

WHITE HOUSE STAFFING MEMORANDUM

DATE: 1-16 ACTION/CONCURRENCE/COMMENT DUE BY: 1-18SUBJECT: Norman Mailer Interview Request

	ACTION	FYI		ACTION	FYI
VICE PRESIDENT	☐	☐	QUINN	☐	☐
PANETTA	☒	☐	RASCO	☐	☐
McLARTY	☐	☐	RUBIN	☐	☐
ICKES	☐	☐	SEGAL	☐	☐
BOWLES	☐	☐	STEPHANPOULOS <i>see note</i>	☒	☐
RIVLIN	☐	☐	TYSON	☐	☐
EMANUEL	☐	☐	WEBSTER	☐	☐
GEARAN	☒	☐	WILLIAMS	☐	☐
GIBBONS	☐	☐	_____	☐	☐
GRIFFIN	☐	☐	_____	☐	☐
HALE	☐	☐	_____	☐	☐
HERMAN	☐	☐	_____	☐	☐
LAKE	☐	☐	_____	☐	☐
LINDSEY	☐	☐	_____	☐	☐
MIKVA	☐	☐	_____	☐	☐
McCURRY	☒	☐	_____	☐	☐
McGINTY	☐	☐	_____	☐	☐

REMARKS:

Any suggestions/reactions on

RESPONSE:

how to handle?

JOHN D. PODESTA
 Assistant to the President
 and Staff Secretary
 Ext. 2702

NORMAN MAILER
142 COLUMBIA HEIGHTS
BROOKLYN NY 11201
phone: 718-858-0892

28 December 1994

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington DC 20500-2000

Dear Mr. President:

In your letter of December 6, you asked in effect what the themes might be if I were to do an interview with you for Esquire and since answers don't come tripping to my tongue, let me see if I can find the ground for a dialogue by circling around it. Years ago, having done a book on the flight of Apollo 11 to the moon, I was still trying to convince Neil Armstrong to talk to me and finally I dropped all modesty and wrote that there were many who thought I was the best journalist in America, and by analogy I suggested to him that he would never let any commercial airline pilot, no matter how good, get near the controls of the LEM that would touch down on the moon, yet he was willing to be written about by good journeyman reporters, and Armstrong wrote back and said "Dear Mr. Mailer--your arguments are most cogent but I think the answer still is no."

Well, once a philosopher, twice a pervert: I'm trying the same approach again. I think you owe it to yourself to have one of our best American writers--myself humbly nominated--to take a shot at interpreting your Presidency and

*Ann Keph
keep w/
input from
Betsy & from
Down Alexander
in per
office
cc: Betsy
Down Alexander*

yourself. My feeling, and it's paramount, is that the public needs a fresh look. If there's time, and I certainly respect how little you have for diversion, I'd propose that you take a look at my Esquire piece on Madonna which I wrote at a point when she was at a relatively low ebb in her fortunes, and I swear I think I did her some good, because she came through in the piece as independent and surprisingly intelligent and feisty and funny; in sum, an honest woman. The point is that it was a new look at her since I do have my way of seeing people and I prefer it to the media way.

So I would propose a dialogue between us of an hour in length, ideally two, in which we would discuss a variety of topics, many of them, preferably, not political, but wide enough and open enough for you to be seen in the breadth of your interests, your more intense concerns, your preferences, your biases--let the public see you for once as a human being rather than as a public servant and/or politician.

The way I ^{view} ~~see~~ it, we would talk and transcribe the talk, and the tone, while generally amiable, would hardly be sycophantic. Naturally, I have disagreements with you, and a couple of them are serious, Cuba for one, but I do think that over the whole you have not only been treated abominably by the media but that there were profound social reasons for the swell of rage in American life that focussed itself unfairly upon you, and I want to give my writing attention to that. You would hardly have to be the active complainant on such matters--I'm the one who's outraged at the treatment you were given. In fact, I might wish to start the piece by recounting this joke:

The Pope and Bill Clinton are in a rowboat and the Pope's high white mitre blows off. Bill Clinton leaps out of the

-3-

boat, walks on the water, picks up the ^{mitre}~~Pope's hat~~ and walks back to return the Pope to his hat. Next day, the headlines read: BILL CLINTON CAN'T SWIM.

If we're going to do it, can I propose sometime this January or the first two weeks of February?

Cheers,

Union Mailer

WHITE HOUSE STAFFING MEMORANDUM

95 JAN 17 1:59 PM '96

ACTION/CONCURRENCE/COMMENT DUE BY: 1-18

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GRIFFIN	☐	☐		☐	☐
HALE	☐	☐		☐	☐
HERMAN	☐	☐		☐	☐
LAKE	☐	☐		☐	☐
LINDSEY	☐	☐		☐	☐
MIKVA	☐	☐		☐	☐
McCURRY	☒	☐		☐	☐
McGINTY	☐	☐		☐	☐

REMARKS:

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RESPONSE:

how to handle?To: MHL
Fr: GSAre we going to
discuss this?

Lots of questions.

JOHN D. PODESTA
Assistant to the President
and Staff Secretary
Ext. 27021-17
copy sent
to McCurry
TW

(C)

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Donnan Mailer