

The Latest Entry in the Slime Sweepstakes

☒ There's been a lot of hand-wringing lately, much of it from sensitive liberals, about how uncivil we've become. Just look at those white racist Neanderthals who go to tea parties, liberals will tell you – in case you need proof.

There were the columns in the Miami Herald, the Washington Post and the New York Times, to name just a few – all decrying the supposed rampant racism at the tea parties.

Proof? Well, what about those racial slurs that the tea partiers yelled out at black congressmen? Isn't that proof enough?

Well, no. The more I look into those charges the more I come away believing they never happened. (See my recent columns on this subject.)

A mere technicality, because tea party racism has become a mantra on the Left, an accepted truth that only fools, conservative Republicans, and other bigots wouldn't see. And surely, these liberals must figure, if they say it over and over again it will become ingrained in the national conversation: tea partiers are bigots, period. The bad news is that it's working.

Every conversation about the tea parties comes around to race and racism. The innocent victims can deny the charges all they want, but the charges out there nonetheless.

And now comes the latest entry in the slime sweepstakes, this one from a United States congressman, no less. Steve Cohen, a Democrat from Tennessee went on a satellite radio show the other night and had this exchange with the host, Michael Shure.

Michael Shure: We'd like to just talk to you ... about sort of the pervasive feeling in Washington right now, all this vitriol, all this hate. What is being done in America about this now?

Cohen: Well, I'm not sure what's being done. The Tea Party people are kind of, without robes and hoods, they have really shown a very hardcore angry side of America that is against any type of diversity. And we saw opposition to African Americans, hostility toward gays, hostility to anybody who wasn't just, you know, a clone of George Wallace's fan club. And I'm afraid they've taken over the Republican Party."

Let's see if I have this right: tea party demonstrators are like the Ku Klux Klan, without the robes and hoods. They hate black people, but only for openers. In actuality, they hate *everybody* – at least everybody who didn't support George Wallace, the segregationist governor of Alabama.

Good thing liberals are the open-minded ones, the good ones, the civil ones, the ones who detest hateful speech with every fiber of their being.

Okay, enough of the all-too-easy sarcasm. Here's the point: unless Democrats denounce this kind of hateful talk, they will have no standing to condemn anybody else's incivility, real or imagined. They will have lost every ounce of their credibility. They will be nothing more than enablers of hateful speech, no matter how much they claim to long for a more civil time in America.

Oh yeah, Steve Cohen is a white Jewish guy who has a precarious hold on a mostly black congressional district in Tennessee and will face a black opponent in the Democratic primary – the former mayor of Memphis who says Tennessee needs a black voice in it's all-white delegation, and whose African American campaign manager says, "This seat was set aside for people who look like me." Translation (as if we need a

translation): kick the white guy out. Two years ago when Cohen ran against a black woman in the Democratic primary, he was targeted by a black minister who sent out fliers declaring that, "Memphis Congressman Steve Cohen and the JEWS HATE JESUS."

So how does Steve Cohen deal with black bigotry when it's aimed at him? He turns it around and aims it at white tea party folks, accusing them of bigotry. And if slandering tea partiers as George Wallace fans minus the hoods and robes is what he has to do to convince black voters he's one of the good white, Jewish guys – and win his upcoming primary, it looks like that's what he's prepared to do.

But race is way too sensitive a subject in America to play with so recklessly. Liberals ought to know that, even if they're prepared to throw liberalism under the bus just to win an election.