

Is “Torture” Ever Justified?

Let’s not spend a lot of time debating whether enhanced interrogation techniques, which include waterboarding, amount to torture. For the sake of this discussion, let’s say they do. Though I don’t believe it for a minute.

And let’s not argue over whether waterboarding yielded information that led to the courier who led the Navy Seals to Osama bin Laden. Instead, let’s say the jury is still out on that; that’s it’s too soon to know for sure.

Instead, let’s ponder this not-so-new question, which has surfaced again in the wake of the bin Laden take-down: Is torture, at the hands of CIA interrogators, or any other American authorities, *ever* justified?

✘ The New York Times, the most reliable daily publication of liberal thinking, says the answer is no. “There are many arguments against torture,” a recent editorial explained, before re-hashing its own old arguments. “It is immoral and illegal and counterproductive.”

This is the basic liberal view of torture. That it is always wrong because, most of all, it violates what liberals call, “American values.” Some go so far as to say there’s no difference between waterboarding and eye-gouging. Never mind that one leaves the prisoner with no eyes while the other leaves him merely gasping for breath –and only for a short time at that.

So, let’s examine the liberal case against torture – first, that it is illegal. Yes, but only because, well, only because there are laws against it. But that can easily be changed. All Congress has to do is pass new laws stating very clearly that under certain circumstances, and only with presidential approval, torture – or enhanced interrogation – is permissible. I’m not saying this will happen. And with our

current president in the White House, he almost certainly would veto such a law. But to argue that torture is wrong because it is illegal, isn't much of an argument. For a long time, mixed racial marriage was illegal in parts of our country. Surely, the Times wouldn't argue that because it was illegal it was also wrong.

What about torture being counterproductive? That one, as I say, is off the table at the moment – even though more than a few high-ranking officials have come forward to say that waterboarding did indeed play an important role in the discovery of bin Laden's hideout. That leaves us with “immoral.”

Forgive me for stating the obvious, but what is immoral to the liberals at New York Times and their acolytes on the Upper West Side of Manhattan isn't necessarily immoral to several hundred million other Americans. But let's pursue the allegation anyway.

Let's say a terrorist operation is underway to explode an atomic bomb in Times Square on New Year's Eve where a million people are gathered to have a good time. And let's also say that U.S. officials have in custody a terrorist suspect whom they believe knows where the bomb is hidden. But he refuses to talk.

I know, I know. You've heard all this before. It's the “ticking time bomb” scenario. The liberal case tells us that if we torture this suspect, we are committing an immoral act. Besides, we're told, we could get the information by other means (a dubious argument at best). But what those sensitive liberal souls don't answer is a question that goes to the very heart of the discussion:

Why it is *moral* to allow the bomb to go off killing hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians?

And exactly what American values are *upheld* by letting the

bomb go off. I can't think of any.

If liberals want to make the case that waterboarding is immoral no matter how many innocent lives are saved – even if the target is a yellow school bus filled with third graders on their way to the museum – then Man Up and make the case, with no apologies.

Nonetheless, like my liberal friends, I'm against torture. Really! They're against it 100 percent of the time. I'm against it 99 percent of the time. I'm against it to punish jay-walkers and litterbugs and car thieves. In fact, I'm against it to punish *anybody* for *any* crime, no matter how heinous, if the crime already has been committed. But if waterboarding, or some other enhanced interrogation technique, could save innocent American lives, I'm all for it. For me, *that's* the moral position.

Hate Crimes – Real and Mostly Imagined

✘ Every now and then a story comes along that has you checking the calendar to make sure it's not April Fools Day. You say to yourself, "This just can't be right. It's got to be a joke." Except, it isn't.

Such a story popped up in the news recently. This is how the Washington Post covered it:

BERKELEY, Ill. – Safoorah Khan had taught middle school math for only nine months in this tiny Chicago suburb when she made an unusual request. She wanted three weeks off for a pilgrimage to Mecca.

The school district, faced with losing its only math lab instructor during the critical end-of-semester marking period, said no. Khan, a devout Muslim, resigned and made the trip anyway.

That was in 2008. So you might think that's how the story ends. A teacher asks for time off right in the middle of the school year; school officials says no; she quits. Think again. Here's what has now happened, as the Washington Post reports:

Justice Department lawyers examined the same set of facts and reached a different conclusion: that the school district's decision amounted to outright discrimination against Khan. They filed an unusual lawsuit, accusing the district of violating her civil rights by forcing her to choose between her job and her faith.

Never mind that Ms. Khan's religion allows her to make the pilgrimage any time in her entire life. And since she's only 29 years old, odds are she probably would have plenty of time to go, when it wouldn't interfere with her job.

But, as the Washington Post reports, "she longed to make the hajj[pilgrimage], one of the five pillars of the Islamic faith, which Muslims are obligated to do once."

The next time the hajj falls on her summer break is nine years down the road. Too long a wait for Ms. Khan. Her lawyer told the Post, "This was the first year she was financially able to do it. It's her religious belief that a Muslim must go for hajj quickly ... that it's a sin to delay."

But Michael Esposito, the town's former mayor, said, "The school district just wanted a teacher in the room for those three weeks. They didn't care if she was a Martian, a Muslim or a Catholic. How come we bow down to certain religious groups? Why don't we go out of our way for the Baptists or the Jehovah's Witnesses?"

Perhaps because they're not special and Muslims are – at least as far as the Obama Administration is concerned. Anti-Muslim hate is “the civil rights issue of our time,” according to U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder.

In fact, it apparently is such a big problem that just a few weeks after the House Homeland Security Committee hearing on radicalization in the Muslim community in America, Senator Dick Durbin, a liberal Democrat from Ms. Kahn's home state of Illinois, announced that he will hold a hearing in the Senate – but not on the problem of radicalization. Durbin's hearings will be about anti-Muslim bigotry in the United States.

So just how serious a problem is anti-Muslim bigotry? One incident of hate is one too many, of course, but William Bennett and Seth Leibsohn – the authors of the *The Fight of Our Lives: Knowing the Enemy, Speaking the Truth, and Choosing to Win the War Against Radical Islam*, provide us with some interesting statistics:

It turns out that 8.4 percent of religious hate crimes in America were anti Muslim in 2009, the most recent year on record. That same year nearly 72 percent of religious hate crimes in this country were anti-Jewish. That translates to 107 hate crimes against Muslims in all of 2009; 931 against Jews.

“Of course each and every hate crime is horrific, and we wish there were zero hate crimes in America,” Bennett and Seibsohn write, “but the larger point is important for context. If a radio host or some cable commentator or U.S. senator said, ‘The United States discriminates against Jews’ or ‘Jews have a particularly hard time in the United States’ or, ‘There is a lot of anti-Jewish bigotry in America,’ it would simply not comport with most people's – or most Jewish Americans' – understandings of 21st century America. And yet, we accept at face value the storyline of wholesale anti-Muslim bigotry in America.”

Ms. Khan's case is working its way through federal court in Chicago. There won't be a decision by April first of this year. But maybe by April Fools Day 2012. Except there's nothing funny about our President's pandering to Muslims – especially when there is no evidence that they are being targeted as a group for hate crimes.

As for the children who would have to endure a substitute teacher for three weeks while Ms. Khan was away in Mecca. As they say on the playground: tough noogies for you, kid.

Progressives Lost in Time ...

✘ Back in the days of America's civil rights revolution, liberals were on the right side of history. Conservatives were on the wrong side.

Liberals believed that black people should be able to vote, eat at any lunch counter, drink out of any water fountain, stay at any hotel, and sit anywhere they wanted on a city bus.

Did conservatives – most of them Southern Democrats – really believe that this was not so much about race but about states' rights? Did they really believe that states had the right to treat white people one way and black people another? Well, yes, they did. Their position not only was wrong, it was indecent.

So, in those days the word "racism" meant something. Maybe not to the racists. Nothing could shame them. But in civilized society, the word carried power. No more.

Today the word is thrown around promiscuously, mainly by liberals. You're a racist if ... you're against affirmative

action as it's currently practiced. You're a racist if ... you think the government is spending too much money on all sorts of questionable programs ...

It sounds like Jeff Foxworthy's redneck routine: You're a redneck if ... You think the last words to the national anthem are "Gentlemen, start your engines." You're a redneck if ... You've been married three times and still have the same in-laws."

That stuff made you laugh. The racism routine makes you want to cry.

Back in the bad old days of real racism, who could have foreseen a time when liberals – the ones who fought so hard for civil rights – would be the ones who would cheapen the word and render it meaningless?

Enter card-carrying progressive Lawrence O'Donnell, who took over for Keith Olbermann on MSNBC. The other night, O'Donnell spotted another case of "racism" in America. He was interviewing Jennifer Granholm, the former Democratic governor of Michigan, when he said this:

"Governor, I want you to listen to that last line of that Republican attack ad against President Obama one more time." He then ran the ad, which ended with this: "Stop Obama and his union bosses today. The Republican National Committee is responsible for the content of this advertising."

In case you didn't see the racism in those words, we'll leave it to Mr. O'Donnell to explain: "The Republican Party is saying that the President of the United States has bosses; that the union bosses this President around, the unions boss him around. Does that sound to you like they are trying to consciously or subconsciously deliver the racist message that, of course, of course a black man can't be the real boss?"

Never mind that Republicans have been saying pretty much the

same thing about Democrats ever since unions came into existence in this country. It used to be called politics. Now, apparently it's called racism – because, as everyone knows, “of course a black man can't be the real boss.”

And I thought Olbermann was nuts!

Even a liberal like Granholm was caught off guard. “Wow, I hadn't thought about the racial overtones,” she said, before changing the subject.

One of the many problems with so-called progressives is that they haven't progressed very much over the past 50 or 60 years, at least not when the subject involves race. Instead, they're hopelessly mired in the past. Someone needs to tell Lawrence O'Donnell, and his progressive pals, that America has changed. It's no longer 1965, and we're not in Selma anymore.

You can cry wolf just so many times before people stop paying attention. And that's the real crime of the progressive Left. If we call every slight, real or imagined, racism, if even honest disagreements are portrayed as racist, what should we call the real thing when it shows its ugly head?

And by the way, the mayor of Selma these days is a black man.

It Was Horrible, I tell you ... HORRIBLE!

☒ I've just been to a horrible place. A place where sad-faced humans plod along in long lines like zombies; where smug authoritarians bark out commands; where the zombies do just as they're told, fearing the consequences if they don't.

Yes, my friends, I've just been to the airport.

It was bad enough when we only had to take off our shoes, jackets, coats and hats. And had to take out our computers and our little bottles of shampoo and tiny tubes of toothpaste so the men in women in uniform could make sure we weren't smuggling anything on the plane that wasn't allowed according to federal rules and regulations.

Now, as I have just learned, we must also take off our belts (no exceptions; doesn't matter if they're made of metal, leather, or flamingo feathers) and take our wallets out of our pockets – because the new high-tech machines demand we have nothing on us when they take a picture of our naked bodies.

The other day when the TSA guy told me I couldn't walk through the metal detector until I put my wallet in a little round tray so it could go through the x-ray machine, I asked him, "What do you think is in this wallet that might do harm to people on an airplane?" Call me curious.

With the new high-tech machine – which he pointed to – you can't have a wallet in your pocket or a belt on your pants. "But nobody is going through the new machine. We're all going through the old metal detector machine."

Yes, he said, but what happens if the old metal detector machine breaks? Then you're going to have to go through the new high-tech machine. Yeah, and if I had wheels I'd be a trolley car.

When I got through security, a pilot for a major airline – who was also disgusted since he practically had to get undressed before they let him through security – started a conversation with me about how ridiculous the system is. "You know what TSA stands for?" he asked me. Figuring it wasn't what I thought, I said no, what? "Thousands Standing Around," he said.

Look, I'm all for security. We're all for security. And I know

the TSA folks mean well. But, come on, don't they remind you of Deputy Sheriff Barney Fife on the old Andy Griffith TV show? Barney would go after old ladies jaywalking with the same vigor he would go after a serial killer, if one ever stumbled into Mayberry. Same with the TSA people. An 85 year old grandma from Des Moines gets the full pat down if they find a knitting needle in her bag. Does this make sense? And why do I think a 22 year old man from Yemen would have an easier time getting through security, even if he was singing the al-qaeda national anthem as he walked through either the old metal detector or the new high-tech machine that wasn't working the day I went to the airport.

There's got to be a better way, but don't count on the TSA to come up with it. A better system might mean fewer TSA agents, and we couldn't have that, now could we?

So here are a few ideas I came up with – not all involve security, but they would all make traveling a little easier – for me, which is who I care about most:

1. Give the pilots a tamper-proof ID card and then let them walk right on through the security checkpoint no matter how much conditioner they're carrying aboard. Think about it: THESE GUYS ARE FLYING A JET PLANE FILLED WITH FUEL. THEY CAN FLY IT INTO THE GROUND IF THAT'S WHAT THEY WANT TO DO. Who cares how much conditioner – or toothpaste, or shampoo, or deodorant – they're taking on the plane.
2. If you're a frequent flier – if the airline knows your name, address, phone number, place of employment, and all that – you should be able to pass through security with a minimum of hassle; you should not have to wait in the long zombie line. This will reduce congestion. Memo to TSA and airlines: Come up with an idea. It can't be that complicated.
3. Since there is no smoking allowed on planes, it only makes

sense that there should be no babies allowed on planes. Okay, not all planes. But some flights should be baby-free. They cry and annoy me.

4. Airline agents in the gate area should be prohibited – by federal law punishable by time in the Big House – from telling passengers to get ON the plane. My name isn't Evel Knievel. Tell me to get IN the plane. (I thank my pal, the late George Carlin for that one.)

5. Make it illegal for flight attendants to say, "This is a VERY full flight." There are no degrees of full. A flight is either full or it isn't. If they're that sloppy with the language, how can I be sure they're going to get my drink order right?

Okay, that's all I have time for right now. I have to go to the airport. And if any TSA person is reading this, I don't know who got into my computer to write such hateful stuff.

Liberals Don't Deserve America

Considering the way that Obama shows his contempt for patriotism time and again – as when he misquotes the Declaration of Independence, neglects to place his hand over his heart at flag ceremonies and denies American exceptionalism at every opportunity – you'd think he'd learn to leave symbolic gestures to the professionals. Instead, whether the issue is closing Gitmo, providing civilian trials for Islamic terrorists or racial profiling at airports, his sole consideration seems to be whether something will annoy Muslims. Understand, I'm not claiming he is a Muslim. I have

no proof of that. I'm claiming he's an arrogant idiot.

As I see it, America has been setting the world a damn good example for over 230 years. Most people have gotten the message long before now. The exceptions have mainly been Islamics and communists, and they're not looking for good examples; they're looking for world conquest. If the president wants to set a good example, he should stop insulting our allies and mollifying our sworn enemies.

Frankly, whenever I hear those knuckleheads in academia and the media praising the likes of Castro and Chavez or lamenting the loss of Mao or Che, I want to rap on their heads just to hear the echo. I mean, is it possible that they are totally unaware that, starting with Stalin, every communist regime has started out by employing intellectuals (aka "useful idiots") to propagandize on their behalf, and, inevitably, ended up by executing the ultimately unnecessary pests.

The reasons that intellectuals are so dangerous is because, one, they reside in a bubble, be it at a university, a paper or a TV newsroom, where they are surrounded by their clones; and, two, they are so certain that they're smarter than everyone else that any two-bit despot who pays them the least bit of attention will have them acting like lapdogs, eager to lick his hand and kiss his patootie.

Intellectuals remind me of Randy and Evi Quaid. They're the couple that escaped to Canada. Psychiatrists have suggested that the Quaid's suffer from folie a deux, the madness of two. It's a delusional state shared by two people who bolster each other's twisted take on reality. When more than two people share the same delusions, we refer to it as the Democratic party.

In the case of the Quaid's, they believe there's a secret cabal in America that has been responsible for murdering Michael Jackson and Heath Ledger. The Quaid's believe those mysterious

assassins they refer to as the Star Whackers are now after them. Of course, any sane person would realize how ridiculous that is. We're talking about Randy Quaid, for crying out loud. He really shouldn't start worrying until he gets word that he's been targeted by the Has-been Whackers.

Finally, getting back to Obama and foreign policy, the man is convinced that we can actually undermine and destroy Iran through economic pressure. That might be described as folie a un. Still, I can see where he might have gotten the idea. After all, it's worked like a charm for him here in America.

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