From Citizens to Subjects

From Kevin Williamson at National Review, The Last Days of Barack Obama

> *The idea that a large, complex society enjoying English liberty could long endure without the guiding hand of a priest-king was, in 1776, radical. A few decades later, it became ordinary — Americans could not imagine living any other way. The republican manner of American presidents was pronounced: There is a famous story about President Lincoln's supposedly receiving a European ambassador who was shocked to see him shining his own shoes. The diplomat said that in Europe, a man of Lincoln's stature would never shine his own shoes. "Whose shoes would he shine?" Lincoln asked.*
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> *As American society grows less literate and the state of its moral education declines, the American people grow less able to engage their government as intellectually and morally prepared citizens. We are in the process — late in the process, I'm afraid — of reverting from citizens to subjects. Subjects are led by their emotions, mainly terror and greed. They need not be intellectually or morally engaged — their attitude toward government is a lot like that of Trump's old pal Roy Cohn: "Don't tell me what the law is. Tell me who the judge is."*