

## Beware the Cult of Obama

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You've met them. They may be friends of yours, or family members. You may even be one of them (in which case you'll hate this column). I'm referring to those who've heard the Call of Obama.

Tucker Carlson compares it to a dog whistle: Inaudible to most, but irresistible to those who can hear it.

Obama "walks into a room and you want to follow him somewhere, anywhere," George Clooney gushed to Charlie Rose.

"I'll collect paper cups off the ground to make [Obama's] pathway clear," Halle Berry recently told the Philadelphia Daily News, "I'll do whatever he says." (Does Michelle know about this?)

Hollywood stars aren't known for their political wisdom. More disturbing is how starstruck the mainstream media has become. Hardball host Chris Matthews isn't the only one who gets a "thrill" up his leg at the very thought of our new president.

Last summer, San Francisco Chronicle columnist Mark Morford wrote that "Many spiritually advanced people I know ... identify Obama as a Lightworker, that rare kind of attuned being who ... can actually help usher in a new way of being on the planet."

The Politico recently ran a 900-word article entitled "The Power of Obama's Hand," reverentially describing how the president "uses touch to control and console simultaneously," laying hands on supporters and opponents alike.

And in February, author Judith Warner used her New York Times blog to confess that "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."

Instead of keeping that information to herself, Warner "launched an email inquiry," which revealed that "many women—not too surprisingly—were dreaming about sex with the president." Those of us who like to point out that the Emperor has no clothes now have to worry that when we do, we may give rise to a new round of lurid cougar fantasies.

Conservatives like to think they're above this sort of thing. Their attitude is summed up by the subtitle of Jerome Corsi's recent bestseller: Obama Nation: Leftist Politics and the Cult of Personality.

But any conservative who thinks cultishness is exclusively a leftist phenomenon ought to take a good long look in the mirror. Because many of those who decry the "cult of Obama" are the same people who made a flight-suited action figure hero out of such common clay as George W. Bush.

Peggy Noonan called Bush's post-9/11 address to Congress "a God-touched moment and a God-touched speech." Fred Barnes wrote that "the stage was set for Bush to be God's agent of wrath." National Review Online ran ads for the Bush "Top Gun" action figure, and an article about how wonderful it was to have a presidential superhero to complement your GI Joe collection.

On Hardball, after the "Mission Accomplished" speech, G. Gordon Liddy got graphic enough to embarrass Judith Warner: "Here comes George Bush. You know, he's in his flight suit, he's striding across the deck, and he's wearing his parachute harness.... and it makes the best of his manly characteristic... He has just won every woman's vote in the United States of America!"

Presidential cultishness can be found all across the political spectrum. It's a pathology that needs to be rooted out, because when we swoon over the man who holds the office, we risk making the presidency far more powerful than it was ever intended to be.

William Hazlitt, the 19th-century English essayist, argued that man was by nature "a worshipper of idols and a lover of kings." As savages, Hazlitt wrote, we fashioned "gods of wood and stone and brass," but now, thinking ourselves above superstition, "we make kings of common men, and are proud of our own handiwork."

But America's very existence repudiates the idea that we're hard-wired for leader-worship. We became a nation by throwing off a king, and our Founders gave us a Constitution that's based on the notion that all men are flawed and none should be trusted with too much power.

Americans, of all people, should recognize how bizarre and dangerous it is to fawn over professional politicians.

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