

Mocking Christians is OK; mocking Muslims is not

Michael Costello/Lewiston Tribune

"If each threat produces more blasphemers than it silences, then threats suddenly become counterproductive."

- Allahpundit, an anonymous blogger at Hotair.com

Yesterday was the sixth anniversary of "Everybody Draw Mohammed Day." Everybody Draw Mohammed Day was the brainchild of Molly Norris, a Seattle-area cartoonist who conceived the idea after Comedy Central had censored an episode of South Park in which Mohammed was represented.

Comedy Central self-censored its own show shortly after Muslims around the world had rioted following the publication of cartoonish images of Mohammed in the Danish newspaper, Jyllands-Posten. In truth, the original cartoons incited nothing and the troublemakers had to create their own cartoons that depicted Mohammed as a pig.

But suddenly, proudly profane leftists around the world, who had previously enjoyed mocking Christianity for decades, were swept up in a gust of cultural sensitivity and were censoring images of Mohammed wherever they might appear. For example, the Associated Press announced that it would not distribute the Jyllands-Posten cartoons because they had developed an acute sympathy for religious sensitivity. At the same time that they refused to distribute those pictures, the AP was still offering for sale glossy reproductions of Serrano's "Piss Christ," an alleged work of great artistic value that was simply a photograph of a crucifix submerged in a jar of the "artists" own urine.

It seems that a credible threat of violence marks the surest path to gaining international respect for one's religious convictions.

Unfortunately, too few joined Molly Norris's campaign and she was forced into hiding with a new identity after Muslims threatened to kill her.

Unfortunately, we have not come any further in defense of our liberties.

This past week, the inevitable Democratic presidential nominee, Hillary Clinton, tweeted out a thinly veiled threat from Nobel Peace Prize winner Malala Yousafzai. "The more you speak against Islam and against all Muslims, the more terrorists will it create," Yousafzai wrote. In her tweet, Clinton was attempting to make the argument that Donald Trump's rhetoric was dangerous. But what she accomplished was to simply amplify the standard threat that Islam regularly issues to the world: Submit or die.

This would represent a continuation of the policy that Barack Obama outlined almost four years ago. On September 25, 2012, President Obama stood before the General Assembly of the United Nations and proclaimed that "The future must not belong to those who slander the prophet of

Islam." At the time, he and his administration were feverishly trying to blame the attack on our embassy annex in Benghazi, Libya, on a filmmaker who produced an amateurish YouTube video critical of Islam.

But I'm pretty certain that when he took the oath of office, he swore to defend the right of Americans to slander whichever prophet they wish. We call it the First Amendment. And although this president and his anointed successor frequently express open hostility to the concept, freedom of speech tenuously remains the law of the land.

But we shouldn't just limit our exercise of free speech to defying Islamic bullies. We have plenty of homegrown bullies who we need to stand up to. Emory University in Atlanta, Ga., was thrown into turmoil earlier this spring when someone wrote "Trump 2016" in chalk on a sidewalk. Incensed students marched into the university's administration building chanting, "You are not listening! Come speak to us, we are in pain! It is our duty to fight for our freedom. It is our duty to win. We must love each other and support each other. We have nothing to lose but our chains."

Emory's spineless president met with the protesters and added his voice to theirs: "I cannot dismiss their expression of feelings and concern as motivated only by political preference or over-sensitivity."

Students across the nation reacted in a manner that would have made Molly Norris proud. "Trump 2016" began to appear on campus sidewalks from coast to coast. And, in time, college administrators appreciated that reacting hysterically, as the Emory president did, simply encouraged more civil disobedience.

Another bit of campus bullying occurred at Millikin University in Decatur, Ill., when the university's Office for Diversity threatened sanctions against the Tau Kappa Epsilon fraternity if its members used their traditional face paint during its annual recruiting event. Their crime was "cultural appropriation." The appropriate response would have been for all Millikin students to paint their faces. But unfortunately, most college students are as obedient before bullies as journalists and television executives.

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