

# The Self-Degradation of Trump Apologists



Many in the media have pointed out that the controversial statements that routinely come out of Donald Trump's mouth often put his supporters in the awkward, unenviable position of having to rationalize them. This isn't always such an easy thing to do, but some people do seem

up for the challenge.

For example, whenever I reference Trump's highly-publicized insult of American POWs (when attacking Senator John McCain) in one of my columns, members of the GOP front-runner's impassioned faithful quickly tell me that Trump did nothing wrong. They say that his comments were a justified dig at McCain for a remark the senator made about Trump fans. Of course, that's ridiculous. Mocking the plight and heroism of our fighting soldiers who were captured (and in some cases tortured) by a brutal enemy has no justification.

When I point out the fallacy of Trump's claim of seeing thousands of Muslims in New Jersey celebrating the 9/11 attacks, I'm told by some of the Trump crowd (and unsurprisingly no one else) that they themselves personally witnessed the event he described. They didn't see it, because what Trump depicted didn't happen.

Even those who had previously spoken out strongly against the notion that President George W. Bush lied about WMDs to take us to war in Iraq now seem to view Trump's advancement of that same accusation to be strangely acceptable. Some are now open to the possibility, while others – when called out on their

inconsistency – are left utterly speechless.

Not all of Trump's apologists have the face-saving luxury of being able to hide behind anonymous Internet screen names, of course. Some are public figures, who (while choosing to pick their battles a bit more carefully) still feel inclined to make excuses for the GOP front-runner's rhetoric – excuses they most certainly wouldn't make for anyone else.

Just a few days ago, Dr. Ben Carson (former GOP presidential candidate and brand new Trump surrogate) told *The Hill* that Trump really doesn't believe some of the things he says publicly, while campaigning.

In defending his endorsement of Trump, Carson described a meeting he'd had with billionaire beforehand, and the criteria his support was contingent on: "I needed to know that he could listen to other people, that he could change his opinions, and that some of the more outlandish things that he's said, that he didn't really believe those things."

Carson apparently received the affirmations he needed from Trump. And for some reason, Trump admitting privately to making false statements publicly is somehow supposed to be reassuring to voters.

I've been hearing more of these "Don't worry, he doesn't really mean it" and "It's okay, he's not normally like this" Trump-excuses for months, and I'm shocked that the people relaying them don't seem to understand how ridiculous they make them sound. Someone laying out the case for a man's presidency shouldn't have to talk like an abused wife defending her husband's actions to a friend. Yet, that's exactly how they come across.

*Fox News'* Bill O'Reilly has been particularly guilty of this. On a number of occasions, he's made allowances for Trump's controversial statements, even personally vouching for his character. Last night, he did it again in a conversation with

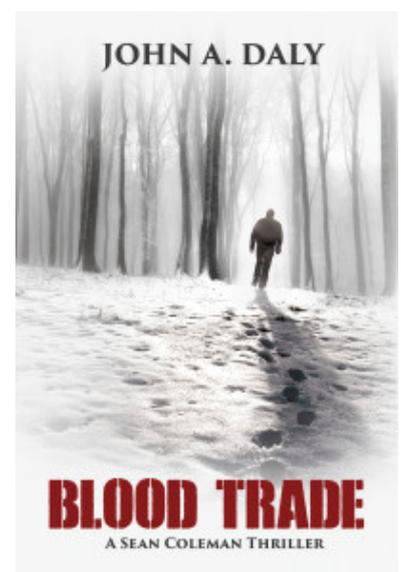
Charles Krauthammer.

Krauthammer took O'Reilly to task for not calling out Trump's refusal to condemn a man who sucker-punched a protester at one of his rallies (Trump went as far as calling the man a patriot, and even offered to pick up his legal fees).

The best response O'Reilly could muster was: "I've said [Trump] has to *readjust his rhetoric*."

Krauthammer didn't let O'Reilly off the hook, responding with, "Come on Bill! 'Readjust the rhetoric'? What kind of weaselly words are those? 'Readjust the rhetoric'?"

After some back and forth, O'Reilly elaborated: "Trump speaks in an emotional manner. He doesn't have notes. He's not, you know, going in there with a speech that says 'beat up protesters.' He speaks like this: bang, bang, bang. And he doesn't have a filter. He doesn't censor himself. He doesn't think sometimes before he speaks. That's what a billionaire businessman has done his whole life. He hasn't made the transition as I've pointed out. He doesn't understand that his words now carry, and can carry threats. He doesn't seem to have gotten that part, right? And I'm hoping that he does..."



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Though O'Reilly insisted that he wasn't making excuses for Trump, how can any objective, intelligent individual interpret such rationale as anything else? *Of course* he was making excuses – the kind of excuses that sound ridiculous when being put forth for a grown adult, let alone a presidential candidate.

The intentions of Trump's apologists (and the apologists for the other candidates, for that matter) aren't necessarily bad; in some cases, I don't think they're even self-recognized. But there should never be a need by *anyone* to compromise their personal integrity to protect a presidential candidate from being held to the standards of the office he or she is running for. No serious candidate should require such allowances in the first place.

In the interest of self-respect, can we please stop making excuses for the inexcusable?

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**The Way to a Man's Heart Is  
Through Comparing Him to a  
Child Molester**



A lot of Donald Trump critics (including me) have long shaken their heads at the Republican front-runner's incessant use of platitudes to gloss over his shortcomings as a candidate. That's not to say that the tactic hasn't been effective. It absolutely has.

Much like what we saw with Barack Obama's "Hope and Change" campaign in 2008, policy positions, a grasp of the issues, and a coherent plan forward aren't as highly valued items among a good chunk of the electorate as a catchy, often-repeated slogan.

One of Trump's favorite expressions (one that he used ad nauseam in last night's CNN debate) is that, as president, he's going to "make deals." The phrase of course plays off of Trump's strengths and iconic brand as a businessman. It also serves another purpose.

In a piece in the *National Review* this morning, Charles Cooke describes the phrase as a "rhetorical device" that allows Trump to "justify his routine incoherence and total lack of policy expertise."

Cooke is certainly correct. That being said, one can't deny that Trump does have some obvious talent as a deal-maker. After all, he just received the endorsement of former rival, Ben Carson.

Sure, a political endorsement isn't akin to high-level, big-money, corporate negotiations, but in the case of Ben Carson, it might just be as impressive.

Carson has long been recognized as a man of strong character.

He's a person of deep faith and moral conviction. His life-story is an inspiring, true testament to the glory of redemption. He has literally saved lives – many lives. He has taken people's pain away, and he has made the quality of life immeasurably better for countless others. His endorsement is worth something.

And he has just endorsed Donald Trump, a man whose political rise was built – in part – off of Trump's degradation and mockery of Carson's honorable, inspirational legacy.

That must have been one hell of a deal.

I realize I sound cynical, but I call things as I see them. Even in an election cycle as bizarre as this one has been, the Carson endorsement strikes me as particularly inexplicable.

Months ago, when Carson's candidacy was threatening Trump's in the polls, Trump chose not to attack Carson on policy, experience, or anything related to Carson's platform. He instead attacked Carson's very character:

Trump trashed Carson's autobiography, framing it as fictional and hopelessly dishonest. At a rally in Iowa, Trump called people who believed Carson's life-story "stupid." He even stepped out from behind his podium, and asked people in the audience to try and stab him with a knife – a mockery of a life-changing story from Carson's youth.

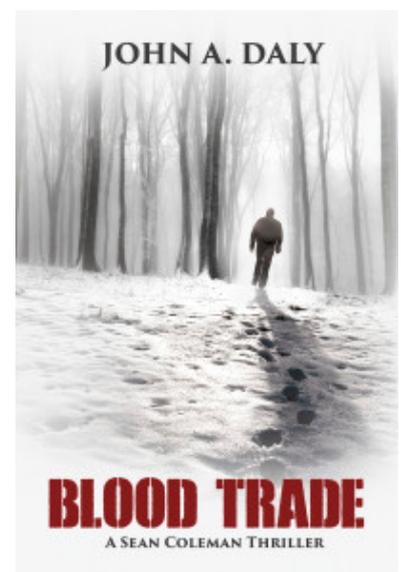
Trump turned Carson's self-description of his temperament as a kid into a theme that the Carson of today is pathologically unstable, and thus comparable to a "child molester" – yes, a child molester.

Trump diminished Carson's vast achievements as a world renowned neurosurgeon, overlooking all of his medical breakthroughs and the people he'd helped, to insist that Carson was just "okay" at his job.

Trump even mocked Carson's faith journey, saying, "[Carson] goes into the bathroom for a couple of hours, and he comes out, and now he's religious. And the people of Iowa believe him. Give me a break. Give me a break. It doesn't happen that way. It doesn't happen that way. Don't be fools, okay?"

Keep in mind that this is the same Donald Trump that took great, vocal offense to having his own religious beliefs questioned.

Hey, perhaps Dr. Carson is simply living by the coveted Christian tenant of forgiveness, and that's his explanation for looking past the things Trump has said about him. It's certainly possible (even though Trump himself has famously claimed never to have asked God for forgiveness).



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That wouldn't explain, however, the backing of a man whose moral code and highly demeaning and divisive rhetoric seem to stand in direct conflict with the platform of unity and civility that Carson tried so eloquently to campaign on.

It seems unfathomable that a man of Carson's moral principles would even entertain advocating for someone who mocks disabled people, brags of his affairs, works references to women's genitalia into public addresses, lies at will, and presents himself as his own false idol. Then again, many other evangelical voters have demonstrated that they don't care about such things in a candidate, so maybe I shouldn't be as surprised as I am.

I guess I also shouldn't be surprised that even Carson's stances on the issues seem pretty far removed from Trump's, whether we're talking about healthcare, taxes, federal spending, or items within the social arena. Sure, we saw the same discrepancy with Chris Christie, but then again...that was Chris Christie; he hadn't set the integrity-bar very high for himself. The larger observation, I suppose, is what I alluded to earlier: Issues really don't matter anymore.

I do respect Ben Carson, and I do believe him to be a good man. I just hope whatever he got out of this deal somehow enables him to, in some small way, advance his noble vision for the country. Because the vision he just endorsed isn't it.

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## **The Shocking Lack of Urgency Among the GOP Field**



In September of last year, Wisconsin governor Scott Walker ended his candidacy for the Republican presidential nomination with an appeal to his fellow candidates regarding Donald Trump:

*"Today, I believe that I am being called to lead by helping to clear the race so that a positive conservative message can rise to the top of the field... I encourage other Republican presidential candidates to consider doing the same so the voters can focus on a limited number of candidates who can offer a positive conservative alternative to the current front-runner. This is fundamentally important to the future of the party and – ultimately – to the future of our country."*

No one listened.

It took nearly two months before another Republican candidate dropped out of the race, and another five weeks before two others finally departed from the ridiculously overcrowded field. The pattern has continued throughout this primary process, with presidential hopefuls staying in contention long beyond their expiration dates.

Even now, with two primaries and two caucuses in the books, and the likelihood of a Trump nomination, there are still individuals who are putting their egos before their stated visions for the country – visions that stand adamantly opposed to Trump's.

The result? While two-thirds of the Republican base don't subscribe to Trump's liberal, autocratic platform, there are

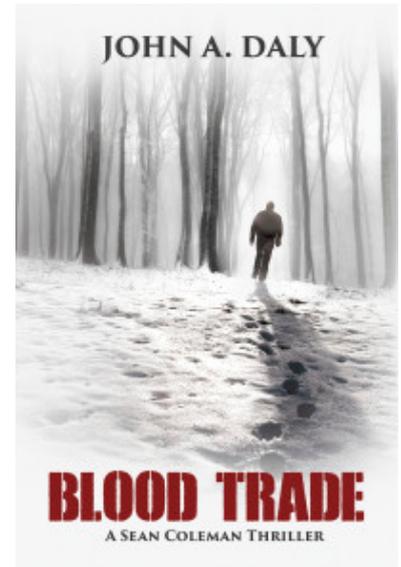
too many conservative-minded alternatives for any of the other candidates to stage an effective challenge against the front-runner.

Of course, not all of the blame falls on the other candidates. Trump has been helped greatly by the media. He monopolizes national news cycles with his outlandish, offensive remarks that have proven to be a big ratings draw. He has influential pundit-friends who've been willing to compromise their long-held principles to campaign for him on-air. He even has a liberal media that seems to be holding off on any substantive vetting of him until the general election; there's a reason for that, by the way.

Still, Trump's dominance would have never lasted this long, had it not been for too many candidates more driven by their public profiles and self-pride than putting our nation on a path back to its former glory and a promising future.

These people should have heeded Scott Walker's warning, but they didn't. And now time is about up.

A strong majority of Republican voters reject Trump, and favor someone who believes in conservative principles. If that majority is to have a relevant voice in this election, and actually beat Trump, they're going to need the type of leadership that Walker described back in September. And they're going to need it *fast*.



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Ben Carson should provide that leadership by leaving the race...today.

John Kasich should provide that leadership by leaving the race...today.

Rubio and Cruz should provide that leadership by figuring out who is the strongest candidate between them. The weakest of the two should go.

This isn't the primary that most of us in the Republican party expected or wanted, but it's where we're at. Unless we're okay with being represented by an undignified leftist for the next four years, we need to join together, accept the reality of the situation, and once and for all deal with it.

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# Could Ben Carson Be a Kingmaker in the GOP Primary?



The results of Monday's Iowa Caucus seem to prove what many observers have been speculating: the Republican presidential primary is a three-man race. Though that could change as early as next week, Ted Cruz, Donald Trump, and Marco Rubio are currently the candidates that have the momentum – something that's vitally important in a presidential campaign.

Sure, Iowa was a disappointing loss for Trump; he was favored to win the state, and many people were already considering him to be the inevitable GOP nominee. Still, his poll numbers are looking good for next week's New Hampshire primary, and Cruz and Rubio will likely build on the media hype they're enjoying for beating Iowa expectations.

What does this mean for the other candidates who are part of this large GOP group? Huckabee bowed out Monday night, and Santorum looks like he's soon to follow. Kasich, Bush, and Christie are teetering on double-digit support in New Hampshire polls, where they're dividing the field among voters who prefer a more traditional, policy-focused candidate. Thus, it's worth it for them to stay in the race...at least for now.

One name now notably absent from the conversation is Dr. Ben Carson, a man who once shared front-runner status with Donald Trump. Carson took 9% of the votes in the Iowa Caucus and is currently polling in New Hampshire at around 3%, with no uptick in support anticipated.

It's hard to see a pathway to victory for Dr. Carson, a man whose weaknesses as a politician have included inexperience in governing, a lack of knowledge in key areas of policy, and a propensity for committing verbal gaffes. Still, I think his waning candidacy may yet prove particularly relevant in this primary.

The general consensus among not just Republican voters but also independents (and even some Democrats) is that Dr. Carson is a good man. Sure, he's made some insensitive comments throughout the campaign – most of them tied to his socially conservative sensibilities and a lack of political training. Those comments understandably offended some, and led to apologies from Carson. Still, a lot of people listen to Carson's soft-spoken belief in a peaceful message of American unity, and recognize its authenticity.

It's that message that brought a couple thousand people to a book signing of his that I attended in Colorado in August of 2014, nearly a year before he announced his candidacy; attendees hung on his every word. It's also that message that made Carson the first 2016 presidential candidate whose name I saw turning up on people's car-bumpers – and not just a few. I still see the "America Needs a Doctor" bumper-sticker more than any other.

The evidence of Carson's grassroots support goes far beyond anecdotal, of course. He has continued to pull in huge fundraising numbers in recent months, even as his poll numbers have declined.

Even those who don't agree with Carson, or don't think he's a viable candidate, seem to respect him. And respect is certainly a rare thing in politics.

While I don't think Carson will last much longer in this presidential race, I do believe his endorsement (and active campaigning) could be extremely valuable to another candidate.

Though Trump has long remained the national front-runner in the GOP field, his popularity has never reflected a consensus (roughly two thirds of Republicans still want someone else). Simply put, there is *no* consensus at this point in time.



Breaking: Presidential candidate Donald Trump endorses John A. Daly's new novel.

Carson, as a man many people have come to admire, could potentially wind up as a kingmaker in this respect.

Who would Carson endorse? It's hard to say. I doubt he'd get behind the current front-runner – a man who mocked his faith and compared him to a child molester. He also seems unlikely to support Ted Cruz, whose campaign he believes spread false rumors about him on Iowa caucus night – rumors that cost him votes. Still, anything's possible. I've seen stranger alliances.

What I *am* confident in saying is that "How can I butter up Ben Carson?" is a question candidates should be asking their campaign strategists right about now.

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# Donald Trump and His Engineered Crazy Train



*"I believe it is easier for people to survive on this train if they have some level of insanity... You need to maintain a proper balance of anxiety and fear and chaos and horror in order to keep life going. And if we don't have that, we need to invent it." ~Minister Wilford*

The above is a line from one of my favorite movies of the last few years: *Snowpiercer*, a post-apocalyptic story of the planet's last remaining survivors, living aboard a perpetually-moving train in a new ice-age. It might also be the deliberate, defining philosophy behind Donald Trump's presidential campaign. At least, that's the essence of a theory that some have put forth.

For months, a number of Trump admirers have been telling me that the celebrity billionaire's seemingly unhinged, often offensive conduct is not – I repeat, *not* – the stamp of an egotistical, overly insecure individual with a screw loose. They insist, instead, that Trump knows *exactly* what he's doing. They say he has masterfully used the psychological edge he has over his opponents to dismantle their candidacies, tap into the souls of voters, and draw in electoral support. Several news pundits have made a similar claim.

In other words, Trump's not crazy... He's crazy like a fox.

Is it possible they're right? I've rejected the notion from the very beginning of Trump's candidacy, but seeing as how the loonier the man acts, the stronger he performs in the polls, I'm starting to have second thoughts.

Could it be that mocking American POWs for their capture, musing over female journalists' menstrual cycles, and comparing opponents to child molesters truly is the mark of an advanced, self-aware mind? After watching Trump's Iowa speech from Thursday night, I believe it's time to consider that.

The 95-minute-long speech, which Trump delivered in front of a crowd of roughly 150 people, covered a lot of ground. It touched on some policies and his thoughts on his primary opponents. In case you missed it, here were some of the highlights:

- In regard to critics that have accused him of not understanding foreign policy, Trump said that he actually knows more about Islamic State terrorists than U.S. generals do. "Believe me," he added to assure the crowd. He also took credit for predicting 9/11.
- Regarding immigration, he repeated his policy-point that the Mexican government would pay for a border wall, and he praised himself for raising the issue of "anchor babies," explaining that the "geniuses" at Harvard Law School have now backed his play. Additionally, he said that when it comes to immigration, Marco Rubio is "weak like a baby", and that sweat would be pouring off Rubio's face if he were ever in a poker game.
- Regarding terrorism, Trump explained that as president, he will "bomb the s—" out of oil fields in Iraq and Syria, and claim that oil for America.
- Multiple times, Trump marveled at how the attendees positioned on stage behind him were remaining on their feet throughout his speech. Note: they didn't have chairs.
- For the second time in two days, Trump cited the phrase

“pathological temper” (which Ben Carson had used to describe his younger self in his autobiography) as evidence that Carson was similar to a child molester. His rationale: Child molesters are pathological too.

- Trump cast doubt on the claims in Carson’s book that he once tried to stab someone with a knife, with the intended victim being spared from injury by the belt buckle he was wearing. In case the audience didn’t fully appreciate the story’s implausibility, Trump stepped out from behind his podium and physically reenacted the scenario, asking if anyone in a crowd had a knife that they would like to try and stab him with.
- Commenting on Carson’s description of how he turned to religion, Trump said, “He goes into the bathroom for a couple of hours, and he comes out, and now he’s religious. And the people of Iowa believe him. Give me a break. Give me a break. It doesn’t happen that way. It doesn’t happen that way. Don’t be fools, okay?”
- Trump offered his opinion of people who believe Ben Carson’s account of his life story, asking, “How stupid are the people of Iowa? How stupid are the people of the country to believe this crap?”
- Trump also explained about himself, “I’m not polarizing.”

It was quite a speech, described by the *Washington Post*’s Jenna Johnson (who was at the event) as an angry, defensive rant. Yet, the rhetoric was really only distinguishable from past Trump statements by its sheer length (95 minutes straight without any time available for questions, which Trump has promised) and it’s cumulative nature. Thus, there must have been some psychological brilliance to it, because Trump, as it has been explained to me time after time, absolutely does *not* have a screw loose. His mind is stable and he knows what he’s doing.



Breaking: Presidential candidate Donald Trump endorses John A. Daly's new novel.

So, I tried to decipher it. I tried to determine how sounding like a bitter, betrayed ex-boyfriend blathering out a drunken toast at his former girlfriend's wedding, was in fact a cunning display of voter persuasion. After several uncompleted graphs and outlines, I'm embarrassed to say that I was unable to do so.

I was so frustrated with my failed analysis that I nearly returned to my original assessment that people were simply drawn to Donald Trump's charisma and celebrity, and felt his angry attitude mirrored their angst over the direction of the country. I almost fell back on my long-held belief that the content of what Trump actually says (including the overly-personal trashing of those he perceives as political threats) comes from no psychological prowess at all, and that maybe – just maybe – Trump is just one miserable human being. I even considered, again, that his campaign is squarely about himself and his ego, and has little if nothing to do with the best interests of the country.

But of course, that *can't* be the case. After all, he's still leading in the polls. And because I can't sufficiently explain

it, I'm forced to concede that Trump's strategy of *invented insanity* is so advanced and psychologically sophisticated, that someone of my clearly primitive intellect couldn't possibly grasp it.

You win, Dr. Trump. You are a profound genius. The crazy train you've masterfully engineered is running right on schedule.