

THE GLORIFIED GLOBAMADRAMA: ACT ONE, FAKE ONE?

HELEN LEWIS *reflects on a Technicolor Dreamboat*

As the “Western democracies” slide into a period of interconnected economic, cultural and demographic dangers, not one statesman of sufficient calibre and proven competence exists to meet them. The quartet offered as Presidential and VP candidates for what is still the leading nation merely confirmed this fact, the defeated duo presenting a clumsy caricature of “conservatism”. The victorious “African-American who is articulate and bright and clean and a nice-looking guy” may be “a storybook, man,” as his running mate said, but in high office is unlikely to prove the exceptional character actually required.

The fact that large numbers could imagine, and well-known writers suggest, that the Hour had at last found its Superman in the lissom shape of Barack Hussein Obama II not only provides the latest chapter in the long story of mass self-deception¹ but also compounds the worst problems facing

our civilisation. Sociologists must consider with concern the implications for the political process of the pop-festival ululation and lachrymose jubilation among “many Americans – and hundreds of millions around the globe”².

Now the initial rave, from Harlem to Honolulu, over a chromatic novelty in US government history has largely subsided, it is worth remembering that faces of ‘color’ were already familiar at lower administrative levels, even if their installation had been helped by affirmative action and state subsidy (a situation poorly appreciated by transatlantic observers indoctrinated in collective guilt over slavery and segregation for which they lack both personal responsibility and adequate knowledge). Besides, an entertainment-drenched populace, long accustomed to ‘black’ prevalence in sports and dance-music, had watched a procession of screen heroes that culminated in actors such as Will Smith and Denzel Washington,

whose features could well morph together into those of the President-Elect.

Cinema portrayals no doubt helped America “accept the idea of the real thing”³. James Earl Jones became President Dilman for a version of Irving Wallace’s *The Man*; Tommy Lister presided over the entire galaxy in *The Fifth Element*; Morgan Freeman as President Beck addressed a world saved from cosmic destruction in *Deep Impact*; Chris Rock hip-hopped into the top-job in *Head of State*; and Dennis Haysbert impressively played the first of two ‘black’ Presidents in the hit TV series *24 Hours*.

Many successful politicians, of course, have histrionic talents: delivering good lines and enthralling audiences are powerful tools of the trade. Long before opening night in the Oval Office, the junior senator had attained celebrity status – concocted by the political impresario David Axelrod, a corporate PR consultant experienced in helping ‘black’ candidates. “From the start, he incited the kind of mobbing usually reserved for rock stars,” wrote Gaby Wood, “and he’s not shy of referring to his own good looks”⁴. His public persona became a “dazzling cocktail of youth, multi-ethnic glamour, oratory and the indefinable aura of infinite possibility”⁵. Baratunde Thurston thought he deserved an Oscar⁶.

“Narrow-lapelled suits, fitted shirts, hair neatly cropped – when he jumps out of his campaign jet he looks like

a black Cary Grant,” enthused Giles Hattersley, “the only American officially cooler than Clooney.”

“The race seemed to follow some Hollywood script – humble beginnings, unlikely plot twists, conflict, redemption and victory – leading to the dramatic final scene when a young black man and his African-American family walked on to a stage for a visual and oratorical finale, at once triumphant and humble, in the best movie tradition”⁷. His carefully orchestrated campaign so resembled a melodrama that *The Guardian* ran a neat satire⁸.

Tinsel Town’s gilded boy, he secured, for instance, US\$9 million at a Beverley Hills dinner organised by Barbara Streisand and attended by Steven Spielberg, while Warner Brothers boss Joshua Berger joined stars like Gwyneth Paltrow for a fund-raising lunch in London.

With unparalleled cyberspace, database and smart-phone exploitation, the “spread the wealth” candidate raised unprecedented funds of US\$650 million. Over US\$3 million were invested in just one half-hour sentimental multi-channel TV “carpet-bombing”. Well over that amount poured in from hedge-fund, private-equity and commercial bank moguls alone. Goldman Sachs and Citigroup together contributed over a million dollars, and Lehman Brothers gave over US\$391,000 before crashing. Some big ‘bundlers’ remain close to his team. His Chief-of-Staff

Rahm Emanuel, who inspired a similar character in the award-winning *West Wing*, made a fortune as an investment banker and in 2000 sat on the board of Freddie Mac. The campaign chest provided by lawyers, plus leaders of finance, insurance, real estate and communications, has been identified as the means whereby the “governing classes” can resume control after a populist interlude, without implying that Obama has “a plan”⁹.

Slanted media coverage protected voters from reflecting on disquieting details about previous close associates like Jeremiah Wright, William Ayers and Tony Rezko¹⁰.

Whence, then, the democratic authority invested in this Democrat?

There was hardly a polling landslide, despite the subsequent seismic ‘Mandela Moment’ combining ‘white’ guilt with ‘non-white’ triumph. The sleek dude from Harvard Law School and Chicago machine-politics might not have won at all but for the relatively sudden ‘Republican’ economic crisis on top of widespread Bush-fatigue. He had a boost from spoiled, suggestible and academia-misguided ‘young adults’ for whom multi-racial ‘music’ played its part¹¹, while ethnic majority members generally voted for him by predictably huge margins. If you supported secure borders, the right to bear arms or the sanctity of unborn life, you might just be a ‘racist’, but as one Kansas columnist put it, “Heck, if you don’t vote for

Obama, you *must* be a racist.”

Nevertheless, Leftist exploitation of population change enabled piggy-back coalitions to intersect with the ‘civil rights’ movement, so that “other ethnic and religious minorities, immigrants, farm workers, women, gays, disabled and the elderly have all participated in pursuing the dream”¹². The winner’s 6% popular vote margin had the extra edge of significantly escalating Hispanic key-state votes¹³ and, less surprisingly, the mobilised Black Bloc. The Director of Harvard’s W E B DuBois Institute welcomed one of those few “magical” moments when his “nation within a nation” moulded itself into “one united body, determined to achieve one great social purpose”, on this occasion “the symbolic culmination of the black freedom struggle, the grand achievement of a great, collective dream”¹⁴.

What next – **precisely what “hope for change”** after inauguration? One can only speculate on the basis of prolific presidential self-portraits, his initial community projects, a minimal although leftwing legislative record, and a team selected from previous administrations, internationalist ideologues and super-rich advisers. He could rush through executive orders on social policy unpalatable to most Americans.

Prediction is premature, especially as many pre-ballot proposals, whether derived from idealism or opportunism, could not be implemented promptly



MARCHING TO SELMA, 1960

in the current climate, however seductive his policies for infrastructure redevelopment and science-led energy independence. Everything turns on the strength and sustainability of an economy saddled with astronomical budgetary and trade deficits, and millions of citizens in negative equity or out of work. Government liabilities total about US \$12 trillion. The 'groundlings' are always likely to become disenchanted with performance, all the more so if a hitherto charismatic messiah delivers no miracles.

He is *not* the "only one who can unite humanity"¹⁵ to "save the planet" from climate change. Foreign relations with China, Russia, Britain and the rest are directly affected by acute competition for trade and resources amid the deriv-

ative-afflicted financial 'architecture'.

Taking just the Middle East example, the grosser fantasies can of course be set aside, from a Shiite expectation of an end-time Western leader with a blessed name (ie, "Barack Hussein") to Jesse Jackson's wish to finish "Zionist control" of Washington. Resolution of the West Bank and Jerusalem issues remain far less assured than the gradual transfer of Anglo-American soldiers from the rocks of Iraq to harder places along the Afghan-Pakistan frontier.

Discarding the old neo-con militarists is one thing, but the Commander-in-Chief's 'first pick' Mr Emanuel, for example, is a "friend of Israel"¹⁶ who volunteered for military service there, and who reputedly sought rabbinical permission to work on the US\$800

million banking bail-out during Rosh Hashanah.

'Blacks in the White House', with a slave-descended First Lady, are expected to inspire Afro-Americans to greater achievement and reduce blame for failure on 'racism'. It is suggested that just as an 'anti-communist' president was 'needed' to open up Red China, so only an 'anti-racist' could bring down black crime. Mr Obama is well aware of the 'strong overlap between gang affiliation and young men of colour', their inexcusable rates of casual sex, and the collapse of two-parent households which has become more 'a difference in kind' than degree in ethnic comparison. A particularly toxic spin-off is video 'rap' which glorifies drug dealers and pimps, and presents as authentic 'blackness' a picture of "monkey-moving, gold-chain-wearing, illiteracy-spouting, penis-pulling, sullen, combative buffoons"¹⁷. Any frank, serious and effective government-led 'conversation about race' would give such concerns high profile.

David Ehrenstein compared the newcomer in the *Los Angeles Times* to the "Magic Negro" of post-modern criticism, a chiefly cinematic figure that has replaced a traditionally threatening stereotype with a character harmless and helpful to white folks; and something of this may be seen in the cautious negotiation of his new role. Charles Moore emphasised the white part of his heritage and his therefore accept-

ably 'skin-deep' blackness; the "racist caricature of a black man is of an ape," it was tactfully explained, whereas "Obama is a cat"¹⁸. Preoccupation with his mixed inheritance is detectable in his lucrative autobiographical publications, and he intelligently spins his unconventional background¹⁹.

The Chosen One is hailed as a harbinger of a 'post-racial' country. However, this is not so much because he exemplifies individual achievement irrespective of complexion or antecedents within a single culture, but because he represents 'a tectonic shift' towards a society whose population, as a result of ethnic factors presaged in his successful election, decreasingly resembles those who founded the nation. "We have changing demographics, and the Census Bureau projection that whites will lose their majority status in America by 2040" so that some feel "the country their forefathers built is slipping away from them"²⁰.

The 'post-racial' objective will not immediately remove demands from various groups on the new leader, either separately in divisive competition or in multiracial coalition against the largest single, though diminishing, minority - the Anglos. For some the "real unspoken" is that the new leader is not "black enough", instead a "kind of Princess Diana figure" for middle-class liberals whose "contact with black people of any sort is minimal", and that Afro-American voters will demand

a more tangible “payback”²¹. And the National Council of La Raza and other Latinos are lobbying for prompt implementation of immigration ‘reforms’.

A further aspect of so-called post-racialism was symbolised in the next President’s genial reference to himself as “a mutt”. Outnumbered and effectively disinherited and outnumbered through unnecessary mass-immigration and differential birth rates, the ‘white community’ also faces progressive disappearance as a recognisable entity and distinctive elite. This is not a development facing the Chinese, Africans or Arabs in their own heartlands, but only people of European descent in theirs.

Can we do *anything* about it?

Yes, we can. ♦

“HELEN LEWIS”
*researches religious, political
 and personality cults*

NOTES

1. Cf Charles Mackay, *Extraordinary Popular Delusions and the Madness of Crowds* (first published 1841); Gustave Le Bon, *The Psychology of Revolution* (New York, 1913); Kimball Young, *Handbook of Social Psychology* (London, 1963) especially chapters on crowd contagion, public opinion, propaganda and fashion. Mass-communication technology and popular “youth culture” make their insights ever more relevant

2. Jonathan Freedland, *Guardian*, 12 November 2008. “A billion happy, singing people,” wrote Democrat activist Richard Schiff, *Independent*, 8 November 2008; he is also an actor in *West Wing* whose fictional president was reportedly based on Mr Obama

3. John Harlow, *Sunday Times*, 9 November 2008, quoting university film culture experts. Cf Mark Ravenhill, *Guardian*, 10 November 2008
4. *Observer*, 9 November 2008
5. Matthew D’Ancona, *Sunday Telegraph*, 9 November 2008; the editor hoped “a candidate of Obama’s quality will soon emerge” and become Prime Minister of Britain. The current favourite is a Mr Chuka Ummuna
6. *Independent*, 31 October 2008
7. Ben Macintyre, *Times*, 6 November 2008
8. Charlie Booker, 10 November 2008
9. Christopher Caldwell, *Spectator*, 1 November 2008; cf Michael Lind, *Prospect*, December 2008
10. David Freddoso’s *Case Against Barack Obama* (Washington, 2008) provided the least imperfect account. Cf Melanie Phillips, *Daily Mail*, 13 October 2008; Martin Fletcher, *Times*, 14 October 2008; Ryan Lizza, *Daily Telegraph*, 8 November 2008
11. Neil McCormick, “And he had all the best tunes...” *Daily Telegraph*, 6 November 2008; Craig McLean, *Observer Music Monthly*, September 2008
12. Patricia Williams, *Observer*, 2 November 2008. His ghosted victory speech listed the usual politically correct categories in proper sequence
13. Eg, “I want you to start voting your numbers,” Obama urged 10,000 assembled in Espanola. “Start flexing your muscles” (*Guardian*, 2 October 2008)
14. Henry Louis Gates Jr, *Independent*, 6 November 2008
15. Ian McEwan, *Guardian*, 19 November 2008
16. *Jewish Chronicle & Daily Telegraph*, 14 November 2008. According to Shmuel Rosner, Jewish voters are the “most liberal” and “nothing makes them happier” than the opportunity to “renew the historic alliance of the 60s between Jews and blacks, fighting together for the advancement of American society” (*Jewish Chronicle*, 7 November 2008)
17. Myron Magnet, *Prospect*, November 2008
18. *Spectator*, 8 November 2008
19. Eg, “I have brothers, sisters, nieces, nephews, uncles and cousins, of every race and every hue, scattered across three continents...in no other country on Earth is my story even possible.” Philadelphia, 18 March 2008
20. SPLC Editor Mark Potok, quoted, *The News Review, Independent on Sunday*, 16 November 2008. He puts rising ‘hate’ incidents down to whites who feel that “they are losing everything they know” and their country has “somehow been stolen from them” (*Daily Telegraph*, 18 November 2008)
21. Bonnie Greer, *Daily Telegraph*, 25 October 2008