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Obama's Rope-a-Dope **Nafsi ya Jamii** **By Wilson Riles** **BC Columnist**

Cassius Marcellus Clay, Jr. (*Muhammad Ali*, born January 17, 1942) invented ROPE-A-DOPE and astounded the **known world**. The quickness of his fists and feet were his physical weapons, although his vanity about his looks might have been a disadvantage at times where risking getting hit in the face might be the winning move. It was when his mental and physical talents flowed together in the development of ROPE-A-DOPE that he **excelled against all comers** to become the heavy-weight boxing champion of The Universe. Off the ropes he was devastating; on the ropes, in close quarters with his opponent, he was equally troubling.

Ali joined the Black Muslims when **PRINCE Malcolm X** was the face of "The Nation;" he joined **that** Black Muslim men's group known as **the Fruit of Islam (FOI)**. And he refused to go into the military because of his religious beliefs and because of his opposition to the Viet Nam War. Ali proved, again, that Black Muslims are a religious organization where you can find **individuals with great character**. What he invented for boxing is **precious!** It is what Obama whipped on Romney in the First Debate.

The essence of ROPE-A-DOPE is the unique, astute, use of **the rope**: jumping back toward the rope to avoid your opponent's blows and delivering your own blows with the assistance of the recoil. **You Dope. POW! POW!** Muhammad Ali usually lost the first rounds and waited until he was tired during the match before he started using ROPE-A-DOPE. Whether Obama consciously made the connection or not, Obama used ROPE-A-DOPE on Mitt Romney. It was a

political/societal/cultural, conversational form using a *jump-back* to *rebound* with greater force in the continuing campaign battle. That's the essence of Ali's inspired move.

One might say it was unbelievably astounding to those who have never seen any kind of ROPE-A-DOPE **AND** those who have never seen it **in this rhetorical battle ground**. Some observers could not allow themselves to speculate beyond their blind-stupid prejudices. Lazy, slow, stupid, "disappointing his wife...by scheduling something on their anniversary" (subtext: *pussy-whipped*) are some of the many ridiculous, thoughtless, disgusting, disdainful presumptions that are an affront to what is an obviously visible reality about the character of Obama. Some blamed "the high altitude of Denver that Obama had not the time to adjust to," the additional demands of the presidency beyond the demands of campaigning, and Obama's "natural" hesitancy to appear the "angry black man" standing up to the "whitest man" in the US in the sight of the millions in the US who are still imbued with racism.

I have no doubt that educated black men consciously and unconsciously **avoid** being **that** "angry black man." Obama has a clear history of such avoidance. Having to appear "presidential" is an additional incentive for holding emotion in, as if anything the President would do could not be defined as presidential. However, the **combined framing** of these concepts of being "presidential" and of not being the "angry black man" channeled Obama's thinking and behavior into the discovery of verbal and postural ROPE-A-DOPE. This was abetted by his proven insensitivity and low prioritization of others' expectations of him. **Those**, who develop in a society that has expectations of them (both positive and negative) that are geared to piling the perceptions and/or misperceptions of a subclass (all black males) on individuals, develop insensitivity and low prioritization for "**others**" expectations. They default to doing their thing distinctly individually and often end up excelling and disappointing at the same time.

Black-activists and white-liberals wanted that angry, passionate man that Obama can be when he is not confronting a white person (e.g. the Governor of Arizona) standing face-to-face with him in the same location. Blacks have seen too many obsequious black men; we **prefer the posture of the FOI** even when that may not be a path free from harm. A clean, upright stance is the proper posture for an **un-oppressed** person. Blacks who adopt this posture, however, in the US, are feared because slavery and discrimination attempted to beat it out

of us. **And** fear **won't win** you votes or lessen the enthusiasm of the uneducated racist opposition voters.

The **limit of the vision of other pundits** is the presumption of bad timing or *coincidence*. That Obama's performance could be a discovered **path** allowing escape from the anxiety of being behind in your preparation compared to your opponent and a combination of other rational mental activity is beyond the comprehension of most pundits. I think he started this phase of the contest using ROPE-A-DOPE because of his exhaustion, the sharp (lying) shift to "the middle" offered by Romney, and the opportunity of rest (against the "rope"), and the opportunity for some space to figure out the moves of your opponent for subsequent rounds. Obama, in the mean time, did not suffer any serious damage in this "early round."

[Parenthetically, no incumbent President except for **one** (Clinton) has "won" their first debate against a challenger. **And**, if Obama had "won" the first debate, the presidential campaign would have been over **and** the down-ballot Senate and Congressional races would have gotten more difficult - Republicans shifting money and attention from the presidential contest - for the Democrats **who Obama needs** to accomplish anything in his second term.]

Romney has lived too long in situations where **he** defined a big portion of the realities of many other persons. As an LDS religious leader, he has spent significant periods of his life in circumstances where once he said something it became the reality for lots of people, no matter what had come before. He came to this debate prepared to move to a more "rational" political/societal/cultural territory but, also, to try to hold on to as much of his past stance as he could **by lying**. Obama jumped back from the get-go. Romney quickly started shedding what he hoped Obama would be knocking off his political/societal/cultural mask. At the end of the round (the first debate), Romney had voluntarily thrown much of his prior bruised parts away, accomplishing a partial transformation. However, without Obama's help, it was not enough. His first post-debate interview attempted to accomplish a complete reversal of his most damaging prior stance: **the hidden camera comment about the disdained "47%."** Obama vigorously followed up the debate with various "quick fisted, quick footed" offensive combinations; he had gotten some psychological rest in the bargain and (maybe) had received some sympathy rather than anger from his wife for not having remembered the day of their anniversary. The improved unemployment numbers were a final blessing. I call that a slick, ROPE-A-DOPE, move.

Romney, like so many who are totally sodden with Western Culture, does not **see the whole ring**. He does not have the necessary empathy. His vision of politics is rooted in what he saw of his father's and his mother's campaigns and his father's time in office. This seems to be totally merged with the skewed perceptions and actions that a person exhibits when other people treat you like you are divine, the deference that some give to rich people and those who make others rich, and the blinding aura of personal exceptionalism that is the core of racism. Mitt Romney's *game* is imperial power politics, which is an old, old game based on full immersion into the worst elements of Western Culture. That DOPE went for the ROPE-A-DOPE. [By the way, where would an African American man get a Roman name: **Cassius Marcellus Clay? Ultimately** from a **likely slave holding** white man. I like Muhammad Ali a lot better.]

[Note: Nafsi ya Jamii is the Swahili phrase that translates in English to "The Soul Community"]

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