

THE BEST NOTABLE QUOTABLES OF 2009



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The 22nd Annual Awards for the Year's Worst Reporting

Welcome to the Media Research Center's annual awards issue, a compilation of the most outrageous and/or humorous news media quotes from 2009 (December 2008 through November 2009).

To determine this year's winners, a panel of 48 radio talk show hosts, magazine editors, columnists, editorial writers, and media observers each selected their choices for the first, second and third best quote from a slate of five to eight quotes in each category. First place selections were awarded three points, second place choices two points, with one point for the third place selections. Point totals are listed in the brackets at the end of the attribution for each quote. Each judge was also asked to choose a "Quote of the Year" denoting the most outrageous quote of 2009. The winner and top runner-up appear on page 18.

A list of the judges, who were generous with their time, appears on page 18. The MRC's Michelle Humphrey, Karen Topper and Kristine Lawrence distributed and counted the ballots, then produced the numerous audio and video clips that accompany the Web-posted version. Rich Noyes and Brent Baker assembled this issue and Brad Ash posted the entire package on the MRC's Web site: www.MRC.org.

For video and audio clips of the broadcast quotes in this issue, please visit our Web site: www.MRC.org.



A bi-weekly compilation of the latest outrageous, sometimes humorous, quotes in the liberal media.

The Coronation of the Messiah Award for Fawning Inaugural Coverage

✓ “We know that wind can make a cold day feel colder, but can national pride make a freezing day feel warmer? It seems to be the case because regardless of the final crowd number estimates, never have so many people shivered so long with such joy. From above, even the seagulls must have been awed by the blanket of humanity.”

— ABC’s Bill Weir on *World News*, January 20. [66 points]



Runners-up:

■ “What a day it was. It may take days or years to really absorb the significance of what happened to America today...When he [Barack Obama] finally emerged, he seemed, even in this throng, so solitary, somber, perhaps already feeling the weight of the world, even before he was transformed into the leader of the free world....The mass flickering of cell phone cameras on the Mall seemed like stars shining back at him.”

— NBC’s Andrea Mitchell on the *January 20 Nightly News*. [63]



■ “You know what it [Obama’s inauguration] reminds me of? It reminds me of the Velvet Revolution. I was in Prague when that happened. And Vaclav Havel was a generational leader and was in the square in Prague and the streets were filled with joy. And we’re not overthrowing a communist regime here, obviously, but an unpopular President is leaving and people have been waiting for this moment.”

— NBC’s Tom Brokaw during live coverage prior to Obama’s inauguration, January 20. [62]



■ “It was a giant love-fest...When Barack Obama started to speak, I was right in the middle of the crowd. People were crying, they were laughing, they were cheering. Suddenly someone would just come up and hug you. It was just amazing. It was like you’re standing in the middle of these strangers, and all of a sudden you had a million friends around you. That’s what it felt like yesterday.”

— CNN’s Carol Costello on the *January 21 American Morning*, recounting her experience at Obama’s inauguration. [23]



Master of His Domain Award for Obama Puffery

✓ “The legislative achievements have been stupendous — the \$789 billion stimulus bill, the budget plan that is still being hammered out (and may, ultimately, include the next landmark safety-net program, universal health insurance). There has also been a cascade of new policies to address the financial crisis — massive interventions in the housing and credit markets, a market-based plan to buy the toxic assets that many banks have on their books, a plan to bail out the auto industry and a strict new regulatory regime proposed for Wall Street. Obama has also completely overhauled foreign policy, from Cuba to Afghanistan. ‘In a way, Obama’s 100 days is even more dramatic than Roosevelt’s,’ says Elaine Kamarck of Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government. ‘Roosevelt only had to deal with a domestic crisis. Obama has had to overhaul foreign policy as well, including two wars. And that’s really the secret of why this has seemed so spectacular.’”



— **Time’s Joe Klein in the magazine’s May 4 cover story on Barack Obama’s first 100 days as President. [100 points]**

Runners-up:

■ “It didn’t take long for Barack Obama — for all his youth and inexperience — to get acclimated to his new role as the calming leader of a country in crisis....Rookie jitters? Far from it....For the past three months, Obama has spoken in firm, yet soothing tones. Sometimes he has used a just-folks approach to identify with economically struggling citizens. He has displayed wonkish tendencies, too, appearing much like the college instructor he once was while discussing the intricacies of the economic collapse. He has engaged in witty banter, teasing lawmakers, staffers, journalists and citizens alike. He has struck a statesmanlike stance, calling for a renewed partnership between the United States and its allies....”

— **AP Washington correspondent Liz Sidoti in an April 25 dispatch, “Obama quickly, confidently adapts to presidency.” [49]**

■ “There were ghosts in that chamber tonight, the other Presidents who tried to reform the health care system and failed. From Teddy Roosevelt, to Harry Truman, to Bill Clinton who came to Congress 16 years ago this month with his plan....There was another ghost in the chamber tonight, the spirit of Senator Ted Kennedy, who fought for decades for universal care....At the end, President Obama sought to draw on the grand rhetorical tradition of President Kennedy and others, trying to summon the country to a great and necessary endeavor.”



— **Co-anchor Terry Moran reporting on Obama’s health care speech to Congress on ABC’s *Nightline*, September 9. [38]**

The Crush Rush Award for Loathing Limbaugh

✓ “The type of female that does like Rush is the same type of woman that falls in love with prisoners. You know what I mean? They like Richard Ramirez or — Squeaky Fromme is a good example. I think Charles Manson’s — Eva Braun, Hitler’s girlfriend. That is exactly the type of woman that responds really well to Rush. And there will be some Eva Brauns, Squeaky Frommes out there that will respond really well to this cattle call right now.”

— Actress/activist Janeane Garofalo on MSNBC’s *Countdown with Keith Olbermann*, February 26. [59 points]



Runners-up:

■ “Limbaugh’s perceived racist diatribes are too many to name but here’s a sampling: He once declared that [words on screen] ‘Slavery built the South. I’m not saying we should bring it back; I’m just saying it had its merits. For one thing, the streets were safer after dark,’ said Limbaugh.”

— CNN’s Rick Sanchez promoting a made-up quote on the 3pm ET hour of *Newsroom*, October 12. [38]



■ “Rush Limbaugh is beginning to look more and more like Mr. Big, and at some point somebody’s going to jam a CO2 pellet into his head and he’s going to explode like a giant blimp. That day may come. Not yet, but we’ll be there to watch.”

— Chris Matthews on MSNBC’s *Morning Meeting*, October 13. [36]

■ “Let’s go along for the full ride and believe that it [the slavery quote] was all a horrible ‘fabrication.’ So what are we left with? Well, essentially, I think we just threw a deck chair off the Titanic. There is still a huge pile of polarizing, bigoted debris stacked up on the deck of the good ship Limbaugh that he can’t deny or even remotely distance himself from.”

— Bryan Burwell, who launched the phony “slavery” quote into coverage of Limbaugh, October 14 *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. [27]

■ “Several NFL players have already said they would not play for Rush because they know he would love to say he owns a plantation full of black men.”

— MSNBC contributor Touré on *Morning Meeting*, October 14. [24]



Damn Those Conservatives Award

✓ “The Republicans lie! They want to see you dead! They’d rather make money off your dead corpse! They kind of like it when that woman has cancer and they don’t have anything for her.”

— Ed Schultz, host of MSNBC’s *The Ed Show*, September 23. [57 points]



Runners-up:

■ “...the total mindless, morally bankrupt, knee-jerk, fascist hatred — without which Michelle Malkin would just be a big mashed-up bag of meat with lipstick on it.”

— *Countdown* host Keith Olbermann talking about the conservative columnist and author, October 13. [52]

■ **Host Dylan Ratigan:** “Some Republicans and conservatives celebrating Obama’s failed attempt to bring the 2016 Olympics to Chicago. Down with Chicago! Contessa Brewer has the latest.”

News anchor Contessa Brewer: “Can you imagine this, that some people actually went as far as to cheer?”

Ratigan: “Sure. I mean, there are people that are actually trying to derail health care in order to take down Obama, even if it means half the country dies.”

— Exchange on MSNBC’s 9am ET *Morning Meeting*, October 5. [28]



■ “The tenets of the Republican Party are amazing and they seem warm and welcome. But when I watch it be applied — like you didn’t have to go much further than the Republican National Convention....It literally look[s] like Nazi Germany.”

— CNN host/comedian D.L. Hughley to RNC Chairman Michael Steele on *D.L. Hughley Breaks the News*, February 28. [28]



The Poison Tea Pot Award for Smearing the Anti-Obama Rabble

✓ **CNN analyst David Gergen:** “Republicans are pretty much in disarray....They have not yet come up with a compelling alternative, one that has gained popular recognition. So-”

Anderson Cooper: “Teabagging. They’ve got teabagging.”

Gergen: “Well, they’ve got the teabagging....[But] Republicans have got a way — they still haven’t found their voice, Anderson. They’re still — this happens to a minority party after it’s lost a couple of bad elections, but they’re searching for their voice.”

Cooper: “It’s hard to talk when you’re teabagging.”

— **CNN’s *Anderson Cooper 360*, April 14. “Teabagging” is a vulgar slang term for a certain variety of oral sex; Cooper later apologized. [65 points]**



Runners-up:

■ “Let’s be very honest about what this is about. It’s not about bashing Democrats, it’s not about taxes, they have no idea what the Boston tea party was about, they don’t know their history at all. This is about hating a black man in the White House. This is racism straight up. That is nothing but a bunch of teabagging rednecks....Fox News loves to foment this anti-intellectualism because that’s their bread and butter. If you have a cerebral electorate, Fox News goes down the toilet, you know, very, very fast....They have tackled that elusive...Klan with a ‘K’ demo.”

— **Actress/activist Janeane Garofalo on MSNBC’s *Countdown*, April 16. [61]**



■ “You know, Kyra, this is a party for Obama bashers. I have to say that this is not entirely representative of everybody in America....It’s anti-government, anti-CNN, since this is highly promoted by the right-wing conservative network, Fox. And since I can’t really hear much more and I think this is not really family viewing, I’ll toss it back to you.”

— **Correspondent Susan Roesgen during live coverage of the tea party protests, *CNN Newsroom*, April 15. [41]**



■ “They’ve waved signs likening President Obama to Hitler and the devil; raised questions about whether he was really born in this country; falsely accused him of planning to set up death panels; decried his speech to students as indoctrination; and called him everything from a ‘fascist’ to a ‘socialist’ to a ‘communist.’ ...And all that was before Mr. Obama’s speech was interrupted by a representative who once fought to keep the Confederate flag waving over the South Carolina state house. Add it all up, and some prominent Obama supporters are now saying that it paints a picture of an opposition driven, in part, by a refusal to accept a black President.”

— **ABC’s Dan Harris on *World News*, September 15. [31]**



Spread the Wealth Award for Socialist Sermonizing

✓ “Why not just nationalize the banks?...People are angry. There’s so much taxpayer money going into the banks. Why shouldn’t the government — why shouldn’t you just fire the executives who wrecked these banks in the first place and tanked the world’s financial system in the process?”

— ABC’s Terry Moran interviewing President Obama for *Nightline*, February 10. [53 points]



Runners-up:

■ “I don’t think that left to its own devices, capitalism moves along smoothly and everyone gets treated fairly in the process. Capitalism is like a child: if you want the child to grow up free and productive, somebody’s got to look over the shoulder of that child.”

— PBS host Tavis Smiley in a *Time* magazine symposium on “The Future of Capitalism,” May 25 issue. [45]

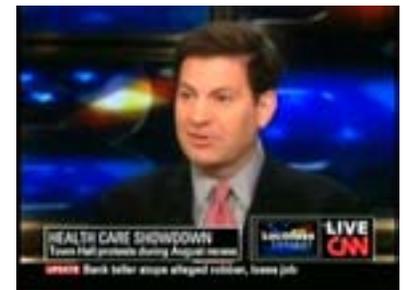
■ “In Britain, a government takeover of a bank last year helped to temporarily calm fears in the financial markets there. Nationalization may have a psychological impact as well, and Uncle Sam wrapping his arms around failing banks in this country might provide a big dose of confidence for the American consumer.”

— Katie Couric on the February 19 *CBS Evening News*, talking about the Obama administration possibly taking over American banks. [45]



■ “We’re the only industrialized democracy that doesn’t cover every citizen. That is immoral....To be a country this wealthy and be the only industrialized democracy that hasn’t figured out how to cover everyone.”

— *Time* senior political analyst Mark Halperin, ex-ABC News political director, talking about health insurance coverage on CNN’s *Lou Dobbs Tonight*, August 6. [29]



Long Live Camelot Award for Lionizing Ted Kennedy

✓ “Mary Jo wasn’t a right-wing talking point or a negative campaign slogan....We don’t know how much Kennedy was affected by her death, or what she’d have thought about arguably being a catalyst for the most successful Senate career in history...[One wonders what] Mary Jo Kopechne would have had to say about Ted’s death, and what she’d have thought of the life and career that are being (rightfully) heralded. Who knows — maybe she’d feel it was worth it.”

— *Discover* magazine deputy web editor **Melissa Lafsky**, who formerly worked on the *New York Times*’s *Freakonomics* blog, writing at the Huffington Post, August 27. [107 points]



Runners-up:

■ “The heavens were weeping for Teddy Kennedy today.”

— Correspondent **Andrea Mitchell** noting the rainy weather for Kennedy’s funeral, August 29 *NBC Nightly News*. [58]

■ “America mourns the lion of the Senate....There is, of course, no royal family in this country. The Kennedys, perhaps, the closest we’ve ever had....For nearly half a century in the Senate, Ted Kennedy spoke for people who had no voice — the poor and the disabled, children and the elderly.”

— Anchor **Katie Couric** kicking off the August 26 *CBS Evening News*. [41]

■ Anchor **Brian Williams**: “We thought one way to look at his life might be the way some people looked at him today, the way filmmaker Frank Capra might have looked at life: What would it have been like without a Ted Kennedy?” ...

Reporter **Kevin Tibbles**: “Many say Ted Kennedy’s passion was people, and tonight they have lost a champion.”

— *NBC Nightly News*, August 26. [20]



The Half-Baked Alaska Award for Pummeling Palin

✓ **CNN's Jack Cafferty:** "Here's the question: 'Would you rather listen to a speech by Sarah Palin or a speech by Newt Gingrich?' Go to CNN — or would you rather just stick needles in your eyes? [Over loud laughter off-camera from a man other than Cafferty, presumably Blitzer] Go to CNN.com/CaffertyFile and you can post a comment on my blog. I forgot about the third option."

Anchor Wolf Blitzer: "What do you think, Jack? You want to listen to Palin or Gingrich deliver a speech?"

Cafferty: "I'm not interested in listening to either one of them."

— Exchange on CNN's *The Situation Room*, June 9, talking about Palin and Gingrich's appearance at a Republican fundraiser the previous evening. [53 points]

Runners-up:

■ "She's been an astronaut and a rock star. Pop icons Beyonce and Shakira. She's won American Idol too. She's even run for President twice. [Over footage of Sarah Palin] Some would argue she also ran for Vice President in 2008."

— ABC's David Wright in a retrospective marking the 50th anniversary of Barbie for *Nightline*, February 16. [49]

■ **Ex-MSNBC anchor Dan Abrams:** "Sarah Palin, to me, is like the representative of everything that's gone wrong [for the Republican Party] lately."

Comedian Chuck Nice: "Yeah, she's a maverick!...And I'm going to say this, and please don't take it the way it sounds. But, Sarah Palin to the GOP, this is what I've got to say: She is very much like herpes — she's not going away. Okay? That's it."

— Exchange on NBC's *Today*, June 9. [42]

■ "She's a joke. I mean, I just can't take her seriously...The idea that this potential talk show host is considered seriously for the Republican nomination, believe me, it'll never happen. Republican primary voters just are not going to elect a talk show host."

— *New York Times* columnist David Brooks talking about Sarah Palin on ABC's *This Week*, November 15. [39]



The Un-Fairness Doctrine Award for Slamming Media Conservatives

✓ “Let me be precise here: Fox News peddles a fair amount of hateful crap. Some of it borders on sedition. Much of it is flat out untrue. But I don’t understand why the White House would give such poisonous helium balloons as Glenn Beck and Sean Hannity the opportunity for still greater spasms of self-inflation by declaring war on Fox....The best antidote to their garbage is elegant, intelligent governance.”

— *Time’s* Joe Klein on the magazine’s “Swampland” blog, October 23. [62 points]



Runners-up:

■ **Host Chris Matthews:** “The activists on radio are not afraid, because they’re not afraid of anything. But at some point, if we have violence in this country against our President of any form or attempt, people are gonna pay for it, the people who have encouraged the craziness....”

The Politico’s Roger Simon: “I agree 100 percent, but the base of the party, the core of the party, likes the clown show....They’re playing with fire.”

— *MSNBC’s Hardball*, September 22. [50]



■ “[Robert] Novak titled his 2007 memoir, *The Prince of Darkness*, and he was indeed a very dark force in cable TV news contributing mightily to the toxic culture of confrontation, belligerence and polarization that so defines cable TV and American political discourse today. There is no way to be nice about his impact on cable TV during its formative years....I am talking about Novak’s sneering TV persona and the role it played in reaching back to the dark political style of the 1950s Richard Nixon — and leading us to the polarized, angry space that cable TV and the conversation of American politics now inhabits.”

— *Baltimore Sun* critic David Zurawik August 18 on his “Z on TV” blog, two hours after news broke of Novak’s passing. [47]



■ “Was there a tone in this country that was actually started with the election of our first black president that is bringing the crazies out of the woodwork, and are they being motivated to move by right-wing pronouncements, like he’s dangerous, he’s a socialist, he’s a Muslim, and he isn’t even a U.S. citizen? This is what we hear on some TV and radio outlets, which, by the way, according to our Constitution, they are entitled to what they believe and even propagate.”

— *CNN Newsroom* anchor Rick Sanchez setting up a segment suggesting “hateful talk” can be blamed for the Holocaust museum shooting, June 11. [38]



Let Us Fluff Your Pillow Award for Obsequious Obama Interviews

✓ “You’re so confident, Mr. President, and so focused. Is your confidence ever shaken? Do you ever wake up and say, ‘Damn, this is hard. Damn, I’m not going to get the things done I want to get done, and it’s just too politicized to really get accomplished the big things I want to accomplish?’”
— CBS’s Katie Couric in an exchange with Obama shown on *The Early Show*, July 22. [92 points]



Runners-up:

■ “It seems to me that there is a sort of meanness that’s settled over our political dialogue. It started this summer at these town hall meetings....President Carter is now saying that he thinks it’s racial. Nancy Pelosi says it could be dangerous. What do you think it’s all about?”

— CBS’s Bob Schieffer to President Obama on *Face the Nation*, September 20. [37]

■ “You lost two nominees, two appointments today. Did that make you angry, I imagine?...How do you prevent the lesson from being that, no matter how lofty the goals of the new guy coming in, Washington wins, in the end?”

— NBC’s Brian Williams in an interview with President Obama shown on the February 3 *Nightly News*. [30]



■ “This week I went down to Monticello, Thomas Jefferson’s home, where they have this wonderful new visitor center. And one of the historians down there reminded me that Thomas Jefferson once said the presidency is a ‘splendid misery.’ But at the end of his term, he also said, quote, that ‘the presidency had brought him nothing but increasing drudgery and a daily loss of friends.’ I just wonder, have you lost any friends yet?”

— Bob Schieffer interviewing President Obama on CBS’s *Face the Nation*, March 29. [29]

■ “House Speaker Pelosi worried about the opposition, the tone of it, perhaps leading to violence as it did in the ‘70s. There’s more recent examples of anti-government violence — occurring even in the mid-‘90s. Do you worry about that?”

— David Gregory to Obama on NBC’s *Meet the Press*, September 20. [28]



Barry's Big Brain Award for Journalists Bedazzled by Obama's Brilliance

✓ "I like to say that, in some ways, Barack Obama is the first President since George Washington to be taking a step down into the Oval Office. I mean, from visionary leader of a giant movement, now he's got an executive position that he has to perform in, in a way."

— **ABC *Nightline* co-anchor Terry Moran to Media Bistro's Steve Krakauer in a February 20 "Morning Media Menu" podcast. [82 points]**



Runners-up:

■ "The President showed his analytical mind....He was at his best intellectually. I thought it was a great example of how his mind works....What a mind he has, and I love his ability to do it on television. I love to think with him."

— **MSNBC's Chris Matthews during live coverage following Obama's February 9 press conference. [51]**



■ "Spock's cool, analytical nature feels more fascinating and topical than ever now that we've put a sort of Vulcan in the White House. All through the election campaign, columnists compared President Obama's unflappably logical demeanor and prominent ears with Mr. Spock's....Like Obama, Spock is the product of a mixed marriage (actually, an interstellar mixed marriage), and he suffers blunt manifestations of prejudice as a result...."

— ***Newsweek's* Steve Daly in his May 4 cover story, "We're All Trekkies Now." [45]**

■ "People who brief him say he is able to game out scenarios before the experts in the room, even on foreign policy, national security and other issues in which he had relatively little expertise before running for president. Obama is approaching the issues as a game of 'three-dimensional chess,' said John O. Brennan, an assistant to the President for homeland security and counterterrorism. 'It's not kinetic checkers....There are moves that are made on the chess board that really have implications, so the President is always looking at those dimensions of it.'"

— **Carrie Johnson and Anne E. Kornblut in a front-page *Washington Post* story, August 28. [27]**



The Audacity of Dopes Award for Wackiest Analysis of the Year

✓ “Reagan [at the 1984 D-Day commemoration] was all about America, and you talked about it. Obama is, ‘We are above that now. We’re not just parochial, we’re not just chauvinistic, we’re not just provincial. We stand for something.’ I mean, in a way, Obama’s standing above the country, above — above the world. He’s sort of God. He’s going to bring all different sides together.”

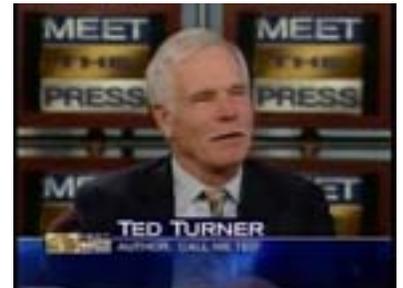
— *Newsweek’s* Evan Thomas to host Chris Matthews on MSNBC’s *Hardball*, June 5. [79 points]



Runners-up:

■ “We have an FBI, and we’re not prejudiced against somebody who’s worked at the FBI. It’s an honorable place to work. And the KGB, I think, was an honorable place to work. It gave people in the former Soviet Union, a communist country, an opportunity to do something important and worthwhile.”

— CNN founder Ted Turner on *Meet the Press*, November 30, 2008. [48]



■ “Watching both the health care and climate/energy debates in Congress, it is hard not to draw the following conclusion: There is only one thing worse than one-party autocracy, and that is one-party democracy, which is what we have in America today. One-party autocracy certainly has its drawbacks. But when it is led by a reasonably enlightened group of people, as China is today, it can also have great advantages. That one party can just impose the politically difficult but critically important policies needed to move a society forward in the 21st century.”

— *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman in a September 9 column, “Our One Party Democracy.” [35]

■ “[Ted Kennedy] just wanted to bring back what Bobby and Jack had given us. He wanted to be his brother’s brother. And then he turned that torch over last year to Barack Obama.... Amazing history. Barack is now the last brother. It’s history.”

— MSNBC’s Chris Matthews on NBC’s *Today*, August 26. [23]



The Obamagasm Award for Seeing Coolness In Everything Obama Does

✓ **Correspondent John Harwood:** “He had this fly that was persistently buzzing around him....He swatted his hand and he said, ‘I got the sucker.’ He threw it onto the ground. It was a, you know, *Dirty Harry* ‘make my day’ moment.”...

MSNBC anchor David Shuster: “Amazing...An amazing interview...It never fails — great weather, rainbows, incredible speeches, and three-point basket. A fly and he nails it. Unbelievable. Unbelievable.”

— Exchange on MSNBC after Harwood’s CNBC interview with President Obama concluded, June 16. [76 points]



Runners-up:

■ “The other night I dreamt of Barack Obama. He was taking a shower right when I needed to get into the bathroom to shave my legs...I launched an e-mail inquiry...Many women — not too surprisingly — were dreaming about sex with the President.”

— *New York Times* “Domestic Disturbances” blogger Judith Warner, February 5. [57]

■ “Between workouts during his Hawaii vacation this week, he was photographed looking like the paradigm of a new kind of presidential fitness, one geared less toward preventing heart attacks than winning swimsuit competitions. The sun glistened off chiseled pectorals sculpted during four weightlifting sessions each week, and a body toned by regular treadmill runs and basketball games.”

— *Washington Post* reporter Eli Saslow in a December 25, 2008 front-page story about Obama’s vacation fitness regimen. [43]



■ “When they were both walking to the helicopter the other day, Marine One... you could tell, like, they were experiencing the — I’m getting old here — the grooviness, the excitement of being this first American couple heading towards Marine One, which is cool in itself, heading from there to Air Force One, to a quick flight across the Atlantic, on your own plane, and to meet with the world leaders as, like, the centerpiece of the world....I’m saying it again, I’m getting a thrill....We agree, we girls agree. I don’t mind saying that. I’m excited. I’m thrilled.”

— MSNBC’s Chris Matthews talking to Michelle Bernard of the Independent Women’s Forum and *Washington Post* writer Lois Romano about the Obamas’ trip to Europe, April 1 *Hardball*. [36]



Michelle, the Media Belle Award

✓ **Correspondent Dawna Friesen:** “Her husband is, of course, the big star of the show, but this is Michelle Obama’s first foray on to the global stage as First Lady. And you can bet that her every move, her every fashion decision will be dissected and analyzed, especially when the couple go to meet the Queen. But she’s got a lot of good will on her side.”

Video of Michelle Obama as Andy Williams sings: “You’re just too good to be true/Can’t take my eyes off of you.”

Friesen, as song continues playing in background: “Ask the British about Michelle Obama, and you’ll hear a lot of what you hear in the States.”

Woman on the street: “Oh, I think she’s really cool. She’s got a lot of really good styles. It makes a change from politicians’ wives to look good.”

Man on the street: “She looks supportive and that’s what a man needs in life.”

Second man: “I have been totally stunned at the awesome nature of Michelle Obama.” ...

Friesen: “Then there’s those arms, the envy of a lot of British women....”

— **NBC’s *Today*, March 31. [66 points]**



Runners-up:

■ “Michelle is so authentic, and so real, and so today, and so, you know, J. Crew, and the whole price point thing and not designer clothes....With Michelle, you can almost feel those warm arms. You know, there’s a kind of real red-blooded feel to her. But there’s also — I mean she’s almost, like, overtaking Oprah, I think, as the kind of inspirational ‘it’ girl at this point.”

— **Former *Vanity Fair* and *New Yorker* editor Tina Brown on CBS’s *Early Show*, April 3. [64]**

■ “In 1961, when Jacqueline Kennedy came to Europe, she enchanted even the crustiest of world leaders, and she’s remained a tough act to follow for every First Lady since. But Michelle Obama looks more than equal to the task of impressing and delighting even the grandest of them....To be honest, most Europeans were going to like whoever replaced President Bush. But there’s no doubt Michelle and her husband have an extra *je ne sais quoi*.”

— **CBS’s Elizabeth Palmer on *The Early Show*, March 31. [44]**



■ “The First Lady is heading Chicago’s Olympic ‘Dream Team,’ with star athletes by her side and some very high-powered help....The President and First Lady will share the stage at that final presentation. We’re told that he will focus on the big picture, while she will get very personal. She’ll speak from the heart — we’re told there won’t be a dry eye in the house by the time she’s done.”

— **ABC’s Yunji de Nies on *Good Morning America*, October 1. [35]**



Media Hero Award

✓ “I’m honored to be joined today by the Godfather of Green, the King of Conservation: Former Vice President Al Gore.”

— **Katie Couric opening her November 2 “@KatieCouric” CBSNews.com webcast. [69 points]**



Runners-up:

■ “The Thinking Man’s Thinking Man: Al Gore’s New Plan for the Planet.”

— **Cover of the November 9 *Newsweek*. [46]**

■ “This woman has a life story that you couldn’t make up! I mean, you know, she’s born in the public projects, in the shadow of Yankee Stadium, a single-parent household, she goes to a Catholic school, she gets scholarships to the best schools in the country, Princeton and Yale, she overcomes all that while dealing with diabetes all her life, and she is Hispanic....This was the political advisor’s dream candidate.”

— **CBS’s Bob Schieffer during live coverage of Obama’s selection of Judge Sonia Sotomayor for the Supreme Court, May 26. [37]**



■ “Clinton and Gore, back in the international spotlight again. A reminder to some of a different time, almost two decades ago, when the two campaigned across the nation, a Boomer buddy team....Both are now international super-stars, Gore a Nobel laureate. But the homecoming that they engineered together this week has to remain one of their best joint ventures.”

— **NBC’s Andrea Mitchell on *Today*, August 6. [35]**



The Barbra Streisand Political IQ Award for Celebrity Vapidity

✓ **Actor Denis Leary:** “I do have to say that I think that President Obama is the greatest President in the history of all of our Presidents, and that he can do no wrong in my book. So how’s that for prejudice on the Democratic side?” ...

Fill-in host Joy Behar: “What do you think of Obama’s pick of Sotomayor?”

Leary: “Fantastic!”

Behar: “You love her?”

Leary: “Everything you ask me about President Obama I’m just going to say it’s the greatest thing ever. I love the guy!”

— Exchange on CNN’s *Larry King Live*, May 29. [53 points]



Runners-up:

■ “The word, ‘zoo,’ is sort of elephant-speak for Guantanamo. They’re really, they are suffering and being tortured.”

— Actress **Lily Tomlin** at an animal-rights protest in Los Angeles, clip shown on NBC’s *Today*, December 4, 2008. [42]



■ “I have a crush on Jimmy Carter. I admit it. He has an extraordinary mind. He’s an exceptional human being. And he writes poetry, for crying out loud. He’s all good things.”

— Actress **Renee Zellweger**, January 30 *USA Today*. [40]

■ “We’ve lived through a nightmare...in the past eight years...We’re going through something that we haven’t gone through in my life. Foreign policy, domestic policy — driven to its breaking point. Everything got broken. And the philosophy that was at the base of the last administration has ruined many, many people’s lives. The deregulation, the idea of the unfettered, free market, the blind foreign policy. This was a very radical group of people who pushed things in a very radical direction, had great success at moving things in that direction, and we are suffering the consequences.”

— Singer **Bruce Springsteen** in an interview with producer Mark Hagen published January 18 in Britain’s *The Observer*. [37]



- Quote of the Year -

✓ “Mary Jo wasn’t a right-wing talking point or a negative campaign slogan....We don’t know how much Kennedy was affected by her death, or what she’d have thought about arguably being a catalyst for the most successful Senate career in history...[One wonders what] Mary Jo Kopechne would have had to say about Ted’s death, and what she’d have thought of the life and career that are being (rightfully) heralded. Who knows — maybe she’d feel it was worth it.”

— *Discover* magazine deputy web editor **Melissa Lafsky** writing at the *Huffington Post*, August 27.



Runner-up:

■ “Reagan [at the 1984 D-Day commemoration] was all about America, and you talked about it. Obama is, ‘We are above that now. We’re not just parochial, we’re not just chauvinistic, we’re not just provincial. We stand for something.’ I mean, in a way, Obama’s standing above the country, above — above the world. He’s sort of God. He’s going to bring all different sides together.”

— *Newsweek*’s **Evan Thomas** on *MSNBC*’s *Hardball*, June 5.

2009 Award Judges

Lee Anderson, editorial page editor, *Chattanooga Times Free Press*

Chuck Asay, syndicated editorial cartoonist, Creators Syndicate

Brent H. Baker, MRC’s Vice President for Research & Publications;

Editor of *CyberAlert* and MRC’s NewsBusters blog

Mark Belling, radio talk show host, WISN-AM in Milwaukee

Robert Bluey, Director of Online Strategy, the Heritage Foundation

Neal Boortz, nationally syndicated radio talk show host

L. Brent Bozell III, President of the Media Research Center

Priscilla L. Buckley, author; retired senior editor, *National Review*

Blanquita Cullum, President, Cullum Communications, Inc.

Bill Cunningham, radio host, WLW in Cincinnati & Premiere Radio

Midge Decter, author; Heritage Foundation Board of Trustees

Bob Dutko, radio talk show host, WMUZ in Detroit

Erick Erickson, editor of RedState.com

Barry Farber, radio talk show host

Eric Fettmann, associate editorial page editor, *New York Post*

John Fund, “Political Diary” editor for WSJ’s OpinionJournal.com

Tim Graham, Director of Media Analysis, Media Research Center

Steven Greenhut, Pacific Research Institute’s Journalism Center

Lucianne Goldberg, publisher of Lucianne.com

Stephen Hayes, *Weekly Standard* senior writer; FNC contributor

Quin Hillyer, senior editorial writer, *The Washington Times*

Fred Honsberger, radio talk show host, KDKA in Pittsburgh

Mark Hyman, TV commentator, Sinclair Broadcast Group

Jeff Jacoby, columnist for the *Boston Globe*

Cliff Kincaid, Editor, Accuracy in Media

Mark Larson, radio talk show host, KCBQ in San Diego

Mark Levin, nationally syndicated radio talk show host & author

Jason Lewis, syndicated talk show host, Premiere Radio Network

Kathryn Jean Lopez, editor of *National Review Online*

Brian Maloney, radio analyst, creator of The RadioEqualizer blog

Steve Malzberg, radio talk show host, WOR Radio Network

Patrick McGuigan, Editor of Capitol Beat OK (online news service);

senior editor *The City Sentinel*

Vicki McKenna, radio talk show host, WISN and WIBA in Wisconsin

Jan Mickelson, radio talk show host, WHO in Des Moines

Rich Noyes, Director of Research, Media Research Center

Kate O’Beirne, President, the National Review Institute

Marvin Olasky, provost of The Kings College in New York City and

Editor-in-Chief of *World* magazine

Henry Payne, editorial cartoonist and writer, *The Detroit News*

Chris Plante, radio talk show host, WMAL in Washington, D.C.

Wladyslaw Pleszczynski, Editorial Director, *The American Spectator*

Dan Rea, host of *Nightside*, on WBZ Radio in Boston

Chris Reed, editorial writer, *San Diego Union-Tribune*

Mike Rosen, radio host at KOA; columnist for the *Denver Post*

Cal Thomas, syndicated columnist and Fox News contributor

R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr., Editor-in-Chief, *The American Spectator*

Clay Waters, Editor of the MRC’s *TimesWatch.org*

Walter E. Williams, economics professor, George Mason University

Martha Zoller, radio talk show host, Georgia News Network

In Memoriam

During 2009, we lost two dedicated judges who loyally completed their ballots each year. On January 4, Troy University journalism professor **Chris Warden** died at the age of 51. On August 18, nationally-syndicated *Chicago Sun-Times* columnist and longtime friend of the MRC **Robert Novak** passed away at the age of 78.

Notable Quotables

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NEWS ANALYSTS: Geoff Dickens, Brad Wilmoth, Scott Whitlock, Matthew Balan, and Kyle Drennen

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