

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

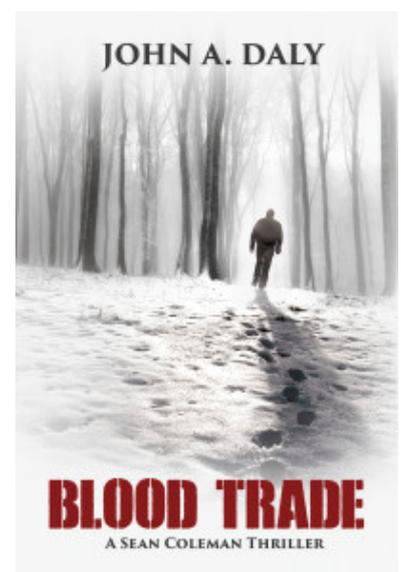
Charles Krauthammer.

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?