



Written by [Ralph R. Reiland](#) on November 16, 2013

## Is President Barack Obama Too “Smart” to Do the Job?

In his 2007 biography of Barack Obama, *Obama: From Promise to Power*, *Chicago Tribune* reporter David Mendell described the exchange he had with then-Illinois state Sen. Barack Obama just minutes before he delivered the keynote address at the 2004 Democratic National Convention in Boston:



After Obama and I slipped through a security checkpoint and he momentarily broke free from the entourage, I sidled up to him and told him that he seemed to be impressing many people of influence in this rarefied atmosphere. Obama, his gaze fixed directly ahead, never broke his stride. “I’m LeBron, baby,” he replied, referring to LeBron James, the phenomenally talented teenager who at the time was shooting the lights out in the National Basketball Association. “I can play on this level. I got some game.”

Obama was right. He had some game, delivering a breakthrough speech that, in an analysis by David Bernstein, senior editor at *Chicago* magazine, “captured the nation’s attention and opened the way for a run at the presidency.”

Prior to that speech, “the idea of Obama running for president would have been laughable; he was a lowly state senator from Chicago’s Hyde Park,” wrote Bernstein. “After the speech, observers from across the political world hailed the address as an instant classic, and Obama was drawing comparisons (deservedly or not) to Martin Luther King Jr. and John F. Kennedy.”

Valerie Jarrett, longtime Obama friend and currently a senior adviser to the president, said of Obama’s 2004 convention speech: “It changed his life.”

David Remnick, editor of *The New Yorker*, quotes Jarrett in his biography of Obama, *The Bridge: The Life and Rise of Barack Obama*, published in 2010. “‘I think Barack knew that he had God-given talents that were extraordinary,’ stated Jarrett. ‘He knows exactly how smart he is.... He knows how perceptive he is. He knows what a good reader of people he is. And he knows that he has the ability — the extraordinary, uncanny ability — to take a thousand different perspectives, digest them and make sense out of them, and I think that he has never been challenged intellectually.... He’s been bored to death his whole life. He’s just too talented to do what ordinary people do.’”

What’s the meaning of Jarrett’s analysis, aside from providing insight into how adoration may be linked to attaining employment?

Obama claimed he didn’t know about the bugging of German Chancellor Angela Merkel, or about the



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National Security Agency snooping on other allied leaders and tens of millions of foreign citizens, or about the Fast and Furious gun-running debacle, or about the facts surrounding the attack on the American outpost in Benghazi, or about the flaws with the ObamaCare website, or about the IRS holding up tax-exempt applications of tea party groups prior to the 2012 election.

Perhaps Obama — perennially “bored to death” and with talents so “extraordinary” that he has “never been challenged intellectually” — found all of the above issues cerebrally unchallenging and intrinsically boring. Said Obama, regarding the IRS’ targeting of tea party groups, “I first learned about it from the same news reports that I think most people learned about this.”

The German periodical *Bild am Sonntag*, citing U.S. intelligence sources, reported that the NSA chief, Army Gen. Keith Alexander, briefed Obama on the Merkel wiretaps in 2010. Obama can’t recall the briefing. Perhaps he was “bored to death” and/or inadequately “challenged intellectually” by Gen. Alexander’s briefing.

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