

Greece Finally Takes a Hard Line... Against Its Athletes?

✘ I can't seem to figure out the Greek culture.

Not a week goes by without fresh news headlines sounding the alarm on the country's worsening debt crisis. By now, we all know that their government spent like crazy for decades on unsustainable public sector wages, early retirement packages loaded with benefits, and massive infrastructure. Their inability to restrain the growth of their government has led them to economic collapse and impending bankruptcy.

Yet, ever since the sobering realities of Greece's dire dilemma began settling in about three years ago, the country has struggled when it's come to actually dealing with their extremely serious situation. Their divided government, along with flurries of violent street protestors, have fought tooth and nail for three years against vital austerity measures required for the eurozone to bail them out of their demise. The drawn-out drama has burned through valuable time that they don't have, and just this week, the British government announced that Greece will run out of money in less than a month.

It seems that even when the preservation of their own country is on the line, the people of Greece are ridiculously timid when it comes to drawing a hard line in the sand.

With that mindset put on display for the world, I found it highly ironic how quick the country was to toss one of their athletes off their Olympic team for making a tacky joke on Twitter. It seems that they have a remarkable amount of cultural tolerance when it comes to the implosion of their own country, but if one of their citizen-representatives briefly strays out from under the binds of political correctness, they

act with quick and deliberate, disciplinary measures.

Last Sunday, triple jumper Voula Papachristou tweeted this joke from her Twitter account, which caused an uproar: “With so many Africans in Greece, the West Nile mosquitoes will be getting home food!!!” The candid remark was in reference to the highly reported appearance in Athens of mosquitoes carrying the Nile virus, and the large number of African immigrants that reside in Greece.

Most of the news stories I’ve read about the controversy have categorized the tweet as “racist”, which I think is a bit of a stretch. To me, it seemed related to geography and not race. After all, if she had made a similar joke about Australians and an Athens influx of kangaroos, not an eyebrow would have been raised. Was the joke a bit thoughtless? Probably. Most tweets are. But racist? I don’t think so.

Still, the Greek Olympic committee has made their *socially acceptable* decision, and a young woman who has gone through years of personal sacrifice and exhaustive training to represent her country has been kicked to curb because she displayed a brief moment of insensitivity.

Now, in the grand scheme of things, the treatment of Voula Papachristou isn’t all that important of a story, and maybe I’m grasping at straws in trying to tie it into the Greek debt crisis. I do, however, see some significance in it. Greece has shaped its culture into what I see as a preview of where our own country is headed. The Papachristou story is just another reminder of that.

Like many, I fear that the United States is rapidly following Greece’s lead of preserving political correctness over everything, including its own economic insolvency. Anyone paying any attention at all to our economic decline knows how much trouble we’re in. Yet, we can’t form a consensus that the problems need to be effectively dealt with because its just

too darn easy to paint supporters of meaningful reforms as “insensitive”. We can’t fix Social Security and Medicare because that would throw senior citizens under the bus. We can’t talk about Medicaid and food stamps because that would discriminate against the poor and suffering. We can’t talk about terrorist profiling or maturely debate how to fix our illegal-immigration problems because that would be racist. We vilify those who have the audacity to point out the audacity of where we’re headed as a nation.

The paralysis that often comes with being overly politically-correct is a serious danger as evidenced by Greece. It’s what led them down the perilous road of dependency that they may not be able to claw their way back from. They should serve as a template to other countries for *what not to do*.

Yet, rather than learning from Greece’s mistakes, we continue to emulate them. And if it’s not politically-correct for me to make that observation, I can live with that.