don’t appreciate some of the amazing legislative agenda that he’s accomplished.”

— Host Christiane Amanpour to White House advisor David Axelrod on ABC’s *This Week*, September 26, 2010.



“It remains simply a fact that Obama has delivered in a way that the unhinged right and purist left have yet to understand or absorb.... What I see in front of my nose is a President whose character, record, and promise remain as grotesquely underappreciated now as they were absurdly hyped in 2008. And I feel confident that sooner rather than later, the American people will come to see his first term from the same calm, sane perspective. And decide to finish what they started.”

— Andrew Sullivan in *Newsweek*’s January 23, 2012 cover story, “Why Are Obama’s Critics So Dumb?”

## Shortsighted Voters Fail to Grasp Obama’s Historic Greatness

“Big problems. Big achievements. Big costs. Historians say President Obama’s legislative record during a crisis-ridden presidency already puts him in a league with such consequential presidents as Lyndon Johnson and Franklin Roosevelt. But polls show voters aren’t totally on board with his achievements, at least not yet, and the White House acknowledges that his victories have carried huge financial and political costs. ‘There are always costs in doing big things,’ Obama told *USA Today*.”

— Opening of May 12, 2010 *USA Today* cover story by Susan Page and Mimi Hall,

“Will doing ‘big things’ wind up costing Obama?” The accompanying picture showed a portrait of Abraham Lincoln peering down at Obama.

## Will doing ‘big things’ wind up costing Obama?

Voters’ anxiety clouds his historic successes

By Susan Page and Mimi Hall  
USA TODAY

WASHINGTON — Big problems. Big achievements. Big costs. Historians say President Obama’s legislative record during a crisis-ridden presidency already puts him in a league with such consequential presidents as Lyndon Johnson and Franklin Roosevelt. But polls show voters aren’t totally on board with his achievements, at least not yet, and the White House acknowledges that his victories have carried huge financial and political costs. “There are always costs in doing big things,”



History book bound? President Obama has pushed through a packed domestic agenda.

## How Obama Approaches the World: “He’s Sort of God”

“Reagan [at the 1984 D-Day commemoration] was all about America, and you talked about it. Obama is, ‘We are above that now. We’re not just parochial, we’re not just chauvinistic, we’re not just provincial. We stand for something.’ I mean, in a way, Obama’s standing above the country, above — above the world. He’s sort of God. He’s going to bring all different sides together.”

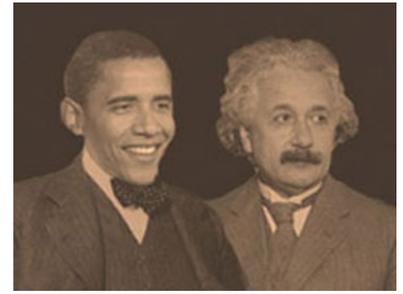
— *Newsweek*’s Evan Thomas to host Chris Matthews on MSNBC’s *Hardball*, June 5, 2009.

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## Reporters In Awe of Barry's Big Brain

“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, 2010 front-page story about Obama headlined, “The Seeker as Problem-Solver.”



“If an Obama brand exists, it is his image as a probing, cerebral President conducting an exhaustive analysis of the issues so that the best ideas can emerge, and triumph.”

— *Washington Post* writers Michael Leahy and Juliet Eilperin in an October 12, 2010 story about Obama formulating a policy on offshore oil drilling.

“What is the President really like on the job and off-hours, using what his best friend called ‘a Rubik’s Cube in his brain?’ These questions are answered here for the first time. We see how a surprisingly cunning Obama took effective charge in Washington several weeks before his election.”

— From Simon & Schuster’s promotional language for *The Promise: President Obama, Year One*, a book released May 18, 2010, by *Newsweek* senior editor Jonathan Alter.

“People who brief him say he is able to game out scenarios before the experts in the room, even on foreign policy, national security and other issues in which he had relatively little expertise before running for president. Obama is approaching the issues as a game of ‘three-dimensional chess,’ said John O. Brennan, an assistant to the President for homeland security and counterterrorism. ‘It’s not kinetic checkers.... There are moves that are made on the chess board that really have implications, so the President is always looking at those dimensions of it.’”

— Carrie Johnson and Anne E. Kornblut in a front-page *Washington Post* story, August 28, 2009.

## Touting Obama’s “Almost Biblical” Success

“By calmly and meticulously overseeing the successful targeting of Osama bin Laden, President Barack Obama just proved himself — vividly, in almost Biblical terms — to be an effective commander-in-chief of the armed forces of the United States.”

— The Huffington Post’s Howard Fineman, May 2, 2011.



“Touring that awful storm damage in Alabama, while knowing at that very moment U.S. Navy SEALs were already on the move halfway around the world. (to Obama) You had to go to Tuscaloosa. You had to go have fun at the Correspondents’ Dinner. Seth Meyers makes a joke about Osama Bin Laden.... How do you keep an even keel? Even when we look back on the videotape of that night [the Correspondents’ Dinner], there’s no real depiction that there’s something afoot.”

— Brian Williams to President Obama during his May 2, 2012 *Rock Center* special on the first anniversary of the Navy SEAL raid that killed Osama bin Laden.

## “A Lot of Things Are Just Perfect About Barack Obama”

“When you watch the President like that, I always feel he’s got so many pluses, doesn’t he? In a sense, he’s personable, he’s handsome, he can be funny. You know, abroad he has this great image for America. A lot of things are just perfect about Barack Obama.”

— Host Piers Morgan to Obama strategist David Axelrod on CNN’s *Piers Morgan Tonight*, December 5, 2011.

## Steady, Chris: “I Get the Same Thrill Up My Leg, All Over Me”

Clip of Barack Obama from 2008: “My family gave me love. They gave me an education. And most of all, they gave me hope. Hope, hope that in America, no dream is beyond our grasp if we reach for it, and fight for it, and work for it.”

MSNBC’s Chris Matthews: “I get the same thrill up my leg, all over me, every time I hear those words. I’m sorry, ladies and gentlemen, that’s me. He’s talking about my country and nobody does it better.”

— Setting up a segment on MSNBC’s *Hardball*, September 7, 2010.

## Joy All Alone In Trumpeting Obama's Great Deeds?

**Co-host Joy Behar:** "You've really done a lot, I think. I mean, you've signed 200-plus laws into — since you're in office. You have — financial reform has taken place. You got a health care — I mean, you put two women on the Supreme Court. I could go on and on about your accomplishments. And yet, the right-wing, through Fox News and other outlets, they seem to be hijacking the narrative. Where, on your side, is the narrative? Where is your attack dog to come out and tell the American people, 'Listen, this is what we did?'"

**President Obama:** "Joy, that's your job."

**Behar, over audience applause:** "I do it! But, I'm only one woman!"

— Exchange on ABC's *The View*, July 29, 2010.



## Our First Vulcan in the White House

"Spock's cool, analytical nature feels more fascinating and topical than ever now that we've put a sort of Vulcan in the White House. All through the election campaign, columnists compared President Obama's unflappably logical demeanor and prominent ears with Mr. Spock's....Like Obama, Spock is the product of a mixed marriage (actually, an interstellar mixed marriage), and he suffers blunt manifestations of prejudice as a result...."

— *Newsweek's* Steve Daly in his May 4, 2009 cover story, "We're All Trekkies Now."



## Dreaming About Sexy Obama, Admiring His "Chiseled Pecs"

"Between workouts during his Hawaii vacation this week, he was photographed looking like the paradigm of a new kind of presidential fitness, one geared less toward preventing heart attacks than winning swimsuit competitions. The sun glinted off chiseled pectorals sculpted during four weightlifting sessions each week, and a body toned by regular treadmill runs and basketball games."

— *Washington Post* reporter Eli Saslow in a December 25, 2008 front-page story about Obama's vacation fitness regimen.



"The other night I dreamt of Barack Obama. He was taking a shower right when I needed to get into the bathroom to shave my legs....I launched an e-mail inquiry....Many women — not too surprisingly — were dreaming about sex with the President."

— *New York Times* "Domestic Disturbances" blogger Judith Warner in a February 5, 2009 posting.

## He's Simply a Masterpiece

"Can we just enjoy Obama for a moment? Before the policy choices have to be weighed and the hard decisions have to be made, can we just take a month or two to contemplate him the way we might contemplate a painting by Vermeer or a guitar lick by the early-seventies Rolling Stones or a Peyton Manning pass or any other astounding, ecstatic human achievement? Because twenty years from now, we're going to look back on this time as a glorious idyll in American politics, with a confident, intelligent, fascinating president riding the surge of his prodigious talents from triumph to triumph.... 'I am large, I contain multitudes,' Walt Whitman wrote, and Obama lives that lyrical prophecy.... Barack Obama is developing into what Hegel called a 'world-historical soul,' an embodiment of the spirit of the times. He is what we hope we can be."

— *Esquire's* Stephen Marche in a column for the magazine's August 2011 issue: "How Can We Not Love Obama? Because Like It or Not, He Is All of Us."



### Notable Quotables

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