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Drooling Over Obama's "Chiseled Pecs"

"Fit to serve: Barack Obama photographed shirtless in Hawaii and a lot of women are giving him the presidential seal of approval."

– NBC's Matt Lauer starting out the *Today* show, December 23.

"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 front-page story about Obama's vacation fitness regimen.



Admiring the Greatness of Obi-Wan Obama

"By now we are all accustomed to that Obi-Wan Kenobi calm....He hit the American scene like a thunderclap, upended our politics, shattered decades of conventional wisdom and overcame centuries of the social pecking order....[But] what now seems most salient about Obama is the opposite of flashy, the antithesis of rhetoric: he gets things done. He is a man about his business – a Mr. Fix It going to Washington....Spare us the dead-or-alive bravado, the gates-of-hell bluster, the melodrama of the 3 a.m. phone call. A door swung open for a candidate who would merely stand and deliver....In the land of the hapless, the competent man is king."

– Editor-at-large David von Drehle in his cover story announcing Obama as *Time's* "Man of the Year," December 29 issue.

Barack Obama = "The Epitome of Cool"

Co-host Tracy Smith: "We're talking about being cool."

Co-host Harry Smith: "Mmm-hmm."

Tracy Smith: "I mean, you're cool, but we're actually talking about how a lot of people think that President-elect Barack Obama is the epitome of cool. Look at that guy. Everything, I mean, even in a baseball cap."

– Exchange on CBS's *The Early Show*, December 26.



A "Team of Moderates" with "So Much Brain Power"

"President-elect Barack Obama wrapped up his Cabinet appointments yesterday, meeting his ambitious holiday deadline by assembling a team full of outsize personalities with overlapping jurisdictions and nominees who are known more for pragmatism than for strong leanings on the issues they will oversee....[Many of Obama's] picks reflect his apparent preference for practical-minded centrists who have straddled big policy debates rather than staking out the strongest pro-reform positions."

– *The Washington Post's* Alec MacGillis in a December 20 front-page article, "For Obama Cabinet, A Team of Moderates."

"It's also a meritocracy. These are superstars, not afraid of strong personalities – Larry Summers inside the White House – but people with so much brain power, and so much education, and a combination of talents here."

– NBC's Andrea Mitchell on Obama's cabinet, December 21 *Meet the Press*.

Chris Clamors for More Lefties: “I’m Waiting for Change”

“What happened to the victory of ‘change’ and – I hate to use the phrase – ‘the Left’?...Why do we have no lefties in this cabinet?...Why no lefties? Why nobody that talks like Barack Obama talked when he got elected?...I’m waiting for change.”

– MSNBC’s Chris Matthews on *Hardball*, December 8.



Praying Obama Is Another Gorbys

“Is it too much to expect Barack Obama to change history? Make peace? Transform an economic system? Rescue the Earth? Build a political program around the truth? Restore a great nation’s decency? ...It will do Americans well to recall that just such a transformation took place once before, even if we declined to respond with transformation of our own. By the grace of God, it is not too late to match the greatness with which [Soviet leader Mikhail] Gorbachev acted 20 years ago.”

– *Boston Globe* columnist James Carroll in a December 29 column, “Gorbachev’s Model for Obama.”

Bill and Hillary to the Rescue

“Preoccupied with economic woes at home, Obama simply won’t have time to spend a big chunk of his first year in office on the road. In many ways the crucial restoration of America’s prestige in the world will fall instead to the Clintons. The couple are already so popular abroad that when they land at a foreign airport, they can hit the tarmac running on all the bilateral and multilateral issues they know so well.”

– Senior editor Jonathan Alter naming the Clintons to *Newsweek*’s “Global Elite,” December 29-January 5 issue.

Bush’s Legacy: No Job, No Health Care, No House

“His economic legacy is selfishness. You know, you look at what they wanted to do to Social Security. Imagine if our money was in the markets right now....You know, he should be ashamed of what he, what he’s left us....I’m just so disheartened by what Bush did to us, and, and all this focus on fighting a war that we couldn’t win....I think the regular American people are sitting here going, ‘We’re in this war, and you said you couldn’t afford health care, and yet all these billions of dollars are over there. And I have no job, no health care and probably no house.’”

– *Washington Post* columnist Michelle Singletary on NBC’s *Meet the Press*, December 28.



Ann Coulter: A “Whiner” Who Should Be Hung on a Cross

“You talk about victims and victimhood in America, which I think is a serious problem. On the other hand, the more I listen to your complaints, the more I kept thinking, well, you’re the whiner. You’re the one who’s claiming victimhood here. That you’re the victim of this great left-wing conspiracy....You should – you should have a cross. You should put yourself up on a cross.”

– CBS’s Harry Smith on the January 6 *Early Show* scolding conservative author Ann Coulter about her new book *Guilty: Liberal Victims and Their Assault on America*.

Newsweek Ends the Year By Slamming Sarah Palin

“In a smear that sounds even worse in retrospect, Sarah Palin goes rogue and stirs up prejudice by accusing Barack Obama of ‘palling around with terrorists.’”

– From *Newsweek*’s list of “The Biggest Losers” of 2008, those “who set the high-water mark for low behavior in 2008,” December 29-January 5 issue.

“Sarah Palin: Ill-informed, inarticulate shopaholic has ego bigger than Alaska – and she’s still the darling of the GOP.”

– From a “Conventional Wisdom” assessment later in the same magazine.

“Sarah Palin: She seemed like McCain’s silver bullet...until she opened her mouth. A 2012 contender if she starts boning up on issues. Now.”

– From a list of “pretenders” in a “Power Index” list later in the same magazine.

Accused Senate Seat-Seller Just a “Victim” of History?

“The Windy City is a political stew of characters, a cast of players that even Hollywood would envy. Governor Rod Blagojevich is just the latest squeaky wheel in Chicago’s political machine. Although he promised to be different, he fell victim, prosecutors allege, to history.”

– NBC correspondent Lee Cowan on the December 11 *Nightly News*.



New York Times: No Poison Politics Before 1998

“Ten years ago this week, Bill Clinton became the first elected president ever impeached by the House of Representatives, the culmination of a sex-and-lies scandal that consumed the nation and fractured the political system....Washington in the last decade has been governed by a climate of anger and animosity, a modern-day tribalism pitting faction against faction that some trace to the days of the impeachment.”

– *New York Times* reporter Peter Baker in a “Week in Review” piece published December 14.

Celebrating Iraq’s “Instant Hero”

“Sock and awe. How the Iraqi shoe-thrower is now being hailed as a hero and drawing thousands of supporters....It’s being referred to as the ‘toss heard around the world.’ In fact, many Iraqis are showering accolades on the journalist who threw his shoes at President Bush.”

– CBS’s Harry Smith on *The Early Show*, December 16.

“In the Middle East, there’s no bigger insult than hitting someone with a shoe, a dirty object worn on the lowest part of the body. By showing the kind of contempt formerly reserved for Saddam Hussein to President Bush, [Muntathar] al-Zaidi’s become an instant hero....Al-Zaidi should do jail time, said the Iraqi bloggers – because he missed.”

– CBS’s Elizabeth Palmer on the December 15 *Evening News*.

I’m Not Stumping for Anybody – I’m a Journalist

CNN’s John Roberts: “But if you disagreed with some of his [John McCain’s] policies, why were you out there on the campaign trail supporting him?”

Joe “the Plumber” Wurzelbacher: “Do you agree with every candidate and your candidate’s policies?”

Roberts: “Hey, I’m not out there stumping for anybody, I’m a journalist.”

Wurzelbacher, laughing: “I’ll leave that one alone.”

Roberts: “No, seriously.”

– Exchange on CNN’s *American Morning*, December 23.



Washington Post Ombudsman Acknowledges: “Conservatives Excluded”

“Make a serious effort to cover political and social conservatives and their issues; the paper tends to shy away from those stories, leaving conservatives feeling excluded and alienated from the paper. I’d like those who have canceled their subscriptions to be readers again. Too many *Post* staff members think alike; more diversity of opinion should be welcomed.”

– Outgoing *Washington Post* ombudsman Deborah Howell in her “Resolutions for a Better *Post*,” December 21 column.

From the ‘I Wish I Could Take That Back’ File

“For a party bereft of ideas, [Illinois Governor Rod] Blagojevich is worth listening to. His enthusiasm is contagious.... With his shock of black hair and cherubic face, he is reminiscent of another eager young governor, Bill Clinton circa ’92, even using much the same language about the forgotten middle-class that launched Clinton on the national scene.”

– *Newsweek*’s Eleanor Clift profiling Blagojevich in a December 16, 2005 Web-exclusive column.

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