

Against More Taxes? You May Be a Terrorist!

☒ He sounded more like a pastor than a politician that night in Tucson. Here was a man with compassion and dignity who wanted just one thing – to bring Americans together. Barack Obama was at his eloquent best that night in January when he delivered a moving tribute at a memorial for the victims of the Arizona massacre.

He talked about how “our discourse has become so sharply polarized,” about how “we are far too eager to lay blame for all that ails the world at the feet of those who happen to think differently than we do.” He said, “It’s important for us to pause for a moment and make sure that we’re talking with each other in a way that heals, not in a way that wounds.”

Who could disagree with that? Well, it turns out that the president’s most reliable (and fawning) supporters – liberal commentators – either forgot what the president said, or didn’t buy into it in the first place.

Today, these media pundits are doing what they so often do when they disagree with the other side. They’re vilifying their opponents, opponents whom they see as enemies. And they’re doing it, again as they so often do, while convincing themselves that they are the stewards of civility in our culture, and that their commentary is the essence of serious and intelligent public discourse.

There’s nothing new, of course, about liberal vulgarity. Bush was a Nazi, Cheney was a war criminal, the tea party is comprised of racists, Sarah Palin and Rush Limbaugh inspired the Tucson lunatic to shoot up the place. Howard Dean once said, “I hate Republicans and everything they stand for.” Can’t get much clearer than that, can you?

Now, it's the current debate between Democrats and Republicans over raising the debt ceiling that has ratcheted up the rhetoric – while important, hardly a “sexy” topic that should generate the angry attacks it has.

Let's begin with Mr. “I Feel a Thrill Running Up My Leg When President Obama Speaks” – Chris Matthews. Twice, in less than 24 hours, Mathews said on MSNBC that Republicans who oppose raising the debt ceiling are “terrorists.” He referred to the GOP as the “Wahhabis of American government,” a reference to the sect of Islam often tied to intolerance and hate.

How civil is that?

Also on MSNBC, Tina Brown, the editor-in-chief of Newsweek and the Daily Beast, called Republicans in Congress “suicide bombers” for not “accommodating” the president in his call for more taxes.

When Rosie O'Donnell said Rudy Giuliani looked like a “Pez dispenser” that was merely obnoxious and insulting. But comparing Republicans to suicide bombers – fanatics who slaughter innocent people – simply because they oppose tax increases? That crosses the line from childish taunts in the playground right into the heart of hate speech territory.

Then there's Richard Cohen, the Washington Post columnist who once said that Newt Gingrich “should be hanged” for “hypocrisy.” Now he's describing the Republican party as a “cult” and says the GOP presidential candidates comprise “a virtual political Jonestown.”

As Peter Wehner, the thoughtful political analysts and prolific blogger put it: “It's hard to know whether these pundits understand how stupid and childish their rants are, or whether they're so blinded by their ideology they don't understand it's not really appropriate to refer to people with whom you disagree on taxes as Wahhabis, suicide bombers and members of a death cult.”

Six months ago in Tucson, President Obama said that, “Rather than pointing fingers or assigning blame, let’s use this occasion to expand our moral imaginations, to listen to each other more carefully, to sharpen our instincts for empathy, and remind ourselves of all the ways that our hopes and dreams are bound together.”

Six months later in Washington, the same president said that, “The debt ceiling should not be something that is used as a gun against the heads of the American people to extract tax breaks for corporate jet owners or oil and gas companies that are making billions of dollars because the price of gasoline has gone up so high.”

A gun to the head? Yes, we know, it’s only a figure of speech, but an unfortunate one, since a gun to the head is what inspired President Obama to speak out so eloquently in the first place about restoring civility, and decency, to our national conversation. A pastor wouldn’t talk that way. A politician would.

Crimes and Misdemeanors

✘ As I sit here, I have no idea how things will play out for Charles Rangel and Maxine Waters, although I find it highly unlikely that either of them will end up in a congressional trial, no matter how much the defendants claim they wish to have the air cleared. When Nancy Pelosi insisted that under the Democrats, the swamp that is Capitol Hill would be drained, she should have kept in mind that after such a draining it’s not treasure chests and fields of four-leaf clovers that are uncovered, but creepy, crawly things.

Although I have no use for either of the two Democrats being

investigated, I have a special loathing for Rep. Waters. For one thing, even after a story in the San Jose Mercury was shown to be a hoax, she persisted in claiming it was the C.I.A. that had introduced crack cocaine into black communities. She also championed the teaching of Ebonics in California schools. So it figured that as soon as the Congressional Ethics Committee targeted her, she would insist it was all the fault of political racists, even though half the members of the committee are liberals. On the other hand, back in the 90s, when it was Newt Gingrich who was charged with ethics violations, Rep. Waters couldn't contain her glee, as she happily announced, "What's good for the goose is good for the gander." And vice versa, Rep. Waters.

Still, I find it odd that neither she nor Mr. Rangel, nor the mainstream media for that matter, see anything even slightly racist about belonging to the Black Congressional Caucus, a group that denied membership to Rep. Stephen Cohen, a Democrat from Tennessee, simply because he's white even though his district is 60% black!

For my part, I can't figure out how the Ethics Committee determines whom to target. The way I see it, they could probably go after every single member of the House, including themselves, with the expectation of striking gold. Or perhaps I should say striking dirt. I'm reminded of the NCAA. Every once in a while, they decide to penalize a college for infractions involving bribes and other perks bestowed by over-zealous alumni associations on student athletes. The truth is, no matter how good the football or basketball player is, he is going to join the professional ranks in a few years. Thus, the only way to ensure that a college team is going to remain a national power year after year, decade after decade, is to entice the best high school players in the country. Although the colleges aren't above using attractive, obliging coeds as lures, nothing beats cash on the barrelhead. Back when I was a kid, I would hear the wise guys say that one All American jock

after another had to take a cut in pay when he left college and turned pro. Such, alas, is not the case when it comes to professional politicians.

Something I've never understood is how permissive America is when it comes to acts of treason. For the life of me, I don't understand why PFC Bradley Manning and Wikileaks chief honcho, Julian Assange, aren't on trial for their lives. However these two punks feel about the war in Afghanistan, there can be no justification for letting the Taliban know which Afghan citizens have cooperated with the U.S. military. What makes their activities all the more reprehensible is that they believe they command the moral high ground. It is a delusion shared by those who oppose all wars, those who oppose capital punishment and, of course, by Jane Fonda.

Whenever I see career politicians, I feel my gorge rising. The fact that these sloths, whose main activity is deciding how to waste other people's money, insist on calling themselves public servants and get to hold fund-raising testimonials on their own behalf is all the more galling. I have been to a few of those events and it's a good thing that the food is so unappetizing because, otherwise, it would be impossible to keep one's dinner down. Even if you skip the over-cooked chicken, you'd have to have a cast-iron constitution to stomach the blatant hypocrisy as you listen to cronies and flunkies enumerate the politician's alleged virtues in a way denied everyone who hasn't first had the decency to die.

Here in California, we have more rotten politicians per capita than any other state in the nation. One of the worst has been Jerry Brown. He is presently running for governor, a job he has held in the distant past. This creep has been recycled more often than a plastic bottle. Even though he's 72 years old, he has never held an actual job in his entire life. He began his current campaign by announcing that his opponent, Meg Whitman, had a great deal in common with Nazi propagandist Joseph Goebbels. His reason was that she had a lot of her own

money to spend on her campaign. It seems to me that's like comparing Charlie Chaplin's Little Tramp persona to Adolf Hitler because they both had tiny moustaches. But that's par for the liberal course.

Jerry Brown also had the nerve to claim that Ms. Whitman was going to use the governorship as a steppingstone to the presidency. That's not a crime where I come from. But in any case, it's an odd insult coming from the man who used his own governorship to run for president in '76, '80 and '92.

The fact remains that over the past 50 years, Brown has run for president, senator, governor, chairman of the California Democratic Party, state attorney general, California secretary of state, L.A. Community College District Board of Trustees and mayor of Oakland. The truly weird thing is that, more often than not, he's won those races, even though in a personality contest with a clam, a cobblestone and a tin can, Brown would come in a distant fourth.

The fact remains that the man who was dubbed "Governor Moonbeam" by the late Chicago columnist, Mike Royko, has spent his entire adult life running for everything but the bus.

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