

# Why It's Sad to Watch the Bush/Clinton Friendship

☒ On Monday, a large crowd attending the NCAA championship game in Arlington, Texas between Connecticut and Kentucky took a moment to loudly applaud an image displayed on the large video boards inside AT&T Stadium.

It was of former U.S. presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush seated next to each other in one of the luxury boxes, enjoying the game, as well as each other's company.

I've always found the friendship between Bill Clinton and the Bush family to be very endearing. It's something genuine, positive, and quite unlikely in an American political landscape marred by bitter, hyper-partisan animosity.


I enjoy hearing stories of how the Bushes consider Clinton a member of their family, and of how respectful Clinton has been of George H.W. Bush in their travels together. Whenever I look at Bill Clinton and the Bushes together, I don't see a cheap photo op. I see people who have an honest affection for each other, and who treat each other with dignity.

Such imagery is good for the country. What saddens me about the display is that I know it will be a while before we see such presidential camaraderie again.

Things changed in 2008 when Barack Obama was elected as our president. Once the campaigning was over and it was time to move on to leading our country, we quickly found out that President Obama wasn't prepared to take the reins and begin defining himself by his own actions. Instead, he decided to continue campaigning against his predecessor for the next four years, making George W. Bush the scapegoat for all that continued to go wrong and worsen in the country. Instead of taking responsibility for his own presidency and taking the

licks for his own lack of success, Obama held tightly onto his bogeyman, cast himself as a helpless bystander, and successfully stacked his own failures onto the shoulders of the Bush legacy. The strategy went a long way toward winning him a second term in office.

To George W. Bush's immense credit, he's demonstrated a lot of discipline and personal character (far more than his political detractors will ever give him credit for) by remaining silent on the criticism. It's a true testament to the amount of respect he clearly has for the office of the presidency. I think anyone who has observed President Obama's demeanor over the past five years can rest assured that he won't extend the same courtesy, should a Republican take the White House in 2016.

In their rare public dealings, Bush has been pleasant with President Obama in front of the cameras, as we would all expect. I don't think anyone, however, could fathom how he could *personally* respect and befriend a man who has shown him such utter, unprecedented disregard. 

On a side note, I don't see Bill Clinton and President Obama sharing a bond of friendship either. Sure, they've been political allies in recent years because it's mutually beneficial and it helps their party, but the personal animosity between the Clintons and the Obamas is far from a secret in Washington. It of course stems from the 2008 primaries when an heir to the presidency was sidelined and the race card was played. Not to mention that Obama's done his share of throwing Clinton-era policies under the bus as well.

Now, there's no requirement that presidents and former presidents (especially from opposing political parties) *need* to be friends or even respect each other. The country can certainly do just fine without it. But when you see a display like the one that was applauded in Arlington, Texas on Monday, and come to realize that it likely marks the end of an era, it

is indeed a sad thought.