

WHY WASN'T THE GUY WHOSE DADDY WANTED TO "CUT HIS NUTS OFF" ACCEPTABLE TO OBAMA?

There was a significant detail in the Trib's Rahm-talking-to-Blago story. The story lists who Obama considered acceptable candidates to replace him in the Senate.

Another source said that contact between the Obama camp and the governor's administration regarding the Senate seat began the Saturday before the Nov. 4 election, when Emanuel made a call to the cell phone of Harris. The conversation took place around the same time press reports surfaced about Emanuel being approached about taking the high-level White House post should Obama win.

Emanuel delivered a list of candidates who would be "acceptable" to Obama, the source said. On the list were Obama adviser Valerie Jarrett, Illinois Veterans Affairs director Tammy Duckworth, state Comptroller Dan Hynes and U.S. Rep. Jan Schakowsky of Chicago, the source said. All are Democrats.

Sometime after the election, Emanuel called Harris back to add the name of Democratic Atty. Gen. Lisa Madigan to the approved list, the source said.

Note who is missing from this list?

Obama national campaign co-chair, Jesse Jackson Jr.

There are a lot of reasons why Obama may not

have favored JJJ replacing him in the Senate—including JJJ's own statements that broke Obama's "no drama Obama" campaign rule.

A contributing factor, though, may be that JJJ's father was publicly taped threatening to cut Obama's nuts off.

I raise this not to talk about the President-elect's nuts, but to point to an underlying (and potentially explicit) tension in Blago's efforts to sell Obama's senate seat. JJJ's fundraiser Raghuveer Nayak may have approached Blago about the seat on October 31. Then, just one day later, Rahm apparently called John Harris and told him that Obama did not want JJJ to replace him in the Senate.

Recall, too, the reference to Obama that JJJ made in his press conference on the Senate seat.

But watching the president-elect carry himself in such an extraordinary way across this country to build bridges that had never been built in this country, even I had become inspired.

And so somewhere along the way, over the last two and a half years, I got the idea that if a skinny kid with a funny name could be president of the United States, that a short kid with a somewhat controversial but certainly a high profile name could be a senator from Illinois.

JJJ delivered that "even I" with pointed emphasis, almost bitterness.

All of this may have added to the attraction—to Blago—of picking JJJ. After Obama's team rejected his demands, after all, he then turned to a candidate that neither of them seems to have favored for the position (which, of course, certainly makes the alleged \$1.5 million price tag on the seat more damning). Also, this may be one of the reasons Jesse Sr. may have gotten involved in negotiations over the seat; if his

incendiary comments screwed up his son's chances to get the seat, he may have wanted to make up for that.

One weedy detail: Note that the first contact between Rahm and Harris was to the latter's cell phone, not a land line. That may mean that particular call was not picked up by the taps, unless Harris was sitting in one of Blago's offices that were bugged, and that this detail comes from information offered to Fitz's team. Which supports the possibility that some of these leaks are an attempt on Rahm's part to pre-empt the public release of this information.