


THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

April 30, 1984

MEMORANDUM FOR FRED F. FIELDING

FROM:

JOHN G. ROBERTS 

SUBJECT:

Proposed Award to Michael Jackson

Jim Coyne has asked for our views on a proposed award to entertainer Michael Jackson, for his contributions to the campaign against teenage drunk driving. Coyne would like to have the President present the unspecified award to Jackson on May 11 in the Rose Garden. Coyne has asked whether the award should be from the White House or the Transportation Department, whether the award may bear the Seal of the President, and whether we object to his suggested language for the award. You have indicated that you object to any award to Jackson involving the President.

I share your view that this is a poor idea. Coyne's suggested award language praises Jackson as an "outstanding example...for the youth of America and the world." If one wants the youth of America and the world sashaying around in garish sequined costumes, hair dripping with pomade, body shot full of female hormones to prevent voice change, mono-gloved, well, then, I suppose "Michael," as he is affectionately known in the trade, is in fact a good example. Quite apart from the problem of appearing to endorse Jackson's androgynous life style, a Presidential award would be perceived as a shallow effort by the President to share in the constant publicity surrounding Jackson, particularly since other celebrities have done as much for worthy causes as Jackson but have not been singled out by the President. The whole episode would, in my view, be demeaning to the President.

The attached memorandum for Coyne objects to any Presidential involvement and to his proposed text. I also recommend copying Darman so that our objections are generally known.

Attachment

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

April 30, 1984

MEMORANDUM FOR JAMES K. COYNE
SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT
FOR PRIVATE SECTOR INITIATIVES

FROM: FRED F. FIELDING
COUNSEL TO THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: Proposed Award to Michael Jackson

You have asked for our views on a proposed award to entertainer Michael Jackson in recognition of his contribution to the national campaign against teenage drunk driving. Specifically, you have asked whether the contemplated award should be a White House award or a Department of Transportation award, whether the award may bear the Seal of the President, and whether we had any objections to your suggested text for the award.

I must advise you that I object to any Presidential involvement in the presentation of an award to Mr. Jackson. Whatever his contributions to the campaign against teenage drunk driving, and whatever his merit as a chanteur, I hardly think it advisable to hold Mr. Jackson up as an "outstanding example...for the youth of America and the world." I do not think we want the youth of America and the world mimicking Mr. Jackson's androgynous life style or other numerous eccentricities, or adopting the dubious lyrics of his songs as a code by which to live. In addition, I think any ceremony involving the President and Mr. Jackson would be perceived as an effort by the President to bask in the reflected glow of the inordinate and at times hysterical publicity surrounding Mr. Jackson, a perception that would be demeaning to the President. This perception would derive in large part from the fact that other celebrities have done at least as much as Mr. Jackson for worthy causes, but have not been singled out for special praise by the President.

To answer your specific questions, if any award is given it should not be a White House award. The award accordingly may not bear the Seal of the President. Finally, I do object to the suggested text for the award. As noted above, I do not think Mr. Jackson should be lauded as an example for youth. Nor should any award citation praise Mr. Jackson for his commercial successes, as your proposed text does.

Thank you for raising this matter with us.

cc: Richard G. Darman

FFF:JGR:aea 4/30/84

bcc: FFFielding/JGRoberts/Subj/Chron

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

May 1, 1984

MEMORANDUM FOR FRED F. FIELDING

FROM: JOHN G. ROBERTS *JGR*

SUBJECT: Proposed Award to Michael Jackson

Jim Coyne has asked for our views on a proposed award to entertainer Michael Jackson, for his contributions to the campaign against teenage drunk driving. Coyne would like to have the President present the unspecified award to Jackson on May 11 in the Rose Garden. Coyne has asked whether the award should be from the White House or the Transportation Department, whether the award may bear the Seal of the President, and whether we object to his suggested language for the award. You have indicated that you object to any award to Jackson involving the President.

I share your view that this is a poor idea. A Presidential award to Jackson would be perceived as a shallow effort by the President to exploit the constant publicity surrounding Jackson, particularly since other celebrities have done as much for worthy causes as Jackson but have not been singled out by the President. The whole episode would, in my view, be demeaning to the President. Coyne's proposed text for the award is also problematic, since it lauds Jackson for his commercial success as well as his charitable endeavors.

The attached memorandum for Coyne objects to any Presidential involvement and to his proposed text. I also recommend copying Darman so that our objections are generally known.

Attachment

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

May 1, 1984

MEMORANDUM FOR JAMES K. COYNE
SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT
FOR PRIVATE SECTOR INITIATIVES

FROM: FRED F. FIELDING
COUNSEL TO THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: Proposed Award to Michael Jackson

You have asked for our views on a proposed award to entertainer Michael Jackson in recognition of his contribution to the national campaign against teenage drunk driving. Specifically, you have asked whether the contemplated award should be a White House award or a Department of Transportation award, whether the award may bear the Seal of the President, and whether we had any objections to your suggested text for the award.

I must advise you that I object to any Presidential involvement in the presentation of an award to Mr. Jackson. Whatever Mr. Jackson's contributions to the campaign against teenage drunk driving, and whatever his merit as a chanteur, I think any ceremony involving the President and Mr. Jackson would be perceived as an effort by the President to bask in the reflected glow of the inordinate publicity surrounding Mr. Jackson. This perception, which would be demeaning to the President, would derive in large part from the fact that other celebrities have done at least as much as Mr. Jackson for worthy causes, but have not been singled out for special praise by the President.

To answer your specific questions, if any award is given it should not be a White House award. The award accordingly may not bear the Seal of the President. Finally, I do object to the suggested text for the award. If there is an award citation it should not praise Mr. Jackson for his commercial successes, as your proposed text does, but be limited to praising his charitable activities.

Thank you for raising this matter with us.

cc: Richard G. Darman

FFF:JGR:aea 5/1/84
bcc: FFFielding/JGRoberts/Subj/Chron