

How Obama is just like Reagan

David Bromwich
HuffingtonPost.com

Has President Obama changed his mind about closing Guantánamo? Is he worried about the blowback from the hundreds of civilian deaths inflicted by Predator missile strikes in Pakistan? What does he think about *anything* that's not part of his scripted speeches? There's no way of knowing, because the White House has apparently decided to end the long-standing tradition of presidential press conferences. Obama's last press conference was held in July, when he said, too candidly, that the Cambridge, Mass., police had "acted stupidly" in arresting his friend, Harvard professor Henry Louis Gates Jr. That gaffe became a dominant national story for more than a week, angering a lot of white, middle-class voters. Since then, Obama has given plenty of one-on-one interviews, but has dodged the White House press corps—which asks the sharpest and most uncomfortable questions. Apparently, Obama isn't kidding when he expresses admiration for Ronald Reagan's presidency. Like Reagan's, his administration has been dominated "by simple messages and a flattering emphasis on the personality of the leader"—and a distinct aversion to pointed questions.

Kagan should stonewall the Senate

Stuart Taylor Jr.
TheAtlantic.com

Should Supreme Court nominee Elena Kagan disclose her views on privacy rights, free speech, abortion, and other hot-button constitutional issues? Hell, no, said Stuart Taylor Jr. Both liberals and conservatives are calling on Kagan to break with a long line of nominees who, in Kagan's own words, have provided nothing but meaningless "platitudes" in their Senate confirmation hearings. But Kagan will stonewall, just like her predecessors. "And she should." Any nominee who speaks freely on abortion, or the constitutionality of health-care reform, would immediately be attacked by various special-interest groups, and would likely suffer the same fate as the one recent nominee who *was* candid—Robert Bork, who was voted down in 1987. But the nominees' understandable reticence goes beyond their own political survival. When senators inevitably try to smoke out Kagan on issues likely to come before the court, they'll be seeking "the moral equivalent of campaign promises": If you rule as I wish later, I'll vote for you now. That's a corrupt bargain Kagan has to reject.

Making war on harmless citizens

Radley Balko
Reason.com

The war on drugs has become "all too literal," said Radley Balko. Consider a SWAT team's recent raid on the Columbia, Mo., home of Jonathan Whitworth and Brittany Montgomery and their 7-year-old son—a raid that was captured on video and has drawn more than a million views on YouTube. Looking for "a large supply of marijuana," the police—dressed and equipped for a military encounter—battered down the door and immediately gunned down the family pit bull. A stunned Whitworth was pinned to the ground by shouting SWAT officers, while his son and Montgomery crept by in terror. Whitworth turned out to have only a small, noncriminal amount of marijuana, and paid a \$300 fine. What's most frightening, however, is that this nightmare scenario is not an anomaly. Every day, militarized police units throughout the U.S. conduct about 150 raids—kicking down doors, pointing guns, and terrorizing citizens. When society considers its attempts to suppress consensual drug use as a "war," cops on the front lines "begin to think of themselves as soldiers," and citizens become "enemy combatants" with no rights.

Quote of the week

"[Elena] Kagan's confirmation would give the Ivy League law schools complete hegemony over the Supreme Court. The new lineup of justices would be non-WASP, but they—like President Obama—all would have been trained in the very New England institutions that were established to spread Yankee learning. Students don't just strive to attend Harvard and Yale for their educational excellence. There is also the matter of absorbing those universities' sense of authority, legitimacy, and historical legacy. If Kagan is confirmed, don't cry for the WASPs. The only thing that has changed is that today's WASP elites are just as likely to be Jews and Catholics as they are to be Yankees."

Gregory Rodriguez in the *Los Angeles Times*

It must be true ... I read it in the tabloids

■ A freak gust of wind blew a terrier off the 11th-floor terrace of his owners' Manhattan apartment, but the dog somehow survived the fall. Alfie, a 10-pound toy terrier, was sucked off the terrace by a freak thunderstorm, landing on another building five stories below. He emerged from the ordeal with just cuts and bruises. "It was like *The Wizard of Oz*, and he was Toto," said a neighbor who saw the fluffy dog spinning through the air.

■ Kate Hudson is furious that Cameron Diaz has replaced her as baseball star Alex Rodriguez's blond actress girlfriend, says *Us Weekly*. Hudson believes Diaz is dating the Yankees third baseman as "payback" because Hudson, 31, once dated the 37-year-old Diaz's ex, Justin Timberlake. "Kate thinks Cameron is an aging actress struggling to remain sexy and relevant," a friend of Hudson's said. Diaz, her friends say, thinks Hudson is just bitter that Rodriguez wouldn't marry her. Rodriguez, meanwhile, has told Diaz not to attend Yankees games, so she doesn't become too "clingy," like Hudson.

■ Police in Australia's Northern Territory are on the lookout for a large, male kangaroo that has been harassing human females. One woman reports that the kangaroo approached her at a car race in a state of obvious sexual arousal, and another says that he followed her during her morning walk. "I hastened my steps," said the anonymous woman. "There was no doubt what he wanted, the randy old thing."

