

# Obama Finally Defends American Exceptionalism... After Turning Us Into Europe

☒ “I believe in American exceptionalism, just as I suspect that Brits believe in British exceptionalism and the Greeks believe in Greek exceptionalism.” Those words were spoken by President Obama during a press conference in France back in 2009.

The president took a lot of heat for that remark from conservatives at the time, and it wasn't all that hard to understand why. His stated belief seemed to be that the concept of *exceptionalism* really didn't have a whole lot to do with actually being exceptional. Instead, he appeared to view it merely as an attitude – a rallying cry from home-team fans at a sporting event.

This perceived sense of indifference or perhaps even distaste toward America's power, relevance and influence in the world has always been a major point of contention for the president's critics, including myself. Many of us view Barack Obama as a man who has long been irritatingly reluctant to recognize this country for its greatness, admire it for its achievements, and accept its vast importance to the world stage.

When we listen to him speak broadly about what makes America special, we often hear him refer to our spirit and our state of mind as Americans, but he rarely reflects on the uniqueness of the American way of life. We rarely hear him describe the magnificence of our country as a testament to a long history of defending freedom, liberty, and the rights of individuals. We don't hear him talk about America as a place where someone can bring their limitless dreams to fruition with enough hard

work and determination, and then bask in the fruits of their achievements.

Instead, we hear him talk about a nation with grand potential that may *one day* be great if only we make the right decisions going forward.

In President Obama's recent proclamation on the remembrance of the 9/11 attacks, he said, "Today, we can honor those we lost by building a nation worthy of their memories."

Are we not *already* a nation worthy of their memories? According to the president, we're not.

As we've witnessed over the past five years, the kind of nation our president seems to prefer more resembles one that you might find in Europe.

I'm talking about a nation where chronically high unemployment is acceptable, and its citizens are conditioned to believe it's now just part of the societal culture. It's a nation where the expansion of the entitlement and welfare states are worth the price-tags of insurmountable debt, a stagnant economy, and a lower quality of living for our children. It's a nation where disproportionate wealth is viewed as immoral and unjust, and thus must be siphoned off for the *greater good*. It's a nation in which the government is heavily involved in the healthcare system, and is steadily going after more control of it. It's a nation that's paralyzed by political correctness, and it's one where self-righteous sanctimony is an acceptable replacement for logic. It's a nation that's becoming increasingly and willfully irrelevant to important world matters, *leading from behind* and content with letting other countries deal with issues that directly affect it.

I don't believe our president has ever viewed America as being exceptional. I think he came into office believing that our nation was a *problem child* that needed to be put in a *time-out*, told that we're no better than anyone else, and then sent

off to a European school for re-education.

That's why I found it interesting, last Tuesday, when the president invoked American exceptionalism in his address to the country regarding U.S. military intervention in Syria.

"But when, with modest effort and risk, we can stop children from being gassed to death, and thereby make our own children safer over the long run, I believe we should act," he said. "That's what makes America different. That's what makes us exceptional."

He's getting closer... at least in the rhetoric. I suppose some of us should feel a little encouraged that he's now not afraid to use that term in a high-profile speech to the nation – even if it was only for the purpose of pandering for our support.

But even in the rhetoric, Obama still hasn't quite figured out what the rest of the country is referring to when it talks about American exceptionalism. Russian President Vladimir Putin got it wrong too, in the controversial op-ed he recently wrote for the *New York Times*.

American exceptionalism isn't about the *means* we have as a country, and how we plan to use those means. It's about how we came to *have* those means in the first place. It's about how the U.S. Constitution and the American way of life led us to become such a successful, prosperous, free nation. We didn't achieve our freedoms by accident. We didn't become the world's last superpower by accident. We didn't become the center of the world economy by accident. Americans don't have the quality of living they do as the result of some accident. We *earned* these things *because* of our uniqueness and *because* we are exceptional. 

It's not a state of mind. It's a state of being. And as our country's leadership continues to work diligently to transform our nation's *state of being* into that of a European society,

what does that mean for the future of American exceptionalism? Will it one day become exactly what our president defined it as back in 2009 – a home-team rallying cry?

I sure hope not, but I fear that may very well be the case.

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## The Presidency Should Not Be a Participation Trophy

✘ There's been a lot of talk about the *participation trophy* in recent years – you know, that prize we hand out to every member of our children's intramural sports team at the end of each season, regardless of how well they play. Many people believe it's become a cultural symbol of how politically-correct we've become as a society. Our fear of hurt feelings has shamed us into rewarding mere participation instead of what we used to reward: Standout achievement.

We do it, of course, because of the affection we have for our children. We want them to be happy. We don't want them to feel bad if their friends receive trophies and they don't. So, our answer is to reward them based on how well we *wish* they performed, and not how they *actually* performed.

Sure, we know that rewarding mediocre and lackluster efforts isn't good for our kids. It sends them the message that success really isn't all that important, and that underachievement is okay. Yet, it's hard to put a price-tag on a child's smile, so we give in.

I have to wonder if a chunk of the American electorate is approaching the presidential election with a similar mindset.

After all, we've reached a point in the national polls where President Obama no longer seems to be adversely affected by the increasingly poor state of the country. As the economic news gets worse, more Americans leave the workforce, and chaos sweeps across the Middle East, support for his re-election bid hangs tight and even grows a little. It's really quite bizarre. Sure, Obama has a tremendous advantage in an adoring and protective news media at his disposal. It's an advantage that can never be underestimated. But I do think there's something else at play... I think there's a significant portion of the electorate that feels inclined to award the president with a participation trophy known as 're-election'.

Voters have always liked *the idea* of President Obama. From a presentation standpoint, he plays the part quite well. Voters like him personally. They find him friendly, charming, and endearing. He's good at portraying empathy for the common American. There's pride in his historic significance as the first black president. Voters *want* him to be recognized for greatness. The problem is that he hasn't *earned* greatness. By any reasonable analysis of the trouble our country is in, he hasn't even earned an honorable mention.

But that's not what the participation trophy is about. Again, it's about rewarding someone for how we *wish* they performed.

We saw an early example of this back in 2009, when President Obama was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Despite not having done anything tangible to achieve peace in his first ten months in the oval office, the Nobel Committee gave him a prestigious award for essentially *wanting* peace (which makes him no different than any other sane person). They were, in effect, rewarding a desire instead of achievement.

Unfortunately for Mitt Romney, the electorate doesn't feel the same affection for him that they feel for the president. They don't have that emotional connection with him. In Romney, many of them see someone who has already won enough trophies in

life. He's an over-achiever who is responsible for great successes, for which he's reaped the benefits. When you think about it, he's exactly the kind of person that the participation trophy was created to marginalize.

Just like President Obama expressed in his infamous "You didn't build that" speech, there's a tendency by some people to want to downplay the importance of exceptional individuals in order to feel better about themselves. Obama has certainly tapped into that animosity with his class warfare strategy, in order to attract votes. One has to wonder if he's also using it to build a case for why his unexceptional first term shouldn't be held against him in this election.

I'm confident that most Americans, deep down, know that the Obama presidency has not been good for this country, just like most parents know that participation trophies aren't good for their children. A lot of Americans may be uninformed, but they're not blind. But at this point in time, most seem to feel good about awarding Obama simply for being Obama. The question is whether or not that nagging knowledge that he doesn't deserve that award will compel them to change their minds before election day.

After all, this isn't a children's sports league, it's the fate of our country.