

Clumsy words unfairly used against Tea Party

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By Michael Costello for the Tribune

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Commentary

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Dianne Capps' story should be a cautionary tale for all Tea Party activists. At the Asotin Tea party rally a couple of weeks ago, Capps made what she believed was a clever allusion to the movie "Lonesome Dove." She laughingly said U.S. Sen. Patty Murray should be hung. It was clumsy, but no reasonable person seeing the video could seriously believe Capps was actually trying to incite a lynch mob. But that's the impression that those who feel threatened by the Tea Party are trying to promote.

If you have 10,000 Tea partiers at a demonstration and one person shows up with a sign that might be interpreted as racist, ABC, CBS, NBC, CNN, MSNBC, the New York Times and the Washington Post will all highlight that one sign and use it to smear the entire movement. It's not hard to imagine media-savvy leftists infiltrating a rally with just such a sign knowing full well the prominence it will be given. And so what happened to Dianne Capps should have been predictable.

To gain a sense for just how threatening elite opinion finds the Tea Party, one need only look at the news media treatment of Joe Stack, the anti-IRS kamikaze pilot who rammed his plane into an IRS office in Austin, Texas. Even though he left behind as a suicide note a manifesto that could have been plagiarized from a Nancy Pelosi speech, he was assumed to be a Tea Partier. According to New York Magazine, "a lot of his rhetoric could have been taken directly from a handwritten sign at a Tea Party rally." The Washington Post's Jonathon Capehart said he was "struck by how [Stack's] alienation is similar to that we're hearing from the extreme elements of the Tea Party movement."

This stuff sticks. One of the dimmer bulbs in the Washington state Legislature is Geoff Simpson (D-47th District). He cited both of the above news stories when he claimed that Joe Stack was a Tea Party activist: "I don't think it's patriotic to fly airplanes into buildings as one of your Tea Party members recently did."

This is how elite opinion works.

When Gregory Girard was arrested on explosives charges in Massachusetts, it quickly got out that he was a Tea Party member and a Sarah Palin fan. Amy Bishop, the woman arrested for shooting up a faculty meeting at the University of Alabama at Huntsville, was reportedly a fanatical Barack Obama fan. But I've not yet seen her described in a headline as "Obama supporter Amy Bishop."

Until it was conclusively proven to be a suicide, Tea Partiers were accused of responsibility for the death of a census worker in Tennessee. He wrote the word "FED" on his own chest and hanged himself. That was enough for Tea Party enemies to attack the whole movement.

This is not an evenly applied standard. There are Democratic members of Congress who believe that Ronald Reagan peddled crack cocaine in black neighborhoods to raise money for the anti-communist insurgency in Nicaragua. Members of Congress accused Ronald Reagan of creating the AIDS virus in a laboratory for the specific purpose of exterminating African-Americans and homosexuals. A former

Democratic Speaker of the House of Representatives initiated an investigation into the crackpot accusation that George Bush the Elder had, in 1980 while Jimmy Carter was still president, boarded a CIA-operated SR-71 spy plane and flown to Iran to convince the mullahs to hold American hostages prisoner until after the 1980 election. The last two series of Democratic primary presidential debates featured a congressman whose agenda includes outlawing space-based mind-control weapons. A former frontrunner for the Democratic presidential nomination and the former chairman of the Democratic National Committee once said it was reasonable for people to suspect that George Bush the Younger was complicit in the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.

Every single one of the people mentioned above either holds or did hold a prominent position in the Democratic Party. And yet not one of these idiots is ever held up as an example of what a collection of nutcases composes the Democratic Party.

Dianne Capps' faux pas is already being exploited by the senator she would like to retire. Murray's campaign is using video of Capps' comments to raise campaign cash. Don't give ammunition to your enemy.

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