

Visual Popular Culture and Political Power



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1. Introduction

The use of vehicles of popular culture to convey political messages is no monopoly of the U.S. political discourse. Neither is it a novelty of the 21st century. The national-socialist regime dedicated a ministry to this endeavor. They explored the use of audiovisual narrative to cement the simple ideas of their doctrine and exploit it in a systematic way. Cinema became one of the most effective aids of the regime. Stars and dramas provided a great tool of mass persuasion. In the communist Russia, cinema also became only means of ideological propaganda. In Russia, the identification of Cinema and propaganda led to a dead end that threatened to exterminate popular culture. It became too obvious, and when the regime lost the power that flows from opinion, the ideological content of the audiovisual products became the opposite of popular culture. In democratic America, a country that guarantees individual rights and idolizes freedom of speech, ideological propaganda needed to become much more subtle. On the long run, subtlety proved to be much more effective as well.

That power flows from public opinion is a truth that we know since Plato. In his controversy with the sophist Gorgias, Plato (302) stated that those who strive after political power would end up becoming slaves of public opinion. This truth, that seems obvious in democratic systems, also applies, according to David Hume (29), to despotic regimes and tyrannies. In the U.S., popular culture flourished during the 20th century, becoming probably the world reference in music and audiovisual products. And as this field grew, political actors became

aware of the potential to use them as a vehicle for ideological and political messages.

2. F. D. Roosevelt

World War I served as laboratory to start studying the instrumental use of communication as a means of mass persuasion. President Woodrow Wilson created the Committee for Public Information with the objective of molding and mobilizing public opinion. This committee had to persuade an extremely heterogeneous population of the importance of making the world safe for democracy. Not without reason, some of the members of that committee became later relevant figures in the professional field of public relations, such as Edward L. Bernays and Carl R. Byoir, or prominent scholars in communication sciences, like Harold Laswell.

When F. D. Roosevelt took office in 1933, there had been an intensive research in behavioral, psychological, and social sciences to understand how persuasion works and to improve communicative strategies with this goal. Still, Roosevelt's presidency established a milestone in the history of strategic communication. He was ahead of predecessors and rivals. President Roosevelt, who actually came from a rather aristocratic family, developed a charismatic personality that allowed him to connect with the plain people of the street. He developed the talent to appear to be "one of them" (Ewen, 249). His personal magnetism was, in an important part, a media construction. The demolishing work of the muckraking press had showed very clear to the political and economic elites the importance of the support of public opinion – if it was not clear enough yet.¹

But besides *the people*, the president identified a second target audience that needed to be addressed in a different way: the press. The White House stopped treating journalists as "muckrakers". Aware of the importance of

gatekeepers in the communication flow and of the potential impact of the press on the dynamics of public opinion, President Roosevelt's administration contributed to lift the status of the members of the press. Winfield describes the revolutionary protocol created for this professional group. For the first time, journalists were treated with a respect normally reserved to other professions. Roosevelt interacted with them during amiable press conferences, a public relations practice never seen before in the White House. Journalists were also invited to official reception and dinners (Winfield, 59). It is significant that in the first issue of the legendary journal *Public Opinion Quarterly*, one of the articles is about the way President Roosevelt dealt with the press: *President Roosevelt and the Washington Correspondents* (Rosten, 37-48).

2.1 The Great Depression and the New Deal

The Great Depression was not the rosier historical scenario for a successful presidency. Economic crises make difficult for political actors to gain the favor of a suffering public. After several years of steady and increasing economic prosperity, the American public discovered and suffered weaknesses in the system. Since the fateful Monday in October 1929, the country was in a situation of dramatic decline. The unemployment rose to 23% and millions of Americans lost their jobs and even their homes. President Roosevelt faced this devastating landscape and fought the depression with his legendary policy: the New Deal.

New Deal theorists blamed the abusive practices of industry, businesses and banks for the economic catastrophe. Thus, the strongest urge of the administration was to regulate all areas of economic activity. Such economic philosophy explains the Trade Agreement Act of 1934, the Social Security Act of 1935, the Banking Act of 1935, as well as the creation of the Federal Deposit Insurance in 1933, the same year the United States abandoned the Gold Standard. The New Deal regulated labor, instituting a minimum wage and

limiting the workweek to 40 hours. The increased weight on regulation, something that was in clear contradiction with the original spirit of the American nation, also reflected on the growth in employment for the government.²

While there is no agreement among economists when it comes to assess the actual contribution of the New Deal to restore the U.S. economy, no one questions the effectiveness of the communication strategies to sell the New Deal to the American public opinion.

2.2 Selling the New Deal

Roosevelt was the first president to introduce the figure of the Press Secretary in the presidential staff, and Stephen Early became the President's public relations man, working closely with two communication experts: Louis Howe and Marvin McIntyre. Howe was in charge of scrutinizing the daily press and keeping informed the president of the issues that dominate the press coverage and the position of the different editorials and opinion leaders. The so-called Howe's Daily Bugle was an essential part of the president's breakfast (Steele, 9). McIntyre who had worked for many years as the city editor for *The Washington Times*, was one of the pioneers who served during World War I in the Committee for Public Information. Stephen Early, Roosevelt's press secretary, used his deep knowledge of the hidden mechanisms of the editorial world to establish solid relationships with the press. Thus, McIntyre became one of the columns of the PR team of the president (Steele, 9f).

The public relations staff of president Roosevelt was aware of the power and public impact of the traditional press, but they did not limit their efforts to this channel. They were constantly scanning new ways to reach the public. Radio was in the rise during the 1930s. Its power and spreading speed made it comparable to what Internet is now. The new channel became soon one of the most effective and influential channels to reach mass audiences. The president

was aware from the very beginning of the potential of the new mainstream channel and used his personal contacts to have access to the most important radio networks. His friend Henry Bellow, a former fellow student at Harvard, was the head of CBS's Washington Bureau. Roosevelt's PR staff had also excellent contacts to the second main network in the U.S., the NBC. The chief correspondent of this network in Washington was George Holmes, brother in law of the press secretary of the U. S. government (Ewen, 251).

Stuart Ewen also points at the vulnerability of radio to governmental control. The First Amendment had been protecting print journalism from this control since the very birth of the nation. Appealing to the "public interest", the government started a series of educational programs in order to enlighten the population about the benefits of the New Deal (Ewen, 252). The legendary "Fireside Chats" were the highlight of this governmental intervention. The most important networks in the country delivered 31 presidential speeches. The power of the new channel made possible that, for the first time, a president of the U.S. was talking directly to the people. And he addressed the whole nation in a language that was accessible to everyone. The Fireside Chats became an immediate success. The American public loved to be addressed in that particular way. Listening to those speeches on the radio created a paradoxical sense of intimacy, since the messages were delivered to millions of citizens at the same time.³

The Fireside Chats were more than public education or enlightenment. Their goal was not only to inform the public about the New Deal policy. On the contrary, they carried a strong ideological load. Roosevelt blamed the economic elites of the country for the crisis, heartless corporations that did not hesitate to sacrifice the well being of the broad population to maximize their benefits. In many regards, the content of the speeches reminds us of the aggressive discourse of the muckrakers. Roosevelt also stressed the priority of the "greater

good”, or the “greater number”, over particular interests. The “benefit of the American people” was at the heart of all the governmental endeavors to defeat the crisis. Ewen points at the ability of the president’s communication team to escape from the shadow of socialism. To avoid this public perception, the President referred in his chats constantly to the traditional (although vaguely defined) American values “that had gotten lost amid an inferno of commercialism” (Ewen, 259). Obviously, presenting the New Deal – and himself – as the savior of American values and people, as the messiah of the greater number, the champion of the common good.

2.3 Faces for the Crisis

The ideological strategy of the New Deal was meticulously designed and inspired the content of the presidential messages. Radio proved to be an effective and manageable channel to reach mass audiences. Still, the communication endeavors lacked the aid of the most powerful tool in popular culture: the image.

The PR team of president Roosevelt found a venue to provide the New Deal guiding message with a series of impacting images that cemented the ideological building. In 1937, the Farm Security Administration was created with the explicit goal of improving the life conditions of the American farmers in the most depressed regions of the United States. It replaced the Resettlement Administration that was lead by Rexford G. Tugwell, professor of Economics and one of the ideologues behind the New Deal concept. Still, the actual goal of the celebrated FSA was not so much to aid farmers in distress as to support the propaganda efforts of the New Deal. Michael Carlebach sees clear that the agency was “conceived as a means of illustrating the necessity and effectiveness of New Deal agricultural programs” (Carlebach, 10).

The main contribution of the FSA to the ideological cause of the New Deal

was the famous series of photographs that were published with the slogan created by Roy Stryker, chief of the information division of the FSA: “introducing America to the Americans”. The FSA assembled a team of excellent photographers that went all through the country gathering visual testimonies of the misery that had been growing in the deepest America. Actually, Roosevelt’s administration was following the lead of Lewis Hine, who was a forerunner using photography to denounce social injustice. Most of the photographers working for the FSA became legends in the field. The names of Dorothea Lange, Walter Evans, or Arthur Rothstein are regarded now as pioneers in a new art form: documentary photography. Even if the photographers of the FSA “were warned repeatedly not to manipulate their subjects in order to get more dramatic images”, as Carlebach recalls, they did in fact try some effects when they saw the opportunity to make the documents more dramatic (20). To this end, increasing the dramatic power of the images, the use of a sober black-and-white, had also advantages over the color.

The Depression got no one, but multiple faces that gave testimony of the misery of a significant part of the American population, on the one hand. On the other hand, the documentary photographers were able to portray such misery with the deepest dignity, which made the documents perfect tools for spreading the New Deal message.

Still, the pictures did not remain in the archives of the FSA buildings. They needed the strongest exposure to be effective. James Curtis reports the first time that the FSA pictures reached a broad public. It happened during the First International Exposition of Photography that was organized in the Grand Central Place in New York. The highlight of the program was the FSA theme “How American People Live”. The show, according to Curtis, was an extraordinary success and the origin of a strong opinion stream. The pictures of suffering Americans appeared everywhere: in Post offices, public libraries, schools,

museums, universities, etc. (Curtis, 5). They were also used by mainstream media and originated stories in magazines that were very popular among the middle class, the target audience for most of Roosevelt's communication efforts.⁴

A moment in the film *Sullivan's Travel*, directed by Preston Sturges and released in 1941, gives testimony of the presence of the FSA photographers in the middle of America's agony. When the wealthy Sullivan is wandering through the desolation of one the numerous homeless camps that appear in the movie, the camera shows a camouflaged photographer collecting visual testimonies of the everyday life of those who most suffered the depression.

Sullivan is a successful filmmaker who decides that movies should also become a channel to denounce the miserable life condition of his fellow Americans. Several real film directors, feeling the same way, decided to follow Sullivan's example. They decided to support the plan of Roosevelt's administration, and consciously or unconsciously, intentionally or unintentionally, backed the ideological agenda of the president with their movies. The machinery of manufacturing popular culture was working full speed at the service of the cause. Preston Sturges's masterpiece is, in a light comedy tone, a good example of this trend in Hollywood. Frank Capra, another comedian, used his pet actor Jimmy Stewart to portray the simple minded, and not especially bright American, who embodied the whole corpus of traditional values of the nation, the same values that were behind the New Deal. *Mr. Deed Goes to Town* (1936), *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939), and *Meet John Doe* (1941, this time starring Gary Cooper) are the essentials in Capra's New Deal package.

Much more in consonance with the visual style of the FSA pictures, John Ford filmed in 1940 John Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath*. The drama of the *okies*, farmers from the south and central states most affected by the depression that needed to leave their homes and migrated to other areas of the country in a

desperate search for work, was also a frequent motive of the FSA pictures.

2.4 Visual Communication in Time of War

The experience with the New Deal strategies prepared Roosevelt very well for his new communication challenge: Making the American population ready for War World II. One of the most effective communication strategies during World War II was the so-called Four Freedoms campaign. It is also the ideal example to understand how the Roosevelt's administration used visual popular culture to support political and ideological agendas.

The first time Roosevelt referred to the *freedom of speech*, the *freedom from want*, the *freedom of worship* and the *freedom from fear*, the four chapters of the legendary series, was in June 1941, on occasion of the 77th presidential address to the congress of the United States. In 1942, the Office of War Information released a booklet entitled *The United Nations' Fight for the Four Freedoms: The Roots of All Men Everywhere*. The document was written in a clean, dynamic and passionate style. The contents were carefully thought through and ordered to appeal to the deepest feelings of the citizenship and incite reflection.

However, the Four Freedoms booklet was hardly effective because few people actually read it. The ideological content needed the aid of powerful images. No one was better suited for the job than Norman Rockwell, the most effective manufacturer of popular icons at the time. Rockwell's series of the Four Freedoms first appeared published in the *Saturday Evening Post*. Ben Hibbs, the chief editor of the Post, had been working with Rockwell for several years and knew his talent perfectly. He immediately recognized the potential of the idea. The *Saturday Evening Post* finally ran the pictures, which appeared in four consecutive editions of the magazine on February and March 1943. Hibbs pointed out how perfect the timing was: "they appeared right a time when the

war was going against us on the battle fronts, and the American people needed the inspirational message which they conveyed so forcefully and so beautiful” (Rockwell³³⁶).

For almost a year (April 28th, 1943, to March 8th, 1944), Rockwell’s pictures circulated through 16 major cities across the country in an intensive War Loan Drive. Always around the pictures and the idea of the Four Freedoms, the cities organized rallies, parades, workshops, raffles, performances and exhibits. Show business celebrities and community leaders usually hosted the events. Popular war heroes were invited, as well. The outcomes of the drive were spectacular.⁵

3. Barack H. Obama

With the turn of the century, the figure of Franklin D. Roosevelt’s figure has risen to colossal proportions, a larger than life figure, and the embodiment of the American spirit. The economic difficulties that America, and the rest of the world, face today resemble those faced by FDR and his administration. And perhaps that explains why no other President in recent US history has come so close in terms of image as the 44rd President, Barack Hussein Obama. His recent victory in the 2012 elections, and the distance from his direct rival, Mitt Romney were clear indicators that his popularity as President was still intact.

This comparison can be based upon examination of three elements paralleled by both presidents: the historical circumstances, with a financial crisis, political and social turmoil, the savvy use of avant-garde communication techniques (Social Media was for Obama what radio was for FDR), and finally, a superb use of visual imagery and popular culture.

The first element in common is the financial, political and social situation. Previous to the arrival of FDR to the White house, America had experience an unprecedented growth for two decades. The now called roaring twenties had brought industrial growth, employment, a war that was successfully won, and

more importantly, an spectacular increase in cultural production (essential to the field of communication), with the birth of the movie industry, the explosion of radio and the constant growth of magazines. We have reviewed FDR's policies and strategies, but it is important to remember his main legacy: the idea of sense, hope and resilience in the face of adversity.

Similarly, when Obama became the 44th President in 2008, the country was waking up from the growth and technological revolution of the 1990s with the growth of Internet and Social Media, and was facing a collapsed house market that would soon double the relatively low unemployment rate of 2008 (5,6%) to a 9,6% in 2010. Following Roosevelt's example, Obama ran his campaign not only on specific measures, but also on larger-than-life concepts. On his final rally in Virginia, November 3rd 2008, the night before the election, he declared: "I come away with an unyielding belief that if we only had a government as responsible as all of you, as compassionate as the American people, that there is no obstacle that we can't overcome. There is no destiny that we cannot fulfill".⁶ As FDR, Obama used his personal magnetism and his ability to speak to the average American and connect on the level of struggle, hard work and overcoming difficulties.

The second parallelism and most crucial to our field of interest, is the use of mass media and communication tools to deliver the messages. We have explored how Roosevelt became a pioneering figure in political communication by exploiting the potential of radio, visual image with photography and visual narrative with the film industry. Similarly, Barack Obama had a clear strategy focused on Social Media. His explosive rise to the national scene is now explained in part because his intelligent use of new technologies and Social Media tools such as Facebook, Twitter and Youtube.

Obama clearly understood that the demographics of 2008 demanded a different approach to traditional political campaigns. He decided to spend more

effort in reaching the younger generations through Social Media than the traditional crowds using more conventional methods (fundraising events and similar options – precisely what McCain did). His website, created by Chris Hughes, one of the founders of Facebook, played a crucial role in the campaign. As Hughes himself declared: “Online technology is at a place now that is pretty significantly different from where it was in 2004. I felt that if it was used well, and keyed to campaign goals of fundraising, and bringing people into the campaign, and bringing people to the polls to the vote, that it could make a significant difference” (qtd in Levin).⁷ Internet became an essential element in the campaign, not just to send the messages out, but to organize his supporters in a way that would have been much more costly and time-consuming on the ground. As Arianna Huffington, editor in chief of The Huffington Post clearly stated: “Were it not for the Internet, Barack Obama would not be president. Were it not for the Internet, Barack Obama would not have been the nominee”.⁸

If Facebook⁹ was the most important tool in the 2008 campaign, Twitter became his strategic weapon in 2012. Reaching over 27 million followers,¹⁰ Obama had clearly understood the importance of Social Media for a specific demographic. According to a Pew Research study, Obama was clearly more active than Romney on the 2012 election, sending more messages across platforms, posting more often on Facebook, tweeting sometimes thirty times more frequently than Romney, and dedicating less time on issues centered around economy. The research also shows that Social Media was the conduct for the main outlet, the website barackobama.com, where Obama again mastered the crowds and effectively reached out to his audience.

The last element in our comparison is the use of visual culture. As we have seen, Franklin D. Roosevelt embraced the power of images and relied on them. Obama also immediately understood the underlying mechanisms of popular culture. He knew that more Americans rely on television shows than political

ones. He conquered the sympathy of key figures in television (Winfrey, Stewart, Cooper) that proved to be essential in creating his public image. His appearances have been multiple and consciously designed to present him as a simple, easy going, and down to earth person. Therefore, he makes sure he is present where his demographic target is watching.¹¹

One of the more relevant cases that proves Obama's capacity to permeate media with his message was Chrysler's "It's Half time in America" Super Bowl 2012 Advertisement.¹² Created by ad agency Weiden + Kennedy and directed by David Gordon, it narrates the sunset of a new day in the country and relies on a discourse heavily related to Obama's (and FDR) social rhetoric: It's halftime and it's time to think how can we "win this game in the second half". From there the story takes the viewers to cities, country roads, small town America, rivers, porches, schools, and factories, while the narrator takes time to explain the dire economic situation of the country.

Republicans immediately up roared in anger, drawing the parallel of the half time of the game and the upcoming elections in November. Perhaps the most important reaction was Karl Rove's interview on Fox news when he declared to be disgusted by the ad and drew a direct relation between Obama's bailout of the automobile industry and this ad, famously quoting a rather Democrat argument: "This is a sign of what happens when you have the government getting in bed with big business like the bailout of the auto companies".¹³

However, we must note that one of the main elements of the narration is the narrator himself, Clint Eastwood. The director brings his presence, persona and aura to provide the backbone of the discourse of the speech. Eastwood is a well-respected figure in American popular culture. From the Western movies of the sixties to the Dirty Harry detective series of the seventies, Eastwood carved a reputation of a tough, resistant and decided hero. Never politically correct,

sometimes on the edge between good and bad, controversial in his views. His more recent filmography has explored deeply social issues, from euthanasia (*Million Dollar Baby*), to racism (*Grand Torino*). But he is also a well-known conservative, involved in politics (he was mayor of his adopted hometown of Carmel, California, from 1986 to 1988) although he has often placed himself somewhere between partisan lines: a conservative supporting choice in abortion, gun control and same sex-marriage, while voting and endorsing Republican candidates since 1952.

The two-minute spot features a powerful narrative style, with a smart use of color, a somber use of music, and a powerful text. Color is used to separate the three elements of the narrative. Eastwood is portrayed in a very dark environment, with blue lights on the background. The images during the commercial appear to have a rather colorful tone. Darkness marks the beginning and the end of the narrative, as we see Eastwood bathed in a stadium-blue light, but the sun is the central element of lightning in the commercial. All the urban scenes are bathed by a striking sunlight.

The soundtrack of the commercial is designed to turn the viewer to the images. The theme was composed, played, produced and recorded by The University of Oregon's School of Music and Dance,¹⁴ plays a discrete yet interesting role in the commercial. There is a background theme playing all throughout the scenes, a beautiful slow tune played by horns and organ. Its quietness evolves into a crescendo as the narrative of the story reaches its climax.

The real keystone element of the advertisement is the text, written by 36-year-old poet from Portland, Oregon, Matthew Dickman and then reviewed by the Director at the agency and by Eastwood himself.¹⁵ The first half of the commercial deals with the uncertainties and insecurities of the situation: We are all hurting, scared, wondering what to do next.

Then on 28" the narrative focuses on one particular place: Detroit, Michigan. The State flag waves, we see a bit of the abandoned city, its workers inside the factories, while the voice-off sets Detroit as the example to follow in a three-step sequence: we almost lost everything, but we pulled together, and now we are ready to fight.

Next we come back to Eastwood's concerned face. This part of the narrative takes us to a more personal level. Eastwood has seen difficult times, we are told. The images turn to protests, angry television commentators and empty industrial areas.

Then we see a series of black and white portraits of individuals and families staring straight to the camera: a young couple, a white family, a mother holding a daughter, two firemen. The screen fades to black between this set of pictures, and the narrator tells us that after the trouble, people got together and "rallied back".

Then life gets back to normal. We see a black suburban father dropping off his kid to school. There are workers on a construction site, people driving to work, cars being made, and a bright sun shining again on a new day. The voice-off asks us how is this possible? How do we get together? Detroit is the example. "What is true about them is true about the rest of us". The camera fades to black and on the last portion of the screen, we see an extreme close-up of Eastwood rallying the troops: "It's halftime in America. And our second half is about to begin".

A thorough analysis of the two-minute commercial offers light on the variety of characters populating the commercial. We could argue that we have two categories of characters: explicit and symbolic. By explicit we mean human beings portrayed in different situations, mostly quiet, portrayed in their everyday lives, as they wake up, go to school and drive thoughtfully around empty cities. By symbolic we understand items such as cars, cities, American flags and even

the sun. The narrative of the commercial mixes these two all throughout the duration. We meet a total of forty-eight characters, one almost one every two seconds. There are some elements that connect them: the sun, the road, and the silhouettes. As for the physical presence of those characters, there are a few common characteristics across the narrative. First, there is the silence. Apart from Eastwood himself, we don't hear anything from the characters. They remain, reflective, serious, concentrated. A man buries his head in his hands when he wakes up, young mother and daughter stare cold at the camera, a girl looks out of a window of the car as the wind blows her blond hair. Most of the time they don't interact with the viewer. They just stare at you.

4. Conclusion

Popular culture is the most effective tool to achieve and maintain political power. Franklin Delano Roosevelt was a pioneer in the understanding and use of popular culture. He was able to build a positive image in the most adverse circumstances: an unprecedented economic crisis and a world war. FDR was a precursor in the use of the *Avant-garde* communication channels, and realized the potential of visual communication. Following his example, Barack Obama also used popular culture paraphernalia to spread his message, using a witty strategy to promote his persona and political agenda through the newest technology.

¹ The legendary expression of the magnate of the Railroad Cornelius Vandervilt, "the public be damned", belonged to the past. The public was, as Stuart Ewen put it, "in the saddle". In spite of that, the presidents of the U.S. had been reluctant to lower themselves to the level of the people. Roosevelt change that dynamic for good (Kunczik, 89).

² The number of people working for the federal administration practically doubled in the first 5 years of Roosevelt's presidency.

³ According to Winfield, Roosevelt's chats were so remarkable because of their carefully constructed spontaneity. A team of PR experts drafted the speeches, which were later revised and refined by Robert Sherwood, one of the most popular playwrights at the time. In spite of such sophisticated manufacturing process, or perhaps because of it, the messages flew smoothly and unaffectedly. The chats conveyed the image of an unpretentious and genuine president (Winfield, 106)

⁴ Regularly, and, as Ewen states, often without credits the pictures of the FSA appeared in *Time*, *Life*, *Newsweek*, *Look*, *Saturday Evening Post*, *Survey Graphic*, *Colliers*, *McCall's*, *Fortune*, *Nation's Business*, *Today*, *Literary Digest*, and *Current History*. Of course, all the newspapers around the country published the photos (Ewen, 285).

⁵ More than 1,220,000 people bought war bonds. The final collection added up to \$132, 882, 593 (Murray and McCabe, 87).

⁶ <<http://obamaspeeches.com/E-Barack-Obama-Speech-Manassas-Virgina-Last-Rally-2008-Election.htm>>

⁷ <<http://www.podcastingnews.com/content/2008/06/is-social-media-behind-barack-obamas-success/>>

⁸ <<http://bits.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/11/07/how-obamas-internet-campaign-changed-politics/>>

⁹ Obama is also doing well on Facebook. As of February 2013, he has over 35 million followers, mostly 18-24 urbanites, according to Facebook statistics. <<https://www.facebook.com/barackobama/likes>>

¹⁰ Obama grows at an astonishing 27,000 followers per day. He now ranks number 5 in number of followers, only behind Justin Bieber, Lady Gaga, Kate Perry and Rihanna. Romney has 1,6 million followers. Statistics according to <<http://twittercounter.com/BarackObama>>.

¹¹ From singing to Al Green on stage after a fundraising event in Harlem, or joining B.B. King and Mick Jagger on the White House, to discussing his weight with late-night superstar Dave Letterman or slow jamming the news with Jimmy Fallon. There are plenty of examples of Obama's savvy media presence.

¹² <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PE5V4Uzobc>>

¹³ <<http://campaignstops.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/02/06/its-halftime-in-america/>>

¹⁴ The music was, by a group of musicians including professor of horn Lydia Van Dreel. And was mixed and produced by UO School of Music and Dance alumnus Collin Hegna.

¹⁵ See full script of the commercial and a close examination of the language used on the following site: <<http://mannerofspeaking.org/2012/02/07/its-halftime-in-america-an-analysis/>>

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