

# A Star is Born?



Over the Christmas weekend, there wasn't much political news to speak of. And that, in my view, was a good thing. In an era when politics have become many people's religion, it's good to have at least one day a year when we recognize and celebrate an actual religion – one based on things like, you know, spirituality and morality.

Interestingly enough, one story that did make national headlines took place at the intersection of politics and religion. It had to do with the president and First Lady, per tradition, calling into Norad's annual Christmas Eve "Santa Claus tracking" event, where they were connected via phone to different children and their parents to talk about the Christmas season.

At the tale end of one of those conversations – a mostly sweet and cordial one with an Oregonian father and his young children – the father (later identified as Jared Schmeck) suddenly blurted out, "Let's go Brandon!"

In case you haven't heard, "Let's go Brandon!" has become an

often-repeated stand-in phrase for “F\*ck Joe Biden!”.

Judging by Biden’s amicable response, he was either unaware of its meaning, or consciously chose to minimize the slight and move on. Regardless, the Internet blew up with lots of hot-takes, including mine:

*I haven’t cared too much about the “Let’s go Brandon” stuff, but the Bidens couldn’t have been nicer on the call to this guy and his children. To throw that in at the end (to flex for his friends) was a total dick move.*  
<https://t.co/bTNyvEQ6Bi>

– John A. Daly (@JohnDalyBooks) December 24, 2021

I think most people would probably agree, shake their head at what was an objectively classless display, and then move on about their holiday. Instead, the tribes rushed to their corners and dug in for another days-long battle in our never-ending, reliably eye-rolling culture war.

Such battles are usually fought on multiple fronts, and this one was no different.

As Schmeck took online heat for his stunt, an interesting defense mechanism kicked in on the political right. Those who weren’t outright celebrating what he said began stoking a narrative that Schmeck was actually a victim... or at least a soon-to-be victim of government and media persecution (including an attack on his civil rights):

*Hope the Lets Go Brandon Dad’s taxes are in order. He should probably lock down his trash. Make some space on the lawn for the CNN van.*

– Stephen L. Miller (@redsteeze) December 24, 2021

And predictably, some on the left indeed began broadening their criticism beyond reason (which served as “You see!” catnip for the right):

*Brownstein: “Let’s Go Brandon” Is Not About Incivility, It Is About Insurrection <https://t.co/5rQppqo1K5>*

– RCP Video (@rcpvideo) December 27, 2021

Next came the whataboutism phase:

*A bunch of people who spent 4+ years telling the last guy to go eff himself now getting their panties in a twist over “Let’s Go Brandon” is utterly emblematic of the fundamental struggle in the US right now and why we can’t have nice things.*

– Carol Roth (@caroljsroth) December 26, 2021

And declarations of media hypocrisy:

*When it’s us // when it’s you [pic.twitter.com/tospfdxR1a](https://pic.twitter.com/tospfdxR1a)*

– Drew Holden (@DrewHolden360) December 26, 2021

Some may recall the above incident from 2017, when a cyclist named Juli Briskman drew similar national attention (and accolades from some on the left) for flipping off then President Trump’s motorcade as it drove past her. Reporters captured the moment on camera, and when Briskman shared one of the photos on social media, she was fired from her job. But she later ran for local office and won, in what some on the left (including an MSNBC headline writer) saw as vindication.

It really is amazing how easy it is to become a political folk-hero or celebrity in today’s hyper-partisan landscape.

All one seemingly has to do is trigger the other side with some unruly, high-profile act.

And judging by an early media blitz, this appears to be where Schmeck is headed.

*Jared Schmeck tells Steve Bannon: "Donald Trump is my president and he should still be president right now. The election was 100% stolen. So, I just want to make that clear." pic.twitter.com/YbyysPAIbH*

– David Edwards (@DavidEdwards) December 27, 2021

*'Brandon' Caller Jared Schmeck May Run For Office: 'God Put Me in This Position for a Reason' <https://t.co/vjASsMfQ2o>*

– Catherine Black (@catblackcanada) December 29, 2021

I honestly wouldn't be surprised to see the guy turn up as a featured speaker at CPAC, especially after the rock-star ovation Kyle Rittenhouse recently received at a similar right-wing convention.

Stuff like this honestly drives me nuts. It's one thing to speak critically of political leaders, or even use some derogatory terms for them in casual conversation. But if you're in their presence in a good-faith setting, have their ear, and use the opportunity to effectively tell them to go f\*\*\* themselves, there shouldn't be any doubt that what you did was wildly inappropriate. And your conduct certainly shouldn't be celebrated or serve as a springboard into political stardom.

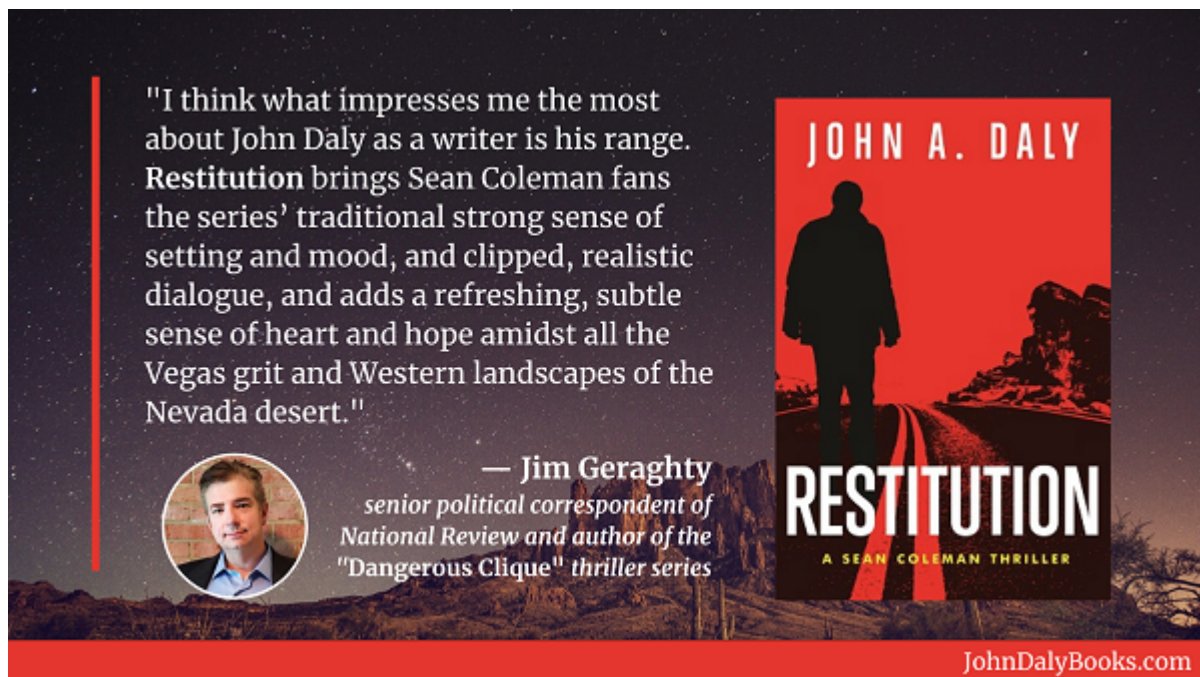
On the other end of the spectrum, it also shouldn't compel people in the media and elsewhere to dig into such people's background, and see what dirt they can find to dish out some payback. A story like the Norad call should be a one-day news

cycle, not a political crusade.

In other words, let's stop making celebrities and martyrs out of people just because they choose to act like jackasses.

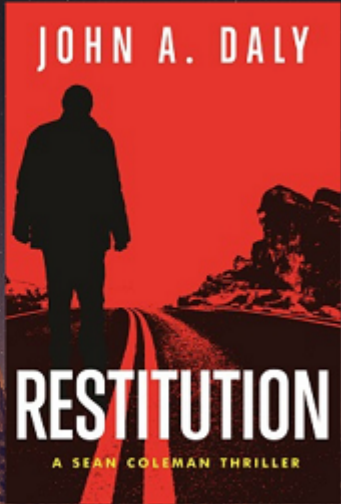
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— Jim Geraghty  
*senior political correspondent of National Review and author of the "Dangerous Clique" thriller series*



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