

THE EMPEROBAMA GARMENT

Remember the Hans Christian Andersen story about the emperor who had no clothes? The point of it is that people can be bamboozled into believing just about anything. In the story, it takes an innocent child to point out that the emperor is naked and then, magically, all those who applauded the beauty of the royal garment that could only be seen by those who were worthy, wise and deserving enough realize that he is indeed nude.

There are several lessons in the story. The central one is that the fashionable torn jeans or the outsized low-rider pants are a perfect example of the mass psychosis Hans Christian was exposing. The less obvious one is that the emperor is not a bad guy. He is just ignorant like his subjects. He is not evil – he doesn't really want to walk down the main avenue buck naked, he just wants to be the best dressed emperor ever and, proudly, he and his subjects believe that he is.

I thought about it as I listened on my car radio to a tape of an Obama's town meeting a few weeks ago. An unscheduled crowd of angry blacks stormed in and demanded why Barack had not taken the opportunity, during his campaign, to stand up against the racist discrimination of blacks by police, courts, media and the society at large. Obama was obviously stumped by this. The question had not been scheduled, he didn't have a teleprompter text to work from and he went to pieces. He hesitated, repeated himself, kept going, "Well, you know" and "Just a minute", and "No, no, no..." and, finally, came up with a disjointed response that more or less amounted to, "Oh yeah, well, I did all that, I did stand up to it, and shame on your for asking..." By then the protesters had been whisked away and the talk show host who played the tape said, surprised, "He is supposed to be such a good speaker... Well, he could never run a talk show if this is how he responds to criticism."

Barack Obama's stellar political carrier began with his speech at the 2004 Democratic convention. It was a brilliant presentation that almost immediately

made him a contender for a higher office. But I can't help wondering: did Obama write it? His deliveries – and his scripted speeches during the current campaign – are faultless, but they are prepared for him by others, just as the lines of a movie star are written by a talented script writer and directed by a talented director.

The problem is that there is very little that we know about this man – what has he really done, what does he really know, what does he really believe?

We think that we know that he was the president of Harvard's Law Review but we also know that he hasn't written a single article for the Review – what he thought, what he believed, what he aspired to. He was just one of 70 “student editors” who elected him as president – but we don't know why, and what the margin was. We know that he was on the faculty of the Chicago University Law School for 12 years – but he wasn't a professor – just a Senior Lecturer, a very different position. N.Y. Times writes that during all these years, “The young professor (*sic!*) stood apart.” He was popular and charismatic but he “rarely took part in conversations and discussions...he had a grasp of legal ideas, but he never committed them to paper by publishing a single piece of scholarship.” So what did he – does he - believe?

He was born to a white atheist mother and a Muslim father whom he didn't really know. He attended an Indonesian school where he was registered as a Muslim and was taught the basics of Islam. There is no mention of religious involvement during his college and post-college years until he joins the Trinity United Church of Christ and accepts Rev. Wright as his mentor and advisor. Later, under pressure he abandons both. So what does he really believe?

I am not exactly sure what a “Community Organizer” is and I do not know what it was that Barack was organizing. We can assume that he was against poverty, discrimination, racism and the rest – but what did he *do*? What were the results? Did he really believe what he was promising the people in Chicago's Southside while he lived in a much more luxurious area? Or was he

just offering them a change like he is offering now to America and “don’t ask me about the details and how it is to come about?”

A supposedly brilliant orator who could charm juries – he never spoke in court on any of the few cases he handled. When he finally made it into the U.S. Senate he didn’t make any connections – his colleagues remember him as a nice guy but aren’t sure about his ideas or beliefs. He never held a hearing of his Foreign Affairs committee and it meant so little to him that he mistakenly said in Iraq, on camera, that he was a member of the Finance and Banking committee. In Berlin, his lack of the most basic knowledge about European history, the Cold War and U.S. role in keeping Europe free was laughingly obvious, but never mind: the crowds cheered him and I believe that I even heard a few cries, “Oh, what a beautiful garment the emperor has!”

And finally, on a lighter note, have you ever heard him tell a joke or make a self-deprecating comment? He has no sense of humor and even if I am wrong about everything else, I do not want him for my President. But, more importantly, let me cry, “Emperobama has no clothes!” and hope my fellow citizens will hear me.