

Only a liberal government employee can be this ignorant and make a living

Written by Barthélemy Barbancourt

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Those of us in the private sector understand that there is a base level of ignorance that disqualifies you from employment. Not so in the public sector.

[Take Rocco Landesman](#), the new head of the National Endowment of the Arts. In a speech in Brooklyn last week, he [said of Barack Obama](#), “This is the first president that actually writes his own books since Teddy Roosevelt and arguably the first to write them really well since Lincoln.”

Second, he implicitly accuses Presidents Clinton, Bush 41, Reagan, Carter, Ford, Nixon, Johnson, Kennedy, Eisenhower, Truman, Hoover, Coolidge, and Wilson of having had their memoirs, autobiographies, and other works ghosted. Many of them received research assistance (one could hardly write a modern presidential memoir without it), and many, no doubt, also received a good deal of editing. Presidents are not usually professional writers. But research and editorial assistance is by no means the same thing as resorting to a ghost writer. I can't imagine Harry Truman using a ghost writer. Herbert Hoover wrote sixteen books in his life, including *Fishing for Fun* — and *to Wash Your Soul*, published three years after his death, and a translation (with his wife) from the Latin of *De re Metallica*. Just a guess, but I don't think there are many ghosted 640-page translations around.

Woodrow Wilson was a college professor and president before entering politics. *Congressional Government: A Study in American Politics*, his best known work and one that ran through many editions, was not ghost written.

Third, Landesman implicitly accuses Theodore Roosevelt of being, unlike Barack Obama, a second-rate writer. Roosevelt wrote a total of 38 books in his life (not to mention countless magazine articles and thousands of letters, all while holding a day job and living only sixty years). His first, *The Naval War of 1812*, written when he was 23, is considered a basic historical text on that subject and is still both highly readable and in print. Will *The Audacity of Hope* be in print a 125 years after it was published?

Fourth, Landesman seems ignorant of even the existence of *The Personal Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant*. They were written in the last months of Grant's life (he died in agony from throat cancer three days after he finished the manuscript). They are universally regarded as the greatest military memoirs since Caesar's *Commentaries*, and among the genuine masterpieces of American literature. Perhaps Mr. Landesman should give them a try if he doesn't object to reading memoirs written by someone who had actually done something (like — you know — save the Union) before writing them.

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Fifth, Lincoln never wrote a book.

I know he was mainly kissing Obama's un-accomplished ass, but to be that ignorant of a subject is a sure sign that this guy will always be a government employee.