

Obama With an Ugly (Fictional) 'Stache

Depicting the President with a Hitler-stache is all the rage these days. During a recent health insurance forum in Dartmouth, Mass., a young woman asked Congressman Barney Frank why he supported President Barack Obama's proposed "Nazi policy" of universal health care.

"Ma'am," the congressman replied, "trying to have a conversation with you would be like trying to argue with a dining room table." He asked, "On what planet do you spend most of your time?"

Had her mic not been cut off, the young woman might have replied, "Prison Planet" — the name of an anti-Obama website and online community helmed by talk radio host and professional conspiracy theorist Alex

Obama Deception." The premise is that Obama, far from the catalyst for change he claims to be, intends to turn the United States into Nazi Germany and then hand the country over to his puppet-masters.

While the New World Order conspiracy theory is not in itself new, interest in it seems to have spiked since Obama took office.

(Just try typing "Oba" into the Google search bar: "Obama deception" is the fifth suggestion generated.)

In part, this phenomenon is the inevitable result of the democratization of and by the Internet. As computer literacy becomes the norm, society's most deranged are able to form networks with one another and propagate their ideas to a larger audience without censor or a sense of accountability.

And more so than any of his predecessors, Obama is a president the deranged can really seek their teeth into, posing as he does such a tangible threat

to the status quo; and revolutionizing, as he likely will, the ways in which nations interact and co-operate with one another.

In the past month alone Obama has cancelled proposed Cold War-esque missile sites in Poland and Ukraine, convinced Russia and China to support a resolution to strengthen the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and pledged before the United Nations General Assembly to begin a new era of U.S. engagement with the world.

His unparalleled ability to reconcile opposing beliefs — or at least to inspire hope that reconciliation is possible, which in itself is powerful — was acknowledged by former Republican secretary of state, lifelong conser-

vative and Obama supporter Colin Powell when he stated, "[Obama] is a transformational figure. He is a new generation coming into the world [and] onto the world stage."

Because his appeal crosses so many borders, both political and ideological, Barack Obama is in many ways the first global president.

The paradigm has shifted: the GOP is no longer relevant and, as The New York Times columnist David Brooks pointed out earlier this week, the Democrat vs. Republican archetype is now an "obsolete culture war."

Put simply, the next cultural war will be fought between those who embrace progress and those who oppose it.

It is only fitting that Jones emerges as one of the loudest rallying criers against Obama; he seems not only opposed to progress, but altogether incapable of it.

During a particularly fiery rant on his show Jones told his listeners, "I want you to rise up and get fired up. And get angry. And just start grinding your teeth. And just get mentally ready ... 'cause if they keep pushing we're gonna take 'em. And I mean take 'em savage. I mean run 'em down. I mean take their heads and just ram them into the concrete."

Were it not for the fact that he holds considerable sway over the emerging anti-Obama, anti-progress, anti-logic movement in the United States, Jones wouldn't be worthy of notice.

But with Rush Limbaugh and Glenn Beck now representing mainstream conservatism in America, Alex Jones has become the new poster boy for the lunatic fringe.

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Jones.

For those unfamiliar with Jones, he is essentially Rush Limbaugh meets Michael Moore meets disheveled man shouting obscenities on the street corner. His claim to fame is his role in galvanizing the 9/11 "truthers" — a fringe group that believes the twin towers were brought down in a controlled demolition orchestrated by "foreign bankers" in order to scare Americans into giving up their civil liberties (and firearms) so that they will be defenseless when the New World Order emerges and enslaves everybody.

Jones' latest effort, a feature-length, straight-to-YouTube release that has racked up a staggering 3.75 million views over the past six months, is called "The

Sucks to Be Tim Tebow

He just didn't see it coming. As University of Florida hero and legend Tim Tebow looked for the open man, Kentucky's defensive end blind-sided him, knocking Tebow to the ground in an oh-that's-gotta-hurt kind of way. To make matters worse, as the 2007 Heisman winner fell from grace, the back of his helmet slammed into the knee of his own offensive lineman, Marcus Gilbert. Tebow lay motionless for more than a few seconds, and the 70,000 plus faithful of Gator Nation fell silent. As the American hero was finally carted off the field, the TV cameras captured him heaving his breakfast into a bag. But not to worry, Gator faithful, Tebow's concussion shouldn't keep him out too long, and he'll probably be back for Florida's next big game.

It's pretty clear why many talented athletes leave college after one or two years for the pros. College football can be as hard hitting as the real thing, or at least hard enough to cause serious and permanent injury. When players sign on to big NFL contracts, they are usually guaranteed some sum of money that exceeds a million dollars, regardless of whether they tear their ACL in the first game of the season. But in college, a bright young star with professional prospects and a potentially multi-million dollar career in front of him can lose it all in the blink of an eye. No wonder we applaud a star like Tebow who chooses to stay in school through his senior year.

Schools profit off their athletes, but do these athletes really benefit from their schools? It might appear that college football is a two-way street — universities get publicity and millions of dollars in advertising revenue from just one segment of their athletics program. Although players

don't receive seven figure salaries as undergraduates, colleges surely pave the way for many players to make it in the big league. And being treated like a god on campus can't hurt either (Colt McCoy used to have co-eds camping outside his dorm room to



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try and get some one on one time with the Texas stud). If you take a closer look, however, this façade of a mutually beneficial relationship crumbles to pieces.

Out of the more than 9,000 collegiate football players, less than two and a half percent of them ever make it to the NFL. Many players spend years traveling week-end after week-end, staying at shitty motels and struggling to keep up with their school work because they hope that one day they might get drafted. But most of them don't. Even a Heisman winner like Tebow doesn't necessarily fit into the mold of an NFL quarterback and knows that stardom is far from assured (he is viewed as a late first round pick by most sports analysts).

As for the benefits of popularity as an undergraduate, according to former Notre Dame football captain and author of several books on college ball Michael Oriard, "It's the downside of celebrity without the upside of it." Many athletes receive Paris Hilton-like scrutiny of their private lives, without getting many of the financial lux-

uries that usually accompany such fame. While football players risk their necks for their alma mater, they are limited by the NCAA from signing any sort of endorsement deals that would provide them a fraction of the millions of dollars they gener-

ate. It is true that players at football powerhouses like Florida, USC and Ohio State receive large scholarships and an education to boot for their talents on the field. But no matter how many commercials praise the scholar athletes at our universities, playing football for a powerhouse can be a full time endeavor. In fact, many top universities offer a pamphlet of "suggested courses" for players that don't have time for a full load of course work. Very few are lucky enough to leave a University unscathed and on the path towards a career in the NFL — but even the best have found themselves unprepared for the dark future ahead.

Football continually evolves to become a more and more brutal sport. Rules have been altered to protect the quarterback, and punish certain types of tackles that put players at higher risk. But with better training and steroids, players are getting bigger, faster and hitting harder. These changes filter down from the NFL all the way to Pee Wee football. The NFL has

been unwilling to risk damaging their multi-billion dollar industry by acknowledging such risks until they released a study on cognitive decline of retired players just last Tuesday. Recent studies have detailed several stories of Hall of Famers who went crazy, became homeless and committed suicide by shooting themselves and drinking anti-freeze, all before they hit 50. So is there any way to fix a system that's clearly broken?

The short answer is yes, and the longer answer is yes and it won't happen. First of all, the NFL (and the NCAA) should do away with head-to-head contact of linebackers, as many experts have suggested. The game would be much less punishing if 300 pound plus mountains of men started from a squatting position rather than slamming headfirst into each other play after play. Second, concussions need to be taken far more seriously. Head trauma doesn't just make you forget whether you ate Special K or Wheaties for breakfast — it does serious and long-term damage to the most important organ in your body. Helmets can't protect your brain against bouncing around in your skull — yet as long as they can walk and talk and tackle, players are hastily thrown back into games without a more thorough examination of their well being. Schools need to stop worrying about their BCS prospects and care a little bit more about the young men who put their health on the line for the love of the game and little else.

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