

# **CONFERRING IMMUNITY FROM JUSTICE, BARACK OBAMA BECOMES “THE GREAT VACCINATOR”**

Ronald Reagan was The Great Communicator. Lyndon Johnson's anti-poverty efforts were aimed at realizing The Great Society. Barack Obama's presidency is moving toward greatness, as well, but not in a good way. At seemingly every turn, Obama has made sure that major crimes are met not with justice but with immunity. Obama has conferred so much immunity on so many different groups that he has earned the title “The Great Vaccinator”.

Ironically, even Obama's major “success”, the killing of Osama bin Laden, is marred by an illegal act that this time is mingled with biological rather than legal immunity. It appears that Pakistani doctor Shakil Afridi, working with the CIA, pretended to be carrying out a house-to-house vaccination program so that he could gather intelligence on who was residing in the compound where bin Laden was found. This short-sighted action by the CIA has now put public vaccination programs in a very bad light and set back vaccination programs in impoverished countries significantly.

Even before becoming President, Obama began his quest of conferring immunity wherever justice is demanded. Once he had the Democratic nomination in his pocket, Obama abandoned the principled stand he took during the primaries (when he said he would filibuster any bill with retroactive immunity and would vote against it) and voted along with all Senate Republicans for cloture and then in favor of the bill that conferred retroactive immunity on the telecommunications companies that illegally wiretapped citizens without warrants.

After he won the election but prior to taking

office, Obama then began his quest to confer immunity for one of the most egregious crimes committed by our country, the institutionalization of torture as a major tool in the "War on Terror". As ABC published on January 11, 2009, Obama famously told George Stephanopoulos "we need to look forward":

PRESIDENT-ELECT BARACK OBAMA: "We're still evaluating how we're going to approach the whole issue of interrogations, detentions, and so forth. And obviously we're going to look at past practices. And I don't believe that anybody is above the law. On the other hand, I also have a belief that we need to look forward as opposed to looking backwards. And part of my job is to make sure that for example at the CIA, you've got extraordinarily talented people who are working very hard to keep Americans safe. I don't want them to suddenly feel like they've got to spend all their time looking over their shoulders and lawyering up.

A key aspect of this "looking forward" to prevent the CIA having to "lawyer up" was to make sure that his Justice Department did not file charges against Jose Rodriguez for destroying the videotapes of torture sessions before the statute of limitations ran out.

The other major scandal from which the country was reeling as Obama took office was the meltdown of the economy caused by banksters inventing various derivative financial instruments, including collateralized debt obligations. When the markets for these invented vehicles collapsed, the accompanying stock market crash resulted in catastrophic losses for millions of Americans who saw their 401K's and other stock investments lose about half their value in just a few weeks. Coupled with this stock market collapse was a collapse in the housing market, leading to millions of Americans now owing more for their homes than they are

worth.

There was reason to hope that Obama would take action to right this huge wrong that had wiped out much of the middle class. After all, during the much smaller Savings and Loan scandal, thousands of bankers were prosecuted and served jail time. But that was not to be. Obama continued the bailout of the financial sector started during the Bush administration but made sure that no prominent figures in the creation and over-selling of fraudulent complex financial instruments ever faced criminal charges.

On April 20, 2010, BP's Deepwater Horizon drilling platform exploded and when the faulty blowout preventer failed, massive amounts of oil flowed unabated into the Gulf of Mexico. The Obama Administration, from the start, did what it could to protect BP and make sure that they didn't face criminal charges. We have even learned lately that Obama's White House took an active role in making sure public estimates of the rate of oil flow were lowballed. This undoubtedly came from twin desires to control public opinion on the spill and to reduce the eventual civil fine that BP will pay for the oil that was spilled. Despite countless Gulf residents who depended on the Gulf for their livelihoods being wiped out, Obama's actions to provide immunity for BP rapidly have helped Tony Hayward to get his life back.

As if conferring immunity on others for crimes is not enough, Obama has now branched out into taking an active role in the extrajudicial execution of US citizens. Of course, those who carried out Obama's orders in these killings are conferred immunity from him.

This all brings us to the announcement last night that 49 state attorneys general and the five biggest banks that have been at the heart of the foreclosure fraud that followed on the heels of the CDO disaster are nearing a final deal that will charge the banks a tiny fraction of the funds they have stolen from homeowners in return for immunity. The immunity in this case

may not be complete, as some cases appear to be specifically excluded, but this settlement removes from criminal prosecution the most easily provable charges of fraudulent documents being used in foreclosures.

Given Obama's history of working to protect the country's most egregious criminals from facing charges, you can bet he will be putting effort into quashing the remaining possible prosecutions, as well.

Oh, and I'm sure it's totally unrelated, but just this week Obama reversed himself and endorsed the use of SuperPacs in the 2012 elections. That can't have anything to do with the banks now having extra funds on hand they probably held in reserve for the much larger damages they should have been responsible for paying, could it? But just in case they are feeling grateful to Obama, I'm sure the banks know where to find his SuperPacs.