



Written by [Thomas Sowell](#) on June 10, 2014

The Prisoner Swap Deal

People are arguing about what the United States got out of the deal that swapped five top level terrorist leaders for one American soldier who was, at best, absent from his post in a war zone. Soldiers who served in the same unit with him call him a deserter. The key to this deal, however, is less likely to be what the United States got out of the deal than it is about what Barack Obama got out of the deal. If nothing else, it instantly got the veterans' hospitals scandals off the front pages of newspapers and pushed these scandals aside on television news programs.



It was a clear winner for Barack Obama. And that may be all that matters to Barack Obama.

People who are questioning the president's competence seem not to want to believe that any President of the United States would knowingly damage this country's interests.

One of the problems of many fundamentally decent people is that they find it hard to understand people who are not fundamentally decent, or whose moral compass points in a different direction from theirs.

Many people who are painfully disappointed with President Obama have no real reason to be. The man's whole previous history, from childhood on, was shaped by a whole series of people, beginning with his mother, whose vision of America was very much like that of the Reverend Jeremiah Wright, whose church Barack Obama belonged to for 20 long years.

Obama is not a stupid man. There is no way that he could have sat in that church all that time without knowing how Jeremiah Wright hated America, and how his vision of the world was one in which "white folks' greed runs a world in need."

Even if the Reverend Wright had been the only such person in Barack Obama's life — and he was not — it should have been enough to keep him out of the White House.

"Innocent until proven guilty" is a good rule in a court of law, which has the power to deprive a defendant of liberty or life. But it is mindless and dangerous nonsense to apply that standard outside that context — especially when choosing a President of the United States, who holds in his hands the liberty and lives of millions of Americans.

People who are disappointed with Barack Obama have no right to be. It is they whom others have a right to be disappointed with. Instead of taking their role as citizens seriously, they chose to vote on the basis of racial symbolism, glib rhetoric and wishful thinking.

Moreover, many are already talking about choosing the next President of the United States on the basis of demographic symbolism — to have "the first woman president." And if she is elected on that basis, will any criticism of what she does in the White House be denounced as based on anti-woman bias, as criticisms of President Obama have been repeatedly denounced as racism?

And what if we have the first Hispanic president or the first Jewish president? Will any criticism of their



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actions in the White House be silenced by accusations of prejudice?

We may yet become the first nation to die from a terminal case of frivolity. Other great nations in history have been threatened by barbarians at the gates. We may be the first to be threatened by self-indulgent silliness inside the gates.

As for Barack Obama, you cannot judge any President's competence by the results of his policies, without first knowing what he was trying to achieve.

Many wise and decent people assume automatically that President Obama was trying to serve the interests of America. From that standpoint, he has failed abysmally, both at home and abroad. And that should legitimately call his competence into question.

But what if his vision of the world is one in which the wealth and power of those at the top, whether at home or internationally, are deeply resented, and have been throughout his life, under the tutelage of a whole series of resenters? And what if his goal is to redress that imbalance?

Who can say that he has failed, when the fundamental institutions of this country have been successfully and perhaps irretrievably undermined, and when the positions of America and its allies on the world stage have been similarly, and even more dangerously, undermined around the world?

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