

# The smaller gathering across the Potomac

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May 2, 2011



There's no doubt that Osama bin Laden had been living on borrowed time ever since 9/11 rendered him America's public enemy number one. For those of us who were still in middle school at the time, our history has been color-coded with security threat levels. The student deluge that inundated Pennsylvania Avenue from midnight to dawn after Obama's announcement yesterday demonstrated a powerful ethos of that generation--some would call it justified, others vindictive.

Still, the impromptu singing of "Ding, Dong, Osama is dead" likely seemed immature and triumphalist to [the solemn 15 or so gathered just across the river](#) outside the Pentagon. To this smaller crowd, the news provided the closure owed to those who lost their lives ten years ago, not just a beer-spilling opportunity to celebrate the killing of a killer.

But the difference between the two sentiments doesn't simply illustrate two ways of dealing with the same emotions. It indicates that each group heard a very different message in Obama's address.

One group heard the success story of a U.S. military operation, of murder justified by murder and of a resume builder for a president often painted as weak and overly apologetic for U.S. foreign policy. This politically minded group included people like

Richard Indoe, an Ohio farmer present at the celebration, who lamented that this "accomplishment...didn't happen during George W. Bush's time."

The other group, however, heard the story of death for death, true brokenness and the hideous distortion of the image of God in humanity. That's nothing to celebrate.

If our actions are aimed at the glory of God, we can't view last night's events simply as an American victory. Bin Laden's death approximates only a fallen sense of justice. And the actions committed in pursuit of earthly justice are among those for which Christ bled.

I think the sober few gathered across the river had a clearer understanding of the implicit message in last night's news--one that wept for the cruel irony of earthly justice but also for our failure to recognize its falling short.