

**Summoning Obama's Talent: All Hands on Decks and All Feet on the Court**  
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What do Capt. James T. Kirk and Alexander the Great have in common with President Barack Obama in this time of crisis? They all inherited and elected to solve the seemingly unsolvable problem of the day: for Kirk it was the Kobayashi Maru, for Alexander the Great it was the Gordian Knot. For Mr. Obama, it is the world wide economic, political and climate meltdowns.

In the film, *Star Trek: The Wrath of Kahn*, Kirk reveals how as a cadet he outperformed all others in an unwinnable scenario (the Kobayashi Maru) in which the rescue of innocents assures the doom of the rescuer. Similarly, Aristotle's student, Alexander the Great, faced an unsolvable problem (the Gordian Knot) with a sharp mind and instrument that, left untouched, would have truncated his name by two words.

President Obama comes into office when it appears that we out-smarted, off-shored and inserted ourselves into a situation in which our jobs, homes, safety and a livable planet are in peril. We need effective responses to issues that have no apparent solutions. Both fictional and historical characters confronting these "no-win" situations have succeeded by resisting the lure of conventional strategies.

Metaphorically, we are playing high stakes poker with opponents who randomly rotate and deal from decks that *never have 52 cards*. We are challenged to play dangerous pick-up games of basketball on distant courts where the hoops alter their shape after each shot and are *never round*. For every hand that is dealt and layup that is taken, a game changing approach is required to prevail.

Where others had tried and failed or simply demurred, Kirk surreptitiously alters the computer program written by wily strangers to produce a favorable outcome. Alexander the Great rests his hand and engages his wits when he chooses to slice, rather than disentangle, the knotted cord that had been cleverly tied by another. These challenges were created to frustrate and to defeat posers -- offering no clues, and purposely framed with fairness out of focus.

President Obama's team promises greatness; however, "no-win" situations require that both leader and group adapt and evolve into a team of rebels. The new administration's Kobayashi Maru and Gordian Knot moments are now. By preparing in advance, Obama has set a tone of value in which technology, cunning and wisdom are being blended and deployed in novel and, hopefully, noble ways.

As a nation, we are off balance and can afford nothing less than success in the big no-win situations. The issues are huge and both the card and pick-up game solutions are comparatively easy. In poker, always identify who brought the deck – that player is out to defeat the table; while shooting at irregular hoops, deflate the ball and it will fit within any rim. This is not cheating; this is the change we need.

Mr. Obama and his choices for talent signal his resolve to reframe problems and take command of solutions. For those who are about to sit at the table or attempt a game of pick-up with this new administration, be advised: President Obama's team appears poised to engage tactics with their talent, while playing fair and in the full light of day.

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