

Nov 04, 2016 by [Adam Clayton Powell, III](#)

## World's Reaction to President Obama and the Arrest of Henry Louis Gates: Yawn <sup>[1]</sup>

The reaction in much of the world was muted, or less. But in some countries that have racial tensions similar to the U.S., the coverage was less muted — and looked familiar.

In Canada, perhaps not unexpectedly, there were Sunday headlines familiar to U.S. readers: "Tsk tsk, Obama spoke too soon" in the *National Post* and "Black Harvard prof's arrest shakes U.S." deep inside the *Toronto Star*, the latter also featuring a Canadian case of racial profiling. But the big story in the *Star* Sunday was a dispatch from its Washington bureau on the latest public opinion polls, headlined "Are Americans souring on Barack Obama?" — a story flooded with reader comments.

In the U.K., coverage in the *Guardian* was played down. Deep inside, headlined "Black professor in race row arrest accepts Obama's invitation for a beer," was a story that could have been straight from U.S. wire services. And check out the numerous reader comments at the bottom of this *Times of London* story, which easily could have been in the *Boston Globe*.

The London *Telegraph* featured a provocative headline "Barack Obama takes sides against the police," in an opinion piece that included a stereotype Americans would recognize from the syntax even if they don't know the British TV show: "There is touch of the Ali Gs here — 'is it coz I is black?'"

But it turns out *Telegraph* readers were far more fascinated over the weekend by a very different story about President Obama: the most widely viewed story on the newspaper's web site today (Sunday) was the controversy over Obama's birth certificate.

Turning to the Middle East, *Al Jazeera* featured a story, with video, headlined "Obama condemns arrest of black professor." It featured a sub-headline, "Barack Obama may have broken racial boundaries when he became the first black US president, but he has admitted that racism is common." That qualifies as today's dog-bites-man story: if the President had said the reverse, that racism is extremely rare, *that* would be a story.

Interestingly, in Africa this was not big news. Yes, the *Independent on Line* had a report, buried far down in its web site, headlined "Obama blasts police 'stupidity'" . But most African media, from Ghana to Kenya, Cairo to Cape Town, ignored it or downplayed it. Far more prominent was continuing coverage of Michael Jackson, such as a feature story in South Africa's *City Press*.

Without question the extreme headline of the week was from the North Korean news agency *DPRK*: "Progressive scholar Henry Louis Gates, Jr. released from U.S. torture prison after outcry of world democratic peoples."

That was just below "U.S. plagued by doubt as to whether so-called president Obama was

born an Indonesian slave," which shows the North Koreans have some of the same interests as readers of the London *Telegraph*.

As is so often the case, however, the North Korean news agency story was just too good to be true. It turns out that probably was not the North Korean news agency after all: *Forbes* and others have found it may all be an Internet hoax.

Just think of it as Pyongyang meets *The Onion*.

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