



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on October 4, 2012

The Debate: Obama's Affirmative-action Performance

Hey, just blame it on Bush. The consensus on the presidential debate last night is that Barack Obama could resurrect the Choom Gang and star in a [remake](#) of *Dazed and Confused*. Conservative pundits are all aflutter with praise and liberals are all on Twitter with groans. Andrew Sullivan [wrote](#), "Obama looked tired, even bored; he kept looking down; he had no crisp statements of passion or argument; he wasn't there." A very upset Michael Moore [tweeted](#), "This is what happens when u pick John Kerry as your debate coach." And million-dollar-donor Bill Maher [chimed in](#), "Obama made a lot of great points tonight. Unfortunately, most of them were for Romney." Well, don't feel too bad, guys. At least he did slightly better than when he debated Clint Eastwood.



Chris Matthews, clearly perturbed that he's lost that tingling feelin', [asked](#), "Where was Obama tonight? ... What was he doing...?" Chris, he was doing what he always does: nothing well. It's just that you've finally noticed.

And now, after the Denver dose of reality, can we finally put to bed the myth of Obama the intellectually gifted? Yeah, I know, after eight years of a media narrative about Bush the cranially compromised, it was easy to say that, hey, now we're getting the smart guy. As Joe Biden put it, "I mean, you got the first mainstream African-American who is articulate and bright and clean and a nice-looking guy. I mean, that's a storybook, man." Or, at least, that's the story by the book — of [cultural affirmative action](#) (CAA).

Let's face it, folks, Obama was never all that impressive. This is the fellow who thought "Austrian" was spoken in Austria, that the USA built the "Intercontinental Railroad," and that a corpsman was a "corpse-man." And the only reason these and other scholarly gems didn't make him a political corpse-man is that the media refused to open the storybook.

But the reality is that people have been greasing the skids for Obama his whole life. Not only did he unquestionably benefit from institutionalized affirmative action, he was elected largely because of the manifestation of CAA known as Firstblackpresidentism.

Even Obama's supposedly great rhetorical skill — which men as brilliant as Thomas Sowell have attributed to him — is largely a CAA-inspired illusion. And the part that isn't is something just as superficial: his nice voice. No, I'm not kidding.

Image is three-quarters of everything in politics, and with the advent of the television age, movie-star qualities have become paramount. Just consider how while radio listeners thought Richard Nixon won his debate with John Kennedy, those who watched it on TV thought he lost. Now, just imagine — try hard — that Obama had the voice of Albert Einstein or Mike Tyson. Do you think people would've been



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transfixed by his speeches and been talking about rhetorical skill? And if he also had the appearance of Gary Coleman, no one would've even given him a second look.

The reality is that Chris Matthews and the rest of the race-obsessed leg-tinglers saw their dream candidate in 2008, a golden-throated black guy who was "articulate and bright and clean," and they wanted to be wowed. Like a gullible person visiting a fortune-teller and looking for hope and change, they yearned to believe. So they did.

And, last night, like with the Sean Connery [character](#) in *The Man Who Would be King*, the believers saw the god bleed and realized he can be no god. If only Obama would be thrust from power as decisively.

Having said this, I don't think Romney's margin of victory last night was quite as great as everyone is saying. Both men's answers were a bit policy-wonkish, and most people watching wouldn't know what was true and what wasn't. I also thought that Romney missed some great opportunities. For example, when the candidates were arguing about whose policies would hurt the middle class, Romney could have cut Obama off at the knees by saying, "Mr. President, your own vice president, Joe Biden, said just a few days ago that 'the middle class has been buried the last 4 years' — under your administration. I think you'd better go argue with him!" I mean, c'mon, Biden had just teed that one up for the GOP.

At the end of the day, though, it wasn't the details that mattered in the debate, but something that has been overlooked. For a long time now, we've heard about how Obama's strength is likeability, and that, in contrast, Romney is stiff and hard to connect with. But last night Romney seemed genial, compassionate, intelligent, engaged, and engaging; Obama, often gazing down at the lectern with an annoyed look on his face, was the one who seemed stiff, aloof, and peevish. There is no question as to who was the more likeable.

The last thing I'll mention is that if Romney gets a bump in the polls from last night's debate, there'll be an irony to it. Obama spent the last couple of weeks trying to lower expectations for his performance, but Romney didn't have to worry about that. The media did it for him.

When the media propagandizes against you 24/7 and casts you as Beelzebub, you have nowhere to go but up. So when people saw Romney last night, unfiltered and unchained, they had to say, "Look! He doesn't have a pitchfork, horns, and a tail!" Of course, you folks in the media shouldn't get too upset. Whatever Romney's bump, it won't even come close to the 20 points you talking heads have stolen through the 24-hour news spin cycle.

Besides, you have the vice-presidential debate, where the baton will be passed to Joe Biden, to look forward to in just a week's time. And he always makes Obama look smart.



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