

# This is What Bumper-sticker Leadership Looks Like

Even with all of the infighting and philosophical  differences currently going on inside the Republican party, it's pretty safe to say that the one thing that unites right-leaning thinkers is this country is a strong opposition President Obama's mind-numbing expansion of the size and scope of the federal government. We understand how it's hurting this country, and we recognize that the president's policies, decisions, and neglect are steadily taking us down a European road of ruin.

There are some who believe that the decline of our nation is the product of purposeful management. In fact, I've heard a number of people insist that it is President Obama's disdain for the history and traditions of this country that has compelled him to intently neuter the power of the United States. They believe he wants to make us less significant on the world stage, and that he recognizes that the best way to manage our slow, steady decay is to bury us under insurmountable debt and dependency. It's his way of teaching this country a lesson.

I don't buy that. I *do* believe that President Obama would prefer that the United States be less influential in world matters. There's plenty of evidence to conclude that he truly does favor the idea of America "leading from behind." However, I don't think that our nation's insolvency is the planned endgame of his social justice crusade.

No, I think the true explanation isn't quite as sinister or conspiratorial, though the end result isn't any less harmful. I'm of the opinion that Barack Obama simply approaches his role as our president with what I'll call *bumper-sticker leadership*.

What *is* bumper-sticker leadership? It's when someone addresses serious, complicated issues with mere expressionism.

Let me explain...

While driving along a road, or maybe as you're walking through a parking lot, have you ever spotted a bumper-sticker that really spoke to you – one that summed up exactly what you believe on a particular topic in a very simple but profound way? I know I have.

In fact, I noticed one just the other day that I thought was pretty brilliant. It read, "Ask not what your country can take from other people and give to you." It was a sharp take-off of the classic JFK line with a modern-day, pro-individualist spin. Though the driver was a complete stranger to me, he managed to earn some legitimacy in my eyes because of his implied, philosophical view of the role government in our society.

But really, beyond the sticker, I didn't know a thing about the driver. I didn't know if he was a good-hearted, honest person. I didn't know if he was a responsible, law-biding individual. I didn't know if he was trustworthy and competent. And I didn't know anything about what he had achieved throughout his life. *Those* are the kinds of things that define an individual... not some clever idiom.

The same distinction can apply to leadership.

When I look at Barack Obama's performance as our president over the past five years, I don't see a man who has defined himself as a leader. I see a man who has essentially relied on attractive slogans and broad theory to earn legitimacy. And in the eyes of the mainstream media and a good portion of the American public, that's all it's taken. In some cases, that contentment can be explained by shared ideology. In other cases, it can be attributed to pure laziness.

Really, President Obama is like one of those cars you see from time to time that has a plethora of bumper-stickers plastered all over its body. With so many messages and witticisms on display, there's always a good chance that some of them are going to draw favor with onlookers. But if you bother to peel away at those stickers, like the media and a lot of unengaged Americans have been reluctant to do with our president, you're most likely going to find a clunker of a car underneath.

The Obama-method for governing appears to be the practice of throwing out some broad proclamation about addressing a problem, with the expectation being that the proclamation alone will somehow magically result in that problem being taken care of. And not only will it be taken care of... It will also be done so in an effective, efficient way.

That's not leadership. That's narcissism and gross irresponsibility.

We've seen major problems arise from this. We have an incoherent foreign policy that includes our government routinely seeming to first learn of significant unrest overseas at the same time the rest of us do. Four and a half years after the Great Recession ended, we *still* have an economy and employment situation that can't find solid footing. We're drowning in debt, we're no longer respected by other countries because we lack credibility, we're not dealing with soaring energy prices, and it's all because bumper-sticker leadership does not solve problems.

The latest example of this is all of the disastrous implementation problems we're continuing to see with Obamacare. The creation of the Affordable Care Act was predicated on the simple notion that *everyone* deserves access to affordable healthcare. I don't doubt that Obama's intent in signing the bill into law was to bring that idea to fruition. The problem is that the extent of President Obama's leadership on this very serious issue of healthcare reform never went

beyond that of knee-jerk instinct and self-righteousness.

We often refer to the Affordable Care Act as “Obamacare” because President Obama was the one who spearheaded healthcare reform as a key component of his first-term agenda. But the truth is that all he really did was throw out a motto. The concoction of the actual bill was delegated entirely to Nancy Pelosi, Harry Reid, and other dimwits in the Democratic majorities in congress.

The president himself was too busy being a progressive visionary and demonizing his opposition to be bothered with the details and ramifications of what actually went into the bill. And I don't think he could have cared less about those things anyway. Obama clearly believes there isn't any cost that outweighs a perceived benefit. There isn't any reality that negates a well-intentioned notion. All he cared about was his name going into the history books as the signer of a big government solution to healthcare.

That's all that mattered.

Even if you overlook the numerous shady deals and joyrides on Air-Force One that took place in order to get enough votes to pass the bill, the rhetoric that was used in selling it the public was very telling. President Obama himself told a number of falsities, like the bill being deficit neutral, people's premiums not rising, and that everyone would get to stick with their current insurance providers. And yet, I'm not even convinced that he was actually *lying*. Willful ignorance fuels bumper-sticker leadership. I honestly believe that the president thought that merely *saying* these things would actually make them happen when the law was implemented.

Of course, that mindset isn't grounded in reality. So now, our country is stuck with a nonsensical, 2,000-page law that is unaffordable to Americans, unsustainable to our economy, unmanageable by our government, and staggeringly detrimental

to the quality of our healthcare. And *everyone*, including those in the administration, knows that it's an absolute train wreck.

The only reason the law hasn't been repealed for the sake of the country, is because of the enormous embarrassment that it would cause to the Obama administration and those in congress who invested their political capital in it . And because of that monstrously costly need to save face, we're already seeing the self-implosion of the law being incomprehensibly blamed by the left on those dirty, Republican *obstructionists*.

It's totally ridiculous. ✘

George Will said it well on ABC's *This Week* last Sunday: "What Obamacare requires for it to work – mass irrationality."

When a law's implementation relies on *mass irrationality*, what exactly is the honest justification for keeping it around? It's an absolute mess, and it's going to cause a lot of pain.

Unfortunately for the American public, no number of "Yes We Did!" bumper-stickers is going to change that.

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## How Obama Has Kept His 'Cult of Personality'

✘ In the immediate aftermath of the 2008 election, when Barack Obama had just been declared our next president, the media was understandably jubilant. They had suffered through eight long years of a president whose decisions, policies, and mere demeanor went so far against their deeply-held liberal sensibilities, that their coverage of him often reached the

level of derangement.

Yes, their day had finally come. They had found their messiah. A youthful, charismatic, true-believing liberal was the country's new leader. History had been made. The nation's first African American president was going to be sworn in, and the media knew they had played a substantial role in making all that happen.

Amongst all the celebrating and congratulatory back-slapping, there was one member of the liberal media elite, however, who absorbed the victory a bit differently than the rest. While his colleagues were still floating along the radiant arch of a euphoric rainbow that emitted tranquil whispers of 'hope' and 'change', Newsweek's Evan Thomas acted as if he had suddenly been slapped awake from a deep, months-long hypnosis.

Speaking to Charlie Rose, Thomas (whose publication was a staunch advocate for Barack Obama), surprisingly expressed some rare misgivings about the president-elect. "There is a slightly creepy cult of personality about all this," he said in reference to the Obama phenomenon. "It – it – it just makes me a little uneasy that he's so singular. He's clearly managing his own spectacle. He's a deeply manipulative guy." He went on to say, "He had – he has the self-awareness to know that this creature he's designed isn't necessarily a real person."

If only people like Thomas would have taken notice of such things BEFORE the election. Media laziness and embarrassing infatuation let a man with no leadership, management, or business experience become the leader of the free world. He hadn't been properly vetted or firmly challenged. An individual who essentially never held a job outside of the halls of academia and politics (where he never produced any legislative achievements) excelled to the presidency solely on the power of his charisma, feel-good speeches, and endless media hype. A larger than life persona – that was the winning

formula.

Evan Thomas' analysis came way too late, but he described the Obama spectacle perfectly with his "cult of personality" comment. For people my age, who graduated high school in the early 1990's, that term holds some pop-culture significance beyond its text book definition of a circumstance that arises when, as Wikipedia describes it, "an individual who uses mass media, propaganda, or other methods, to create an idealized and heroic public image, often through unquestioning flattery and praise." It was also the title of a popular rock song by the band, *Living Colour*. The song's lyrics, if you listen to them now, so eerily describe Barack Obama (even down to the mention of a *Nobel Prize*) that you have to wonder if the band had somehow managed to get a hold of a DeLorean and traveled twenty years into the future for their inspiration.

More astonishing than the victory Obama's *cult of personality* gave him in 2008 is the fact that the cult is *still* very much alive today. I never thought it would have survived his entire first term (even with an adoring media) unless his policies had proven to be a resounding success. They, of course, did not. In fact, they took us in exactly the opposite direction. Yet the cult has retained most of its disciples, and there's a real possibility that its shelf-life will be extended by four years.

How can this be? I think the answer goes back to a brilliant remark Vice Presidential candidate, Paul Ryan, made during his speech at the Republican National Convention: "President Obama is the kind of politician who puts promises on the record, and then calls that *the record*."

Truer words have never been spoken.

If you listen to what the president says in public appearances, it's as if he hasn't been the incumbent for nearly four years. He repeats promises that have already been

broken, and speaks of his ideas for the country as if they are new, and haven't already resulted in failure. He presents this empty rhetoric as his record. One has to only listen to his recent stump speeches for examples.

The president has been traveling around the country and actually telling cheering crowds (with a straight face) that we need to bring down our national debt, and that he's going to do it. It's the same message he delivered when he was campaigning four years ago. If you'll remember, he promised back then to cut the deficit in half. The problem is that he has been in office for nearly four years and he has done absolutely nothing to achieve anything that remotely resembles that goal. Not only has he shown less fiscal discipline than any president in our history, but he has added far more money (over \$5 trillion) to our national debt in a single term than any other president has in two terms. He has spent more of our money than our first 42 presidents... combined! And if that wasn't bad enough, he has demagogued and killed every serious solution offered up by congress to address the national debt problem, while offering no solutions of his own.

Over the past couple of weeks, he's been touting to crowds his willingness to reach across the aisle to work with Republicans to fix our problems. He even joked in Ohio on Monday that he'd be willing to "wash their cars" in order to work together. Stuff like that always sounds great, but the reality is that he's had FOUR YEARS to do this, and as Bob Woodward's new book describes in great detail, Obama has never made any serious attempt to work with Republicans. Beyond that, he's repeatedly blamed the Republicans for all of our country's problems, despite the fact that they had no power during his first two years in office, and currently only hold one branch of congress.

He mocks the Republicans' claims that tax cuts will help the economy grow, when just three years ago, he was making this very same case himself.

He complains about how small and vindictive our politics are while refusing to denounce his super PAC for accusing his opponent, Mitt Romney, of killing a cancer victim!

He says these things without a hint of apprehension. They're even applause lines for him. It seems unfathomable that he can escape political blow-back for such comments, but he does because there is no media appetite to hold him accountable for his own words. Aside from outlets like FOX News and conservative radio, the media lets him effectively separate himself from his record, and run his campaign on little more than *hope, change,* and pure hypocrisy.

Imagine if George W. Bush's 2004, re-election stump-speeches included lines like, "War is never the answer" or "Democracy is not something we should be promoting abroad." Do you think for a second that the national media wouldn't have been excoriating him for his gall, or even questioning his sanity?

President Obama not only goes largely unchallenged for his hypocrisy, but also for the accuracy of what he touts as his achievements.

Obama often brags about the four million jobs being created under his watch. That sounds like a big number to most people. The problem is that the media rarely explains to Americans that the number doesn't include the number of jobs that were lost. More importantly, they don't explain how obscenely low that number is in context with historical recession recoveries.

Obama does the same thing when talking about energy and gas prices. He likes to point out that domestic oil-drilling has increased during his presidency. What the media fails to explain is that it has only increased on private land where the government has no control. Through Obama's policies, there is less government-land oil-drilling going on in this country than before he took office.

The media not only shies away from providing the proper context, but they set the bar so incredibly low for any measure of success from the Obama administration, that the president can effectively hail sub-standard and even downright poor results as major achievements. Whenever there's a mild, positive uptick in an economic number, the media tone is that a *corner has been turned*, and that we're *on the right track*... And when that uptick disappears a couple of weeks later, you don't hear much about it.

Many once-controversial policies (aka policies that were controversial under the Bush administration) receive practically no media attention now that Obama has adopted them. When's the last time you heard anyone in the media bring up the Guantanamo Bay detention camp? Four years ago, its existence was framed by Democrats and the media as a moral collapse of American values and a major recruitment tool for Islamic terrorists. Bush's position – that he'd like to close it, but couldn't due to lack of a better solution – was soundly rejected by critics. Candidate Obama even ran on the promise of closing down the facility, and pledged again to do so shortly after taking office. Yet, it's still open and active today, with Obama's rationale now parroting Bush's, and the media couldn't care less. It's been years since any news organization have given publicity to Gitmo critics, if there even are any more.

What *has* the media paid close attention to during this election cycle? It certainly hasn't been the shocking number of Americans on the government dole, but it *has* been Mitt Romney's in-artful description of the problem on hidden-camera. It hasn't been the high unemployment rate of female workers, but it *has* been a fabricated *War on Women* controversy and Todd Akin's idiotic comments. It hasn't been the Obamacare taxes, but it has been Mitt Romney's tax records, which are always good for a front-page headline or fifty. Oh, and of course we can't forget about all of that award-worthy,

investigative reporting on that *pathological liar*, Paul Ryan, who thought he could get away with citing the wrong marathon running-time from twenty years ago.

Now, media bias against conservatives is nothing new, and it's not going to change anytime soon. Complaining about it isn't going to do much good as far as the November election is concerned. The Romney campaign needs to find a way to deal with it, and do their best to work around the media. Their biggest challenge, though, will be to break through Obama's *cult of personality* and slap the country awake to the realities of what is on the line when it comes to our country's future.

When you strip away Obama's record, you have a personable, charismatic charmer who sounds great on the microphone – a viable candidate. But when you strip away his *cult of personality*, you're forced to recognize the reality that our nation is in deep decline, and may very well be broken beyond repair if drastic changes aren't made very soon.