

Progressive Demagogues Play Mafia and Brownshirt Games



It's a close call, lately, as to whether supposedly responsible adults are playing "Mafia and Shopkeeper" or "Nazis and the Yellow Stars," but in either case, they are *not* on the right side of the game, and they have begun to play for keeps.

While I have deplored, in this very column, the facile use of Nazi analogies, I will make my own similar argument here, and let readers decide if the comparison is merited.

Joaquin Castro, who represents San Antonio's 20th District in Congress, publicly posted the names and businesses of 44 large donors to the Trump campaign. These names are public record, certainly. What is NOT public record is the framing of the list by Castro's editorial comment that the donors "are fueling a campaign of hate."

On August 6th, Castro doubled down on his distaste for these "new deplorables" by letting us all know that they can add the

sin of “racism” (well, of course... *yawn*) to their evil of “hate.” (Castro seems not to have noticed that several on the list donated to his own campaign as well as to Trump’s, but I suppose it is left to his Twitter followers to sort through the carnage of his blast and to understand that Castro, himself, is morally pure.)

MSNBC host Willie Geist pressed Castro on his motive for publishing the list – which includes, as Geist pointed out, names of eleven retirees and one homemaker. Geist asked the obvious question regarding the donors: “What do you want from them?” Castro practically batted his dewy eyes as he assured Geist that he didn’t want anyone to be “targeted or harassed.” Oh, sure!

Castro, all innocent, insisted that no particular ill consequence should or would follow publication of the names. Why, golly gee, Willie, he pointed out, “They’re already public. They’re already out there.” Which, of course, brings us precisely back to the original question: Given that the information is “already out there,” “already public,” then what, exactly, was the *point* of his sensationalized calling of attention to it? What did he hope to accomplish thereby?

Castro hoped, of course, to slap a yellow star of shame on Trump donors.

Back in Nazi Germany, everyone “knew” who the Jews in the community were. That information was “already out there, already public.” But it was useful to formally designate the category with a specific sign: a badge of dishonor.

The yellow stars of the Third Reich officially were simple identification: Their purpose was [officially] a neutral one. Who could object to a Jew being identified as what he or she was, after all? Or, as MSNBC co-host Mika Brzezinski said in defense of Castro’s list: “If you’re proud of funding President Trump, you need to understand that that will be

public information.”

The true intent of the yellow stars, of course, was to humiliate the Jews, and to mark them out for segregation and discrimination. To shame them. It is significant to note that the LA Times’ Michael Holtzik and the Washington Post’s Jennifer Rubin explicitly “defend” the calling out of those who support Trump as “sham[ing] them” or marking them as behaving “shamefully.” The stigmatization is justified because, after all, the shame is deserved. (Trying to hide your Star of David? What?!? Not proud to be a Jew?!? Never mind that we have cleverly imbued the Star with all manner of negative associations.)

The yellow stars also served a subtle psychological purpose: The physical stars gave an official, governmental imprimatur to personal bias. What had been, prior to Hitler’s regime, one’s individual anti-Semitism, became legitimized by visible, bureaucratic documentation: One’s personal loathing was not only approved by the state, but was virtually *required* by the state.

Joaquin Castro has, with his publication of names, used the implied authority of his governmental office to officially mark certain citizens – his own constituents – as meriting segregation, shame, and discrimination. He has explicitly linked them to “fueling hate” and to “racism.” And Representative Castro also blithely tied his list of donors to an outright massacre. He said: “They’re giving their money to this guy... We saw the cost of that in El Paso over the weekend. People died.” It makes me very, very nervous to see a demagogue blame a group of people, those whom he personally loathes, for deaths and destruction they neither planned nor condoned. (Hitler, you know, successfully convinced many Germans that the Jews were somehow responsible for their nation’s defeat and the pointless deaths of World War I.)

What else does Castro want? Boycotts of businesses, obviously.

(I will skip any comparison to Kristallnacht and its prequel boycotts as being perhaps a reach too far for now.)

What other businesses, not on Castro's list, are targets of boycotts by progressives? Well, it's hard to say what businesses *aren't* so targeted.

Most recently and famously, businesses owned by Stephen Ross are facing a boycott. (Equinox Fitness, SoulCycle, etc.) Mr. Ross has violated the conscience of the progressives by – wait for it! – raising funds for Donald Trump. That cannot be allowed.

MSNBC regular guest Elie Mystal made a truly bizarre appearance on that network, calling for an unimaginatively thuggish attack on the home of Mr. Ross. (*Now* we are genuinely approaching a Kristallnacht Lite, alas!) Mystal's threat was couched this way: "I've been to the Hamptons; it's very nice. There's no reason it has to be. There's no reason he should be able to have a nice little party. There's no reason why people shouldn't be able to be outside of his house."

Elie Mystal bore an eerie physical resemblance to boxing promoter Don King. (Really. Google it.) But his rhetoric resembled that of maybe Don Fanucci – you know, the "Just enough to wet my beak!" Black Hand padrone who preens his way through "Godfather II."

Nice little town you have there. Be a shame if anything happened to it.

Apparently, MSNBC host Chris Hayes, who possesses the general shrewdness of a poached egg, did not quite perceive the threat behind the veil. Mystal offered a risible fig leaf, saying that this protest would be an attempt (merely) to "[make] their voices peacefully understood." Hayes fawned, in response: "Totally. There have been peaceful protests outside Mitch McConnell's house."

Oopsie! Forgot two quite relevant points!

First, Hayes apparently forgot that Mystal had mentioned, in passing, regarding this “peaceful” protest: “I want pitchforks and torches outside this man’s house in the Hamptons.” (Yep. “Pitchforks and torches.” That’s a direct quote.)

Second, Hayes must have forgotten that the “peaceful protests outside [Senate Majority Leader] Mitch McConnell’s house” involved a rather ugly mob, including one protester who is clearly heard on tape exulting that McConnell is recovering from a fractured shoulder, and wishing that McConnell had “broken his little, raggedy, wrinkled-ass neck” and another protester who convincingly rages that someone should “just stab the mother-f***er in the heart.”

Joaquin Castro claims that he has done nothing in particular – merely provided names that are “already public.” Although he did add the gravitas of his position to said publication, and just happened to link said names to “hate,” “racism,” and a recent massacre. And, by association, stained all Trump donors with that ugly invective. But, y’know, his hands are clean. He is only making speeches. And slinging tar. Not his fault if the masses become all riled up – and if those riled masses then boycott Bill Miller BBQ, Historic Pearl, local San Antonio realtors, etc. Not his fault if the long knives come out.

Elie Mystal wants nothing but a peaceful protest. You know – like the happy kum-bah-yah moment at Mitch McConnell’s house. The one where everybody linked arms, handed out a few leaflets, politely exchanged views, then ripped each other’s mother-f***ing hearts out with rusty, raggedy-ass pitchforks.

Nice little democracy we have going, here. Civil and tolerant. Sure be a shame if anything happened to it.