

Diary of a Deranged Liberal

✘ On Sunday, New York Times writer Paul Krugman offered his 9/11 thoughts on the ten year anniversary of the terrorist attacks on America. He did so in a brief column, almost in the form of a diary entry. In it, Krugman decided to take a strong stand and call out (by name) the villains of that terrible day. Interestingly, Osama Bin Laden, Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, and Al Qaeda didn't make the list. Who did make the list? George W. Bush, Rudy Giuliani, and Bernard Kerik.

No, I'm not kidding.

His reasoning? He claims that the three became "fake heroes" by racing to "cash in" on the horrors of that day. He doesn't expand on that assertion any further, other than taking shots at his colleagues in the news media for letting the three get away with it, and at "neocons" for taking us to war.

He ended his column by announcing that he wasn't going to let online readers comment on his thoughts for "obvious reasons".

What a deranged individual.

Now when it comes to Paul Krugman, I suppose I shouldn't waste my time. The notorious left-winger is infamous for routinely making absolutely ridiculous comments that are no more grounded in reality than unicorns and vampires. However, his 9/11 thoughts do offer some constructive insight into the mind of a 21st century liberal elitist.

Even on this historic anniversary, left-wingers like Krugman can't bring themselves to condemn Islamic extremists. They're far more comfortable using the memory of thousands of American deaths to take pot-shots at high-profile political opponents who had the gall to show actual leadership on 9/11, and in the days following the attacks.

Krugman despises these three men not because of how they handled the crisis, but because of two reasons: 1) Most Americans were inspired by their leadership that day. 2) They're Republicans.

In Krugman's mind, it was their relevance that somehow made them opportunists. With that logic, at least we don't have to worry about this "fake economist" ever becoming an opportunist. Right?

Defining The Hero By Creating The Villain

✘ Film critic Roger Ebert once said, "Each film is only as good as its villain. Since the heroes and the gimmicks tend to repeat from film to film, only a great villain can transform a good try into a triumph."

Not only does that point apply to movies, but as we're finding out with the Obama administration, it also applies to politics.

During the 2008 campaign, Barack Obama's selling points were not based on policy or experience. They were based on himself. He was an energetic, likable newcomer who captured the imagination of an electorate that was war-weary, panicked by the economic crisis, and ready for change. Much like the protagonist in a film, he was introduced to the audience in a positive light, sparking interest and a curiosity for what his character would achieve.

Once in office, it was time for the plot to develop. I believe the administration predicted early on that much of the country

wasn't ready for their style of progressive change. They had a likeable hero but anticipation of a poorly received storyline is what seemed to lead to the creation of Obama's first foil. No, I'm not talking about George W. Bush. Bush has always been a handy figure to go back and blame as part of a sub-plot, just like large corporations and Wall Street. Bush, however, wouldn't have been effective as an active threat to the Obama agenda. Someone else was required.

When conservative radio host Rush Limbaugh stated, "I hope he fails" in regard to what he predicted was Obama's drive toward socialism, Democratic strategists' began to salivate. They had found their first villain. Despite the fact that far more provocative statements had been made about President Bush by left-wing commentators (almost on a daily basis during much of his presidency), the administration and news media created a national narrative of Limbaugh's comments. Limbaugh was the bad guy, unwilling to give the new guy a chance. The story seemed to garnish more media headlines than the freshly-passed, controversial stimulus bill. I don't think that was by accident.

Months later, when the Obamacare bill was being debated in Washington, and images of angry constituents shouting at their elected officials were still all over cable news, a new villain was needed to change the national conversation. This time, it was the FOX News Channel. In a coordinated effort, White House spokespeople Robert Gibbs, David Axlerod, and Anita Dunn went on the offensive, announcing that the administration did not believe FNC was a legitimate news organization. They warned other news outlets not to follow FOX News' lead and even went as far as to try and eliminate FNC's presence in the White House press pool. The strategy failed, however, when rival media organizations came to the aid of FNC. Despite many in the media's dislike for FOX, they looked past their own affection for the Obama administration and viewed the conflict as potentially dangerous to the free press

of which they are a part of.

The first half of 2010 went by with a more restrained demeanor coming out of the White House. In the wake of the passage of Obamacare and unexpected Republican wins in special elections, the administration lowered the combative rhetoric, recognizing that the electorate was not at all happy with their recent actions.

In April, the BP oil spill hit. An oil rig explosion in the Gulf of Mexico led to an environmental disaster and the Obama administration found themselves on the defensive against criticism that they didn't respond quickly enough to the catastrophe. There was an easy villain this time: BP. Traditional protocol would have been to get the problem fixed first, then later address accountability for the accident. However, it was clear from the start that the administration wasn't going to wait. "Big Oil" has always been a favorite target of liberal politicians, so it was no surprise when Interior Secretary Ken Salazar set the tone, stating that the administration was going to "keep the boot on the neck of BP". Almost immediately, Attorney General Eric Holder launched criminal and civil investigations of BP. Obama himself excoriated the oil company for spending money on television advertising and dividend payments. The narrative was clearly to vilify BP who was indeed responsible and should have been held accountable. However, the administration's piling on of the oil giant in the middle of the crisis wasn't done in the interest of fixing the problem (which BP was clearly working exhaustively at). It was done to deflect criticism away from Obama.

Two months before the 2010 election, after analyzing political polls and concluding that Republicans were on the path to take back the House of Representatives, Obama himself went after the next villain in line: Then House Minority Leader, John Boehner. While Obama campaigned hard against the generic 2010 Republican candidates, everyone knew that Boehner was sure to

become the next Speaker of the House if the Republicans won. Since it's easier to create a villain caricature from an individual than it is from an ideology, he went directly after the man. On September 8th, the president delivered a hyper-partisan speech that berated Boehner by name a grand total of eight times, portraying him as the symbol of everything selfish, greedy, and merciless in politics. White House aides posted blog items hitting Boehner on his ideas for the economic recovery. Press Secretary Robert Gibbs mocked Boehner in his daily briefings while Obama and other Democrats teased him about his tanned skin. An anonymous White House senior aide explained to the Los Angeles Times, "You need a device if you're going to have a debate, because you can't have a debate against a vacuum. Boehner provided an opportunity for that." The attempt to vilify Boehner ultimately failed because at the time, the public had little idea of who he was. Once details of his rags to riches personal story became widespread knowledge to the public, the strategy fizzled.

Though the outcome of the 2010 election was not at all what the White House wanted, it opened an opportunity for the creation of a new villain – the first one that actually had some opposition power in Washington... The Tea Party. Republican candidates that ran on fiscally conservative promises won a strong majority in the House of Representatives. Once in office, they took a hard line on federal spending which proved to be a major thumb in the eye of the Obama agenda. Battles over the budget and debt ceiling forced Obama and the rest of the Democratic party into concessions that angered their liberal base. Just months after President Obama's plea for the toning down of divisive rhetoric in response to the Gabrielle Giffords shooting, he and his supporters began likening Republican opposition to "hostage taking". Soon after, politicians and pundits moved to outright calling the Tea Party "terrorists".

We're currently experiencing Obama's most creatively conjured

up villain to date: Washington. Yes, the president of the United States is actually casting himself as the victim of partisan gridlock in Washington. Content with throwing his own party under the bus, he's now the responsible parent trying to get squabbling siblings to put aside their differences and clean up the playroom. Ridiculous.

The liberal ideology has long relied on the promotion of victimization to attract support. If you can convince voters that they are victims of the environment and government is the solution, you'll win elections. We see this often at the populist level, but rarely at the leadership level. In fact, I can't remember another president ever running on the notion that he's as much of a victim of the U.S. government as the electorate is. This need to create a villain in order to garnish sympathy and support is the mark of an extremely weak leader who can't be successful on his own vision and actions.

Ironically, this administration has been painfully reluctant to identify our REAL villains, like Islamic terrorists. Yet, they're all too eager to create false enemies.

Obama ran his 2008 campaign on the promise of an era of unification and post-partisanship. However, he opted instead to turn division into a cinematic art-form.

Racist Elements

☒ Typically, when a politician or media personality starts receiving heat for publicly stating that the Tea Party is a racist movement, they fall back to a common argument. That argument usually sounds something like this: "Well, they're not ALL racists, but there are racist elements within their ranks".

Most recently, it was Democratic Congressman Andre Carson of Indiana who went through the motions. Last Monday, he told a gathering of supporters that the Tea Party movement would like to see black people “hanging on a tree”. Two days later, Carson clarified his remarks for CNN stating, “I am deeply concerned about some elements of the tea party who are extremist...”

Last year, the NAACP even adopted a highly-publicized resolution that specifically condemned “racist elements” within the Tea Party movement.

This raises an obvious question: What exactly is a “racist element”?

In the context of how most people are using the term, it seems to be a way of applying the morally repugnant charge of racism to a group of people without having to actually offer any proof that the foundation of the group supports or promotes racism. If a racist is a member of the group, that group has “racist elements”.

This of course would mean that if you’re ever attending a concert, and you hear someone in the audience yell a racial slur, you’re suddenly part of a group that has “racist elements”. Congratulations!

Now to me, this sounds an awful lot like Guilt By Association, which liberals repeatedly told us in 2008 was completely and utterly unfair to then presidential candidate, Barack Obama. Isn’t it fascinating that the same people who are now complaining about racist elements in the Tea Party were tight-lipped when it came to the indisputable racist elements within Reverend Jeremiah Wright’s church, of which Obama was a member? Congressman Andre Carson himself didn’t seem to have a contempt for “racist elements” when he endorsed parishioner Barack Obama for the presidency during the height of the Wright controversy.

What's the difference here? Why is it a problem when the racist elements are a couple of idiots who show up at a rally waving objectionable signs, but not when the racist elements are the leaders of the group who are spewing racism to an applauding congregation?

The unfortunate reality these days is that the accusation of racism is rarely a legitimate condemnation of vile, racial discrimination. Today, it's most often used as a tool to silence and discredit opposing viewpoints. It pains me to reach such a conclusion because genuine racism is a very serious issue that deserves attention, but with accusations of racism thrown around like candy at a parade, the charge is meaningless.

Sadly, as many have pointed out, our country as a whole has historically had a racist element to it. Though continually shrinking over time, it might always be with us.

What I'd like to see is a larger "shame element" in our society, where more people condemn those who trivialize the issue of racism for their personal attention and gain. I tend to believe that growth in this element would work towards diminishing the other.

One can hope.

Global Warming and Morality

✘ In a recent interview, former Vice President Al Gore compared global warming skepticism to racism. He explained that his generation began to win the Civil Rights movement by questioning their elders on the morality of discriminating against people whose skin color was different. Seeing many

similarities between the two cultural debates, Gore believes that society should use morality to marginalize global warming skepticism the same way it used morality to marginalize racism.

Now while I think it's over the top to use such an analogy, I'll at least give Mr. Gore some credit for not literally accusing global warming skeptics of being racists. In today's political environment, that sort of thing has sadly become common from the left. However, in the wake of his profanity-laced-tirade against the same opponents a few weeks ago, it's clear that Al Gore has found himself in the desperate, unanticipated position of having to fight for his own relevance.

Oh how the mighty have fallen.

Just a few short years ago, Al was the king of the world. He won the Nobel Peace Prize for his environmental activism, an Oscar for his documentary "An Inconvenient Truth", an Emmy for his "Current TV" news channel, and Tony Award for his critically acclaimed Broadway musical "Dancing for Carbon Credits". I might be wrong about that last one, but you get my point. In addition to having the respect of world leaders and unlimited media adoration, he was racking up millions and millions of dollars in speaking fees. He had successfully transitioned from a politician to a celebrity. Life couldn't have been better.

But suddenly, he and his crusade were on the receiving end of an unexpected double-whammy. The world was hit with an economic crisis that re-prioritized international concern away from climate change and toward fiscal stability. Soon after, the Climategate scandal hit. Hacked emails revealed that leading climate change scientists had been actively suppressing their critics while manipulating climate data that was proving their own predictions wrong. The U.S. media largely didn't pick up on Climategate (big surprise), but the

British media certainly did and the climate change movement was tremendously hurt by the exposure.

Gore seemed to go into sabbatical with his global influence soon reduced to reading environmental poetry to a fawning, emotional Harry Smith on CBS's "Early Show". By the way, if any of you haven't watched that video on YouTube, you're missing out on a classic.

I certainly don't feel sorry for Mr. Gore, as I think his arrogance and condescension toward opposing views and opposing data has clouded what could very well be a legitimate issue. I don't subscribe to the alarmist tactics that he has used to promote his environmental prophecies. However, I also don't feel comfortable discounting the evidence that man-made pollution is having a dangerous affect on our atmosphere.

What I can say without any hesitation is that the differing opinions in the global warming debate have nothing to do with morality. There is no moral edge between believers and skeptics. However, Al Gore himself may be an exception. If skeptics of man-made global warming are immoral (as Gore believes), what does that make the spokesman of the movement who leaves a larger carbon footprint in any given year than the average person does in a lifetime?

Personalize the question: If you were absolutely convinced that the lifestyle of many humans was causing catastrophic damage to the planet, what would you do? Would you change your own lifestyle to keep from contributing to the problem, or would you live a lifestyle that exacerbates the problem while you lecture others on the problem (making millions of dollars in the process)? Isn't that the real moral argument here?

To use his own metaphor of racism, which I do only in the spirit of irony: Isn't Al Gore like a segregationist who preaches racial diversity to others?

Why the 2012 Campaign Will Be About Social Issues

✘ With chronically high unemployment, anemic economic growth, and monstrous debt hanging over the head of America, one would assume that the 2012 presidential race would certainly be about the economy. My prediction is that it won't be. Once the Republican primaries are over and a GOP candidate has been selected, the narrative of the campaign will turn to social issues.

Now, before Rick Santorum fans get too excited, let me clarify my point: The debate will not be a contrast between social conservatism and social liberalism. The debate will be over whether or not the Republican candidate's views on social issues are too extreme to qualify him or her for the presidency.

"Too Extreme" will be the phrase we'll hear over and over again from media pundits, campaign spokespeople, and political commercials. It will be the cultural narrative of the election.

You see, Barack Obama has already lost the economic debate. He's the incumbent president who, despite making hundreds of promises and spending trillions of dollars, has not been able to rejuvenate this stalled economy. A recent Gallup poll showed that only 26% of voters approve of his handling of the economy. Obama's most vigorous defense of his failed economic policies has been to blame the Bush administration for the problems he inherited, and insist that things would have been far worse had he not taken the steps that he did. Other than that, there's not much he can do to escape the perception of

gross incompetence, even with the help of his surrogates in the media. Blaming congressional gridlock may keep him afloat in the short term, but I don't believe it to be a viable, long-term strategy.

Obama also won't have an edge when it comes to foreign policy. Yes, Bin Laden was killed on his watch, but with our country having now been engaged in three wars (one more than when Obama took office), voters aren't going to see a much of a difference between the two candidates. Besides, our military involvement overseas is no longer a hot issue for voters. We can thank the media for that. Once George W. Bush left office, the anti-war sediment being shoved down our throats every day on television suddenly came to a screeching halt.

This leaves social issues, and the only chance Obama has of beating his Republican counterpart is to paint that candidate as socially unacceptable, aka "too extreme".

Despite being low on the priority list of voters, issues like gay rights, creationism vs evolution, global warming, and special-circumstance abortions will rise to the forefront and put the Republican candidate on the defensive.

In spite of how bad the economy is, using these issues as part of a campaign strategy could very well win the president a second term. How do I know this? I saw it happen here in Colorado last year.

Colorado is a genuine swing-state. We've given our electoral votes to Bill Clinton, Bob Dole, George W. Bush (twice), and Barack Obama.

When the Tea Party tsunami swept across our country in the 2010 mid-term elections, we were one of the few purple states that managed to withstand the brunt of the wave. While Colorado Republicans picked up House congressional seats, they lost the important U.S. Senate race. The sitting senator, Michael Bennet, had supported the federal stimulus, every

bailout on record, and Obamacare – none of which were any more popular here than throughout the rest of the country.

In dissecting the loss of Republican Senatorial candidate Ken Buck, analysts lazily threw him into the category of unelectable Tea Party candidates like Christine O'Donnell and Sharon Angle, who proudly swung the populist banner of limited government but lacked the knowledge, background, and confidence of a serious candidate. This was not the case with Buck. Buck was a Princeton graduate, a former prosecutor for the U.S. Department of Justice, and the District Attorney of Weld County. He never embraced the Tea Party label, despite receiving some support from the movement. He was a strong, articulate candidate. Yet, he lost to his Democratic opponent who had an approval rating of only 39% just prior to the election. How did this happen? Buck's opposition successfully branded him as "too extreme" on social issues.

The Democratic party and outside groups concentrated all their efforts on blasting Buck relentlessly in advertisements and in public appearances for his personal opposition to certain types of birth control, his opposition to abortion in the cases of rape and incest, his belief that homosexuality is a choice, and his skepticism of man-made global warming. He didn't campaign on any of these issues, and they're pretty common positions in socially conservative circles, but the relentless pounding of the "too extreme" narrative caught on and worked.

Social issues often connect with people on an instinctive, emotional level. While more political-savvy people tend to look at comprehensive differences between candidates and their visions, constituents who don't necessarily follow the political spectrum tend to vote more on their gut feeling. So, if a campaign can drive a wedge into the voters' guts by exposing fringe (or at least minority), social viewpoints of the opposing candidate, you can bet they'll do it.

In Buck's case, an election that polls showed was going to be a referendum on Democratic policy-makers became about him being "too extreme". The guy whose policies Colorado voters believed were damaging the country was rewarded with re-election. The guy whose vision they supported lost because of a handful of personal beliefs. Democratic operatives certainly took note of the successful strategy, labeling it "The Colorado Model".

In the 2012 presidential election, there's no doubt in my mind that this model will rise to the national level. That doesn't mean that there's no hope for a socially conservative Republican candidate. The strategy will most likely be used regardless of who the Republican candidate is, but some candidates are certainly more susceptible than others. The media, of course, will play their part by doing everything they can to mainstream the narrative. Despite the horrible economy, Obama's low approval ratings, and the overall unhappiness with the direction of our country, the Republicans need to be prepared for the "Too Extreme" strategy because it could very well lose them the race.