

# The Media Can't Bring Themselves to Detach Palin from Giffords

☒ If I had to write a list of the most bone-headed media indictments of my lifetime, toward the top of the list would be Sarah Palin's suggested involvement in the Gabrielle Giffords shooting.

As many will recall, almost immediately after Jared Lee Loughner opened fire at a January event put on by the Democratic congresswoman, the media was desperately looking for a connection to the vocal Tea Party movement. Sarah Palin in particular took heat after left-wing bloggers did a Google search on "Sarah Palin" and "Gabrielle Giffords" and found that Giffords' congressional district had been *targeted* months earlier on one of Palin's websites as part of a *get out the vote* election strategy. Along with several others, Giffords' district was marked on a map of the United States with a cross-hair icon.

Now, it's lame enough when the media speculates on influences to murderers based on who authored the books that sat on their shelves at home, or who sang the songs they enjoyed listening to. But this was far more of a stretch. At the time the Palin connection was being suggested, the media knew practically nothing about the shooter. They had absolutely no idea of his political leanings. They had no idea if he even had access to the internet, let alone had ever visited the website of Palin's political action committee.

And despite the concept of *targeting districts* being used for decades by numerous political strategists (often accompanied with visual representations of cross-hairs, targets, and bulls-eyes), its metaphorical context was selectively

disregarded by many in the mainstream media for the purpose of creating a link to Palin. In their well-documented disdain for the former Alaska governor, many despicably went ahead and suggested that she could have been some sort of spiritual accomplice to the shooter.

In the end of course, Loughner was found to be a complete nut-case who former friends actually described as a "liberal" who regularly welled up in anger at the sight of George W. Bush. His longstanding, dangerous fixation on Congresswoman Giffords predated the Tea Party and Sarah Palin's introduction onto the national scene. Palin was of no influence on him, nor was any coherent political ideology.

One would have thought that the revelation would have put to rest the reckless and politically-motivated media assault on Palin, but as we've found out over the last two weeks, it didn't.

On November 15th, ABC ran a widely praised special on Giffords' inspirational recovery. The special featured the congresswoman's grueling rehabilitation and the strength of her marriage. Gabrielle Giffords' story was a testament to the human spirit, but host, Diane Sawyer chose to cap off the program with these final comments: "After she [Giffords] voted for healthcare, she faced people in her district calling her a traitor, booing her in townhalls. Someone even fired a gun into her office door. And you may remember Sarah Palin targeted her district with an ad that had a gunsight on it."

Unbelievable. What relevance did any of that have to what happened to Giffords? Did ABC decide that Giffords' amazing story of triumph after tragedy couldn't stand on its own? Did they feel the need to concoct a few more villains? A few more hurdles? The answer is no. They just saw another opportunity to take a few political cheap shots (while they had the attention of a large audience) at the supporters of an ideology they abhor.

But it didn't end there. On November 23rd, Piers Morgan brought up Palin again in a CNN interview with Gabrielle Giffords' husband, astronaut Mark Kelly.

"Sarah Palin doesn't come out of this very well, I don't think, because there was a woman who at the time had been putting these cross hair things on her website and stuff, including Gabby", said Morgan. "And in her haste to take responsibility didn't even bother to pick the phone up, to write, do anything."

When Kelly confirmed that he and his wife were indeed not contacted by Palin, Morgan responded, "I find that extraordinary."

Extraordinary? Really? Is it customary for someone falsely accused of a crime to reach out to the victim? If anyone owed the Giffords an apology, wouldn't it be those in the media who used the horrific tragedy to fuel a witch-hunt against those they see as their political opponents?

Sarah Palin didn't contact the Giffords for the same reason that I didn't, Piers Morgan didn't, and hundreds of millions of other Americans didn't: We didn't know her or her family. We kept them in our thoughts and prayers instead. Any notion that it would have been responsible for Palin to contact them is absurd. If she had, fine. But she had no moral responsibility to do so. She had no more to do with the Arizona shootings than the very people who unjustly yanked her into the story in the first place.

I really did have high hopes that the media would have learned something from their knee-jerk reaction to the Gabrielle Giffords shooting. I keep thinking that there has to be some *come to God moment* in their profession when they finally force themselves to look into the mirror after such an episode and self-evaluate their adherence to a journalistic code of ethics. I know... It's a foolish dream on my part.

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# Palin Did it Her Way

✘ Sarah Palin announced Wednesday that she will not be running for the office of the U.S. presidency in 2012. Her declaration brought to end the exhaustive media speculation that had centered around her political aspirations for nearly three years. Over the next couple of days we'll most likely hear from a multitude of news analysts weighing in on her decision and several comedians joking about how the country has dodged a bullet. I'm already reading messages of celebration from some of my Facebook friends. God bless 'em.

Make no mistake about it, however... It was Palin, not her critics, who got the last laugh. I never believed for a second that she was ever seriously considering a run at the presidency. Her public appearances and provocative statements over the past three years have been about rebirth, reckoning, and living the American Dream.

By the end of the 2008 presidential campaign, Palin had become a national joke. While conservatives remained galvanized around her and continued to hail her for her proud promotion of their values, most of the country had concluded that she was a know-nothing airhead who had no business in national politics. The media scrutiny and defamatory criticism of her was like nothing I'd ever seen. Her and her family had inexplicably become fair game to vile personal attacks that often exceeded levels of complete lunacy. As the governor of Alaska, she was left knee-deep in frivolous, politically-motivated ethics complaints that came at a great professional and personal expense to her and her family. Having spent a good portion of the year exhaustively touring the country in a role that she had never asked for but felt obligated to accept, one wouldn't have blamed her if she'd crawled under a

rock in Wasilla and shunned the public spotlight for good.

But that's not what happened.

Instead of fading into the background and conceding defeat, she used the news media's remorseless obsession with her to revamp her relevance in our political discourse. She studied up on geopolitics, refined her narrative, and reentered the political stage as an effective voice of stinging opposition against the Obama administration. She became more comfortable in front of the camera, sharper in her public appearances, and began looking and sounding like a serious presidential candidate.

The media predictably wasn't about to stand for it, and once again put their derangement on display for all to see. Palin drew out and exposed the worst in them, from the author who creepily rented the house next to hers to the commentators who insanelly identified her as a likely inspiration to the Gabrielle Giffords shooter. She continued on as an object of disgust for talking heads and mean-spirited comedians like Bill Maher, Kathy Griffin, and David Letterman whose unhealthy fixations on her routinely crossed boundaries of decency.

But as negative as a lot of the exposure was, it helped garnish publicity that opened up new opportunities for Palin including lucrative careers as an author, public speaker, political commentator, and even a reality television star. Her voice of support for conservative congressional candidates helped the Republican party regain a strong majority in the House of Representatives. And perhaps most infuriating to liberals, she really seemed to be enjoying her life in the process. They hadn't broken her after all.

As the Republican presidential primary race began to take shape, I got a kick out of Palin's unconventional and often confusing tactics of hinting at entering as a candidate. The national bus tour was my favorite. I found it amusing when the

national news media would voice frustration over the cryptic nature of the tour which they felt compelled to cover, yet couldn't quite explain why. They would routinely demand interviews with Palin along the way, who seemed to take some delight in turning them down and draining their resources. As Andrew Breitbart so skillfully observed, she drove the media nuts by refusing to cooperate with her own demise. I suppose that if my family and I had been assailed by them the way the Palins have been, and I had money to burn, I'd enjoy messing with them as well.

A lot of Palin's detractors might feel some sense of accomplishment today in her sagging approval ratings and exclusion from the 2012 race, but they shouldn't. They gave her exactly what she wanted: The platform. Public approval only matters if you're serving the public, not if you're just speaking your mind, meeting supporters, providing for your family, and loving what you're doing. We all should be so lucky.

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## A Picture's Worth of Bias



They say a picture's worth a thousand words. This phrase rings no truer than when it comes to most of the media's feelings toward Republican politicians.

The photo to the left was posted Wednesday on CNN's website as

the featured image for an article describing Republican Bob Turner's Congressional seat win in New York. While I haven't spent any time around Bob Turner and know little about the man, I'm fairly confident that he's not an evil mastermind from a James Bond film. Thus, I think it's safe to say that CNN sorted through dozens and dozens of available photos before they found one of Turner looking absolutely diabolical.

While I tend not to get too bent out of shape over this cheap form of bias (especially in the grand scheme of a disreputable media that routinely commits far worse offenses), I'm always taken by the adolescence it stems from. It reminds me of when I was a child and used to crayon-draw unflattering pictures of my older brother (occasionally with devil horns) when I was mad at him.



While I recognize the temptation, the role of the news media in this country is an important one. There should be a certain level of maturity that accompanies how the news is presented. It's one thing if this is being done on a partisan blog site. It's quite another if it's being put out by a major news organization that claims to be fair. In the case of the Turner photo, I thought the column it accompanied was pretty fair. Yet, someone in the newsroom apparently felt the need to add their own artistic accent to the story.

This is certainly nothing new, but it seems to have grown more blatant in recent years. Case in point, Newsweek took a lot of criticism last month when they featured a cover photo of presidential candidate Michele Bachmann looking mentally unstable. While a lot of us know full well where Newsweek's political leanings are, they bill themselves as a legitimate

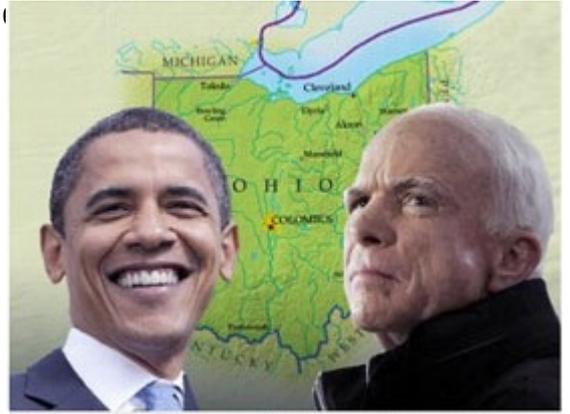
news source. Thus, the idea that they would put forth such an obvious, agenda ridden caricature (and then try to defend it) is astonishing.

Sometimes the habit even borderlines on the perverse as it did during the 2008 presidential campaign when the Associated Press featured a photo from a Sarah Palin campaign stop. The image seemed to play off the Mrs. Robinson scene from the film "The Graduate", zoomed in on a student looking up at the Alaskan governor in wonder from a vantage point between her legs. Though I don't think the shot was done with malice toward Palin, there was certainly a sexist element to it that would have been off limits to a Democratic politician.



One of my all-time favorite examples of this pseudo-subliminal, partisan imagery also came from the 2008 presidential campaign, when ABC News posted an an article about Barack Obama and John McCain campaigning in Ohio at the same time. The faces of both men were superimposed over the outline of the state. For Obama, they used an energetic, pleasant photo. McCain's made him look like a former KGB agent

who won't accept that the Cold War's



The larger point here is that there is a consensus in the media that the Republicans and everything they stand for are at worst evil and at best wrong. Thus, this type of imagery doesn't trigger reservations from the editors who are ultimately responsible for what is presented to readers. Again, in the grand scheme of things, this isn't a monumental issue. However, it's symbolic of an agenda-driven media culture that, like it or not, persuades public opinion.

Like any other bias in the media, it deserves some attention.

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## Larry Flynt and Palin Obsession Disease

☒ While “Bush Derangement Syndrome” has subsided in the psyche of the left since the President left office, Palin Derangement Syndrome has risen. As the presidential election of 2012 looms, even though no one knows whether Mrs. Palin plans to run, I would venture to say that the left is now suffering much worse with, what I call, full-blown “Palin Obsession Disease.”

I can't go a day without reading something from the left

maligning not only her policies but her accent, her clothes, the East coast bus tour, or her earnings. Recently, her comments about Paul Revere were dissected by left-wing bloggers, ad nauseum. NBC anchor, Brian Williams, didn't have time to cover the actions by Congressman Anthony Weiner, but felt it necessary to include Mrs. Palin's comments on his broadcast. Now, the left is obsessed with her recently-released 25,000 emails, going over each and every one of them to find some morsel to sink their teeth into.

The left just doesn't get that Mrs. Palin's message rings true to millions of Americans and they just can't stand it. The left believes that everyone should think like they do and, because we don't, they're absolutely terrified. Why else would you spend so much time vilifying this woman's every move if you weren't running scared?

So, what did I read recently? An attack by the vile troll, Larry Flynt, on Mrs. Palin's son, Trig. Not content to simply assail her politics, this low-life who sits in his soiled diapers and who, if thrown into a sewer, would most likely float to the top, is so disgusting that he referred to Trig, not as a little boy, but as an "it." If he chose to disagree with her politics, I wouldn't have a problem; that's his right. But how despicable can you be to attack the existence of this little boy?

Here's his brilliant opinion about why Mrs. Palin did not have an abortion: "She did a disservice to every woman in America. She knew the first month of pregnancy that kid was going to be Down's Syndrome. It's brain dead. A virtual vegetable. She carries it to all these different political events against abortion; she did it just because she didn't want to say she'd had an abortion."

Yeah, yeah. Please don't tell me about his First Amendment right to be disgusting. I know that. If I've said it once, I've said it a hundred times, "just because something is

legal, doesn't make it right." When is enough, enough? When should we say certain things are off limits? Can you imagine if someone made any type of verbal attack on the Obamas' children?

Too bad Flynt's theory that Mrs. Palin gave birth to Trig for political reasons isn't as solid as his diaper. I know I have a terrible memory but wasn't Trig conceived way **before** Mrs. Palin was brought on to the national scene as John McCain's Vice-Presidential running mate? Of course, he was.

So, Flint criticizes Mrs. Palin for using Trig as a political prop to garner the pro-life crowd, but tells Johann Hari of London's "The Independent" the reasons why he stretches the bounds of free speech. "That's our purpose – to be offensive. We're always pushing the envelope; it's understandable that people are getting upset – but that's what built our reputation and it's what our core readership like." Now, who's the hypocrite? (By the way, Mr. Hari, offended by the comments about Trig, said, "I am so thrown by the unpleasantness of all this, I don't even interject.")

One of the comments posted following his remarks said, "what happened to ... civility?" Another said, mirroring my own initial thought after reading the article, "he makes me second guess my pro-life stance."

Yes, our Constitution, gives even the most loathsome among us the right to say just about anything about anyone. It also gives me the right not to buy his magazines, just like it's my choice not to see Roman Polanski or Woody Allen movies.

The First Amendment also gives me the right to say that, between the two, the world is a much better place because of Trig, not Flint who's wasting our oxygen.

I expect more of this madness over the next sixteen months from people who suffer from POD. I think it will only get worse whether she runs or not. If you don't like Mrs. Palin's

politics, fine, but leave her children alone.

I don't get it, but if you do, God bless you.

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## Random Thoughts: Election 2010

☒ When I finally turned off the tv last night, it was 12:30 in the morning here in Washington state and, despite percentage signs and other stats flashing in red and blue inside my brain, I miraculously fell asleep. Three Senatorial races were still undecided when I finally went to bed, Washington, Colorado and Alaska, and remained so when I woke up this morning.

My biggest hope in this election was for the Republicans to win back the House – which they did in great numbers – if only to remove Nancy Pelosi as Speaker. It was a wonderful achievement in my book. When I listened to Harry Reid's speech last night, I thought of a taxi ride I took in Las Vegas last year. The driver ranted on and on about Obama and Harry Reid and I told him, "all you guys have to do is vote that guy out in 2010." Well, obviously no one heeded my advice and we've got ol' Harry back in the Senate. One out of two ain't bad.

Losing the Senate is probably a blessing in disguise in light of 2012, but I'll leave the potential advantages of a split Congress to the political analysts, something I'm not. I did, however, learn a lot about the importance of the Republican gubernatorial wins, particularly in Ohio, Pennsylvania and Florida. Good job, John Kasich!

I'm sorry to see Christine O'Donnell didn't win. I previously wrote about Ms. O'Donnell and got some flack from readers regarding my concerns about her nomination. I thought she couldn't win. I'm with Bernie on this one. I'd rather have someone who would vote my way half of the time (Michael Castle) rather than someone who'd never vote my way (Chris Coons). It's great to be an ideological purist, but, sometimes, you have to be practical. I must say that listening to acceptance speeches by Tea Party-backed candidates, Rand Paul and Marco Rubio, was a breath of fresh air.

I would've loved to have seen Barbara Boxer lose and Meg Whitman win in California, but you can't have everything. God only knows what Jerry Brown is going to do in California. He was blabbering during his acceptance speech last night but perhaps it was way past his bedtime. I sure hope he gets some rest because he's going to need it when he starts to tackle the massive problems in that state. But, hey, I don't live there anymore.

To be fair and balanced, I did switch tv coverage from Fox News to MSNBC a few times but someone would've thought they were watching election returns in a foreign country. Their coverage – if you could call it that – was laughable. When I did muster up the strength to actually watch Keith Olbermann and his three cohorts, their attempt to minimize the Republican take over of the House was pathetic. I could vaguely make out the outline of the black armbands under their jackets while they sat around like a clique of silly school girls giggling and bad-mouthing those that weren't part of their elite group. They had no one on with opposing views, unlike Fox News which had several pundits on the right and left throughout the night. Instead, Olbermann sat around with three other like-minded individuals enjoying their Republican bashing and Chris Matthews even threw in one of his sophomoric comments about Sarah Palin. Did someone forget to tell him

Ms. Palin wasn't running for office? These bozos must be obsessed and afraid of this woman otherwise why bother?

We're still waiting to hear whether Patty Murray lost her Senate seat to Dino Rossi here in Washington. Knowing how liberals rule in Seattle, I'm not holding my breath. I'd just love to see the woman who once said, "[Osama bin Laden]'s been out in these countries for decades, building schools, building roads, building infrastructure, building day-care facilities, building health-care facilities, and the people are extremely grateful. He's made their lives better," have to look for a real job like the other 10% of Americans.

Over the past several weeks, President Obama drove his analogy of the car into the ground. The Dems were in the front seat and the Republicans, who ran the car into a ditch, according to him, didn't get to drive anymore and were relegated to the back seat. Well, it doesn't matter who was sitting in the front seat or the back seat, because, last night, the American people applied the brakes!

When I watched the President speak this morning, he looked as if he would've preferred to have a root canal without any anesthetic rather than stand in front of those cameras. He's now calling for cooperation and bipartisanship, but I'll believe it when I see it. I still remember the closed door sessions during the Obamacare fiasco when "transparency" was promised. Whether he'll be able to tolerate being in the same room with John Boehner is something we'll have to wait and see.

As Mick Jagger said, "you can't always get what you want, but ... you get what you need." Well, we needed to stop Obama's far left agenda to transform this country into something unrecognizable and that's exactly what we got last night. Let's hope the Republicans will do actually what they said during the campaign, otherwise, like the Dems found out last night, the electorate will boot them out in two years.

Overall, it was a very good night. Countdown clock on my computer to Election Day 2012: 2 years, 0 months, 3 days, 3 hours..... Let the games begin!