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THEY SAID IT

In their assessment of what is going on in the world, they seem to start off with a default assumption that we are in the wrong. The “we” can take different forms: the United States government, the vast mass of middle-class Americans, white people, affluent people, churchgoing people or the advanced English-speaking countries. Such people are seen as privileged and selfish, greedy and bigoted, rash and violent. If something bad happens, the default assumption is that it’s their fault. They always blame America – or the parts of America they don’t like – first.

Where does this default assumption come from? And why is it so prevalent among our affluent educated class (which, after all, would seem to overlap considerably with the people being complained about?). It comes, I think, from our schools and, especially, from our colleges and universities. The first are staffed by liberals long accustomed to see America as full of problems needing solving; the latter have been packed full of the people cultural critic Roger Kimball calls “tenured radicals,” people who see this country and its people as the source of all evil in the world.

On campuses, students are bombarded with denunciations of dead white males and urged to engage in the deconstruction of all past learning and scholarship.

Michael Barone, “The Blame America First Crowd,” March 19, 2007.

THE HOLLOW MEN (AND WOMEN).

Have you, gentle reader, noticed anything strange about the Obama administration and the mainstream media’s references to the massacre in Fort Hood, Texas last week? Have you perhaps noticed that the greatest concern among these noble souls, including the President of the United States himself, is not protecting you and other ordinary Americans from the danger of being killed by a radical Muslim, but that you might take umbrage at your Muslim neighbors because one of theirs killed a large number of innocent Americans?

President Obama, for example, has addressed the shooting/massacre at Ft. Hood twice now, once in the now-infamous “shout-out” press conference during which he treated the deaths of 13 American soldiers and civilians almost as an afterthought, and once in his weekly radio address. On neither occasion did the President see fit to mention the religiously inspired ideology of the killer, the very same religiously inspired ideology, by the way, that has this country engaged in two protracted wars at the current moment. The same religiously inspired ideology, it goes without saying, that was responsible for the heinous slaughter of over

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3,000 men, women, and children on September 11, 2001. Indeed, the President's only mention of Islam or Muslims this weekend came in the form of his interminable public fretting about the possibility of a backlash by the non-Muslim population of the United States against the Muslim population of the United States – a backlash which, we should note, has never materialized since it was first foretold nearly eight years and two months ago.

Whoops! Our mistake! President Obama has actually mentioned Ft. Hood *three* times – the two times mentioned above and a third, over the weekend, when he used the slaughter of these innocents to rally House Democrats to support passage of Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi's health care reform bill. In due time, we imagine that President Obama himself will wish that no one had ever heard of this final reference. But heck, we're nothing if not thorough.

Of course, the President wasn't the only administration official to address the issue over the weekend. Department of Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano, the woman who fretted publicly last spring that the crazies on the right might be involved in terrorist activity and might be the *real* threat to the country, traveled to Abu Dhabi to let the world know that she is concerned about the Ft. Hood massacre – specifically about the . . . wait for it . . . backlash. To wit:

The U.S. Homeland Security secretary says she is working to prevent a possible wave of anti-Muslim sentiment after the shootings at Fort Hood in Texas.

Janet Napolitano says her agency is working with groups across the United States to try to deflect any backlash against American Muslims following Thursday's rampage by Army Maj. Nidal Malik Hasan, a Muslim who reportedly expressed growing dismay over the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Super.

As for *The New York Times*, the venerated Old Gray Lady, the "newspaper of record," which prints "all the news that's fit to print," its first report on the slaughter perpetrated by Nidal Malik Hasan, like the President's, contained no mentions of Islam or Muslims or anything else related to religion. *The Times*, you see, has decided that religion had little or nothing to do with what happened at Ft. Hood.

Rather, the most likely cause of Major Hasan's actions was a familiar acronym, namely PTSD, only in this case, the "P" doesn't stand for "Post," but for "Pre-" as in Pre-Dramatic Stress Disorder, a modification made necessary by the fact that Hasan has never actually been in or near combat. In fact, he has never been deployed overseas. Over the weekend, the editors of the *Times*, diligent as they are about digging for truth, actually assembled a panel of "experts" (and we do, in fact, use that term loosely) to discuss the phenomenon of "secondary stress disorder," which might be better labeled "Post Traumatic Stress by Proxy" or "a gigantic pile of crap." Take your pick.

Elsewhere in the mainstream media, *Chicago Sun-Times* columnist Neil Steinburg took this nonsense even farther than most of his media brethren, deciding that you (yes YOU!) are a racist, simply because you happened to notice that Hasan was a Muslim.

The killings at Fort Hood might say something about the strain that overtaxed U.S. soldiers are under. It might say something about security on Army bases. But if you think that it says something about religion, what you're really doing is saying something about yourself, and it isn't something good.

Steinburg has you pegged, doesn't he?

Of course, the President, his Homeland Security Director, *The New York Times*, and the beautiful and talented Mr. Steinburg are not alone in pretending that the religion of the Ft. Hood shooter is irrelevant or even that mentioning it makes *you* a giant jerk. Far

from it. Indeed, their view is solidly representative of that of the nation's mainstream, left-wing, political and media establishments.

By contrast, the right-leaning parts of the political and media establishments have, from the very instant the shooter's identity was learned, focused on his religious practices, prejudices, and affiliations. And for good reason. As it turns out, Hasan was not your ordinary, average, run-of-the-mill Army shrink. He was also a Muslim with some pretty fundamental and extreme ideas about what it means to be a faithful practitioner of his faith.

What we've learned since the shooting is disturbing, to say the least. Hasan was not a man who "cracked" under pressure. He was not a man who turned to a radical version of his faith in a time of undue stress. He was, rather, a man who had, over the scope of several years, carefully cultivated relationships with radicals and their institutions. He was a man who has always (or at least since adulthood) been an active, aggressive, and inappropriate proselytizer of the most radical version of his faith. He was a man who carefully, calmly, and rationally *chose* to link himself personally to violent and radical religious beliefs.

Naturally, the folks on the right are unhappy that the folks on the left – and in the mainstream – are loath to point this out. You see, the fact of the matter is that the killer's religion, however screwed up, perverted, or violent a version of it he may have embraced, is still the man's defining characteristic and was, like it or not, the principal inspiration for his murderous act. And to ignore that, or even to downplay it, misses the point of Islamic terrorism altogether and sets the country up for further such tragedies. The *Atlantic's* Jeffrey Goldberg sums this storyline up nicely:

It seems, though, that when an American military officer who is a practicing Muslim allegedly shoots forty of his fellow soldiers who are about to deploy to the two wars the United States is currently fighting in Muslim countries, some broader meaning might, over time, be discerned, especially if the

officer did, in fact, yell "Allahu Akbar" while murdering his fellow soldiers, as some soldiers say he did. This is the second time this year American soldiers on American soil have been gunned down by a Muslim who was reportedly unhappy with America's wars in the Middle East (the first took place in Arkansas, to modest levels of notice). And, of course, this would not be the first instance of an American Muslim soldier killing fellow soldiers over his disagreements with American foreign policy; in 2003, Army Sgt. Hasan Akbar killed two officers and wounded fourteen others when he rolled a grenade into a tent in a homicidal protest against American policy.

I am not arguing, of course, that American Muslims, as a whole, are violently unhappy with America . . . But I do think that elite makers of opinion in this country try very hard to ignore the larger meaning of violent acts when they happen to be perpetrated by Muslims. Here's a simple test: If Nidal Malik Hasan had been a devout Christian with pronounced anti-abortion views, and had he attacked, say, a Planned Parenthood office, would his religion have been considered relevant as we tried to understand the motivation and meaning of the attack? Of course. Elite opinion makers do not, as a rule, try to protect Christians and Christian belief from investigation and criticism. Quite the opposite. It would be useful to apply the same standards of inquiry and criticism to all religions.

We have to admit that we are sympathetic to this view. Not to get all trite here, but while not all Muslims are terrorists (far from it), nearly all terrorists these days are Muslims, which is to say that ignoring or even suppressing the religious inclinations of the Ft. Hood shooter is to conceal the very nature of the enemy.

Nevertheless, we also think that the preoccupation on the right with Hasan's religion is somewhat distracting, in that it misses the point ever so slightly and thus misses the real relevance of the Ft. Hood massacre, that being that the *real problem* is us, not them, or in this case, him.

Of all the commentary we've seen thus far, that which comes closest to identifying the real source of concern was written by the inimitable Mark Steyn, who at least understands that the issue isn't radical Islam *per se*, but the West's reaction to radical Islam. To wit:

To infidels, Islam is in a certain sense unknowable, and most of us are content to leave it at that. The vast majority of Muslims don't conspire to kill cartoonists or murder their daughters or shoot dozens of their fellow soldiers. But Islam inspires enough of this behavior to make it a legitimate topic of analysis. Don't hold your breath. We'd rather talk about anything else — even in the Army.

What happened to those men and women at Fort Hood had a horrible symbolism: Members of the best trained, best equipped fighting force on the planet gunned down by a guy who said a few goofy things no one took seriously. And that's the problem: America has the best troops and fiercest firepower, but no strategy for throttling the ideology that drives the enemy — in Afghanistan and in Texas.

Steyn is close, perilously close. But if this were really just a problem of strategy, then it could be corrected. Indeed, it probably would have been corrected long before now. Unfortunately, the issue here is not strategy. It's civilizational will, which the West in general and the United States in particular appear to be lacking these days.

The fact of the matter is that Major Nidal Malik Hasan, American born and American raised, had no faith in America or its mission. He was openly and

unapologetically sympathetic to the enemy. Not only did he believe its propaganda, but his superiors and others knew all of this, but did nothing about it.

Part of this is simple political correctness, the feeling that to notice that a Muslim is being radically and aggressively hostile to the United States and its interests is too touchy a subject to address. And clearly this was a factor, as the *Associated Press* notes:

There was the classroom presentation that justified suicide bombings. Comments to colleagues about a climate of persecution faced by Muslims in the military. Conversations with a mosque leader that became incoherent.

As a student, some who knew Nidal Malik Hasan said they saw clear signs the young Army psychiatrist—who authorities say went on a shooting spree at Fort Hood that left 13 dead and 29 others wounded—had no place in the military. After arriving at Fort Hood, he was conflicted about what to tell fellow Muslim soldiers about the fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan, alarming an Islamic community leader from whom he sought counsel.

"I told him, 'There's something wrong with you,'" Osman Danquah, co-founder of the Islamic Community of Greater Killeen, told The Associated Press on Saturday. "I didn't get the feeling he was talking for himself, but something just didn't seem right."

Danquah assumed the military's chain of command knew about Hasan's doubts, which had been known for more than a year to classmates in a graduate military medical program. His fellow students complained to the faculty about Hasan's "anti-American propaganda," but said a

fear of appearing discriminatory against a Muslim student kept officers from filing a formal written complaint.

A bigger part of the problem, though, is what we will call cultural nihilism, for lack of a better term. Hasan was taught to dislike America. He was taught to see Americans as “the aggressors.” He was taught to think of American military actions as inherently evil and to see them as ultimately oppressive. He was taught to think of American soldiers as murderers and thugs. And he was taught all of this not by radical Muslims but by the American establishment itself.

The current President of the United States has spent much of his first ten months in office running around the world apologizing for his country’s loathsomeness. He has apologized to friends and enemies alike, but has made a particular effort to make sure that those who hate America know that they have his sympathy at the very least and quite possibly his empathy as well.

His predecessor as the democratic presidential nominee, the now-senior Senator from Massachusetts is known, among other things, for his “joke” about how stupid America’s soldiers are. More relevantly, said Senator is best known as one of the Winter Soldiers, the gaggle of disgruntled former service members who sought to amplify their own concerns and promote their own careers by besmirching fellow soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines and portraying them as sub-human monsters propelled onward by sub-human political masters.

In the past 15 years, one of the two major parties in this country has nominated four men for president. One of them had discussed the fact that he “loathed the military.” A second said the following in Senate testimony:

Several months ago in Detroit, we had an investigation at which over 150 honorably discharged and many very highly decorated veterans testified to war crimes committed in Southeast Asia, not isolated incidents but

crimes committed on a day-to-day basis with the full awareness of officers at all levels of command . . .

They told the stories at times they had personally raped, cut off ears, cut off heads, taped wires from portable telephones to human genitals and turned up the power, cut off limbs, blown up bodies, randomly shot at civilians, razed villages in fashion reminiscent of Genghis Khan, shot cattle and dogs for fun, poisoned food stocks, and generally ravaged the countryside of South Vietnam in addition to the normal ravage of war, and the normal and very particular ravaging which is done by the applied bombing power of this country.

A third launched his political career at the home of an erstwhile anti-American political terrorist, a man who actually set bombs to kill Americans and only by the grace of God failed to carry out his own mass slaughter of American soldiers at Ft. Dix and who told the *New York Times* (in a piece published on September 11, 2001) that he didn’t regret setting bombs and engaging in terrorism against his own country and actually felt that he and his friends “didn’t do enough.”

Two of these nominees were actually elected President of the United States, one of them twice. And yet we are still to wonder why Nidal Malik Hassan thought that America and its soldiers were the world’s true enemies, despite the fact that he himself is an American and a soldier?

This isn’t a case of Islamic extremism gone wrong. It’s a case of cultural self-loathing reaching its inevitable and all too foreseeable conclusion.

For the better part of the last half-century, the dominant themes in the study and teaching of history, politics, and other social sciences have postulated that the West in general and the United States in particular are anything but “exceptional.” They are, rather, oppressors; powerful, privileged, and despotic. And every student in every high school, community college, and university throughout the country has

been exposed to this belief system, at least in passing. Heck, the current President of the United States admits openly and unashamedly that he agrees with this assessment, at least to some degree, denying the very concept of “American exceptionalism.”

So what are we to expect?

This is cultural suicide.

There really is no other way to explain it.

A squirrely little goofball sits around in school, among other soldiers, in the hospital, and online talking about how Americans are infidels and aggressors. He talks about how Americans are evil and how infidels should be beheaded and burned. He rambles on about the wickedness of the American missions in Iraq and Afghanistan. And no one does anything to stop him, to bring his nuttiness to the attention of authorities, to bring him up on charges of treason, which would be entirely appropriate in this case.

And why is that? Is it because he’s a Muslim? Nope.

It’s because he’s just your average, everyday American educated in American schools since the end of the Vietnam War.

In a piece this morning, Arnaud de Borchgrave warns that “There are tens of thousands of Hasans all over the Western world.” He’s right, of course. But there are probably also tens of thousands of Bill Ayers. And John Kerrys. And John Does. People who believe that Americans and American soldiers are the bad guys in the world and who believe this because they have been taught to believe it by their teachers, professors, politicians, journalists, columnists, and authors.

With apologies to T.S. Eliot: this is how the West ends, not with a bang, but with a whimper; the whimper of a civilization unable or unwilling to defend itself; the whimper of a civilization undermined by those entrusted to protect it; in short, then, the whimper of hollow, shallow suicide.

SAVING THE FROG.

Needless to say, neither of us here at The Political Forum voted for Barack Obama last November. And if we had it do over again, we probably still would not. But we say *probably* because it is beginning to look as though the Obama presidency could turn out to be such an unmitigated disaster for the Democratic Party specifically and for liberalism in general that it will actually save the nation. Now we know this is a provocative statement. That some might even call it stupid. But we also know that it provides a good platform from which to offer a few thoughts about the state of American politics today. So here goes.

We’ll begin with the proposition that if John McCain had been elected President, he would have led the nation farther down the exact same path that it had been talking for the past few decades, slowly but ever so surely increasing the size and power of the federal government and slowly but ever so surely spending it further into debt and bringing it ever closer to bankruptcy. Of course, he would not have done this with malice and forethought. But the Democratically controlled Congress would have pushed him along and the mainstream media would have brutalized him every time he faltered or tried to change direction.

Yes we know, Barack is taking the nation down the same lethal path . . . and at a much faster pace. But that’s the point. He is traveling toward financial oblivion at such a breakneck, irresponsible, “hold my beer and watch this” speed that there is a possibility – a remote one perhaps, but nevertheless a possibility – that Americans will finally no longer be able to ignore the dangers that lie on the road to socialism and will force a change of course before its too late.

At the risk of mixing metaphors here, think of America as the proverbial frog sitting in a pan of hot water on a stove, destined to die if the temperature is raised so slowly that he doesn’t realize the danger he is in until it is too late. Think of John McCain raising the temperature ever so slowly until the frog dies. Then think of Barack turning up the heat so quickly that the frog figures it out and jumps to safety.

It is important when considering this to understand that Barack is correct when he says that he didn't create the mess in which he finds himself, that he inherited it. Indeed, the cold hard truth is that the good old U.S. of A. was already well on its way to becoming a troubled, socialist state when Barack was still just a child dragging his prayer rug around a Muslim school in Jakarta.

His real failing is not that he has made a terrible mess. It is that he is so dense about economic matters that he apparently didn't know that a terrible mess was awaiting him when he took office and, as such, had no plan whatsoever to address it, to which the only response any sane person could offer is "how dumb can he be?" We here at The Political Forum may not be the sharpest knives in the drawer, but even we knew that Barack would have an overwhelmingly difficult job on his hands the day he sat down in the Oval Office. We put it this way in an article written just a few days before his election. It was entitled "President Obama, Socialism's Sentinel Perdue."

Now we are not experts on the mysterious nuances that America's Orwellian "thought police" employ when seeking evidence of racism in the everyday pronouncements of the nation's citizens . . . Nevertheless, despite our poor understanding of this arcane science, we have decided to toss a theory of our own into these treacherous waters. It is only a theory, mind you. But it is one that, if true, would expose the existence of a racially explosive plot by the nation's largely Caucasian, political establishment to let a black guy take the fall for the terrible mess that they have collectively made of things over the past several decades.

Of course, we have no solid evidence of such a conspiracy, but certainly, anyone who is paying any attention at all knows that the poor sap who wins the election next week doesn't have a chance in hell

of leaving the White House in four years with either high popularity ratings or a shred of dignity left. So why not hand this hopelessly impossible job to some poor black guy with the middle name of Hussein, with known links to terrorists, with ties to a noxious cabal of Chicago snollygosters, and with no experience in managing anything whatsoever, much less the most powerful nation in the world, and assume that his failure is likely to be so spectacular that the ultimate responsibility for the whole mess will fall on his shoulders rather than on those of the white crooks and mooncalves who made the mess in the first place.

And indeed, if one is seeking a guaranteed loser to take the ultimate blame for the on-going economic meltdown, the astounding proliferation of corruption, and the growing social tensions among classes and races it would difficult to find a better candidate than a black socialist whose understanding of economics appears to begin and end with the musings of Sidney and Beatrice Webb, who is either highly comfortable around crooks or too stupid to recognize one even when the guy buys him a house, and who says and does things that make sensible people question his affection for and ties to America's traditional culture.

Now we are admittedly kidding around a little here. But nevertheless, one has to recognize the irony in the fact that the first order of business for the nation's first black president, if he is elected next week, will be the Herculean task of cleaning the dung out the Augean stables left behind by the best and the brightest among America's white elite.

Of course, rather than clean the dung out, Barack has added a great deal more. Heaps of it, in fact. So how, you ask, could anyone in his or her right mind place a positive spin on such a nightmare?

Well, we will begin by noting, as we have done many times in these pages, that there is no conventional, political way out the fiscal mess in which this nation finds itself. We repeat, there is no *conventional, political* way out the fiscal mess in which this nation finds itself. The system, as it is set up today, simply doesn't allow for it.

Why? Because, as it turns out, America's democratic structure of checks, balances, debate, and compromise is very poorly suited for handling the fiscal and budgetary matters of a country with a fiat currency. You see, the system, as it was designed by the nation's founding fathers, assumed that a bicameral legislature made up of popularly elected officials, sharing power with an elected president and an independent judiciary, could, via a process of debate and compromise, design and administer a fair and judicious system of taxing and spending.

This arrangement worked reasonably well for over a century and a half, until, on a cold December day in 1971, a small band of men, formally called the Group of 10, gathered at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington to redesign the global financial system, and in the process released the members of the U.S. Congress from the shackles of a pesky little provision in Article 1, Section 10 of the U.S. Constitution, which stated that "No State shall . . . make any Thing but gold and silver Coin a Tender in Payment of Debts.

In simple terms, Congress was given the power to print as much paper money as it wished, backed up by nothing more than a declaration that it would be recognized as "legal tender." Thus, in one simple stroke, these "masters of the financial universe" did away with need for members of Congress to fight among themselves over slices of the federal pie by making it possible for them to simply make the pie as big as they wished.

Last Thursday, in an article entitled "Democrats Pose Health Care Hurdle," the *Wall Street Journal* included an interesting example of how this process works. According to the article, Senator Mary Landrieu would like to see a few items added to the Senate's health reform bill before voting for it, including "bigger federal Medicaid payments for her home state of Louisiana, extended health coverage for her pet cause of foster children, and help for teaching hospitals in her state."

The *Journal* then notes that one of her Senate colleagues, Evan Bayh, would also like to vote for the bill, but he "is a big supporter of medical-device makers in Indiana, and he signed a letter declaring himself "extremely concerned" about a proposed tax on the industry." Then there is Senator Blanche Lincoln, who "is facing a tough re-election contest year," and would like to support the health reform measure but would also "like to tackle the shortage of health providers in rural areas." And, of course, there is New Jersey's Bob Menendez, who "is pushing a tax break for investments in startup biotechnology firms, earning him plaudits from his state's burgeoning biotech industry." In fact, the *Journal* says that "dozens of other Senators" who support the measure have their own similar priorities.

In the old days, when the size of the federal pie was limited by the archaic notion that paper money had to be backed up by something of value, these individuals would have had to duke it out on the floor of Congress. Today, they can simply enlarge the pie by printing more money. In a sense they can declare, with the Carroll's Dodo, that "Everybody has won and all must have prizes"

Now the fact of the matter is that this happy system cannot last. We could quote numerous brilliant individuals in support of this statement, including but not limited to Ludwig von Mises and Alan Greenspan, but common sense will inform any thinking person of its truth.

So what will happen? Well, if you buy our contention that neither Congress nor the White House has any politically practical means available to them of

stopping the march into bankruptcy, in the absence of a Constitutional mandate against the debasement of the currency, then you have to assume that fiscal discipline will eventually be imposed upon the nation from another source.

As we have said numerous times in these pages, the most likely possibility would be the nation's creditors, i.e., Ed Yardeni's "bond vigilantes." Another, unfortunately less likely, source of discipline would be ordinary Americans who, acting not out of idealism but strictly in their own best interests, demand that the sacrifice of theirs and their children's economic future on the altar of sloth, corruption, and socialist economics be stopped.

Either course would involve economic and social hardship, and possibly violence. The crooks and charlatans who are benefiting from the ongoing decay of law, order, fiscal prudence, and respect for the nation's traditional mores, customs, and religious beliefs

will fight to insulate the privileges they are gaining from the chaos they are creating for others. And Barack will fight for the socialist ideas and ideals that he learned at the knees of his mother and various father figures and has nurtured throughout his adult years.

But if you assume that a disciplinary assault on the status quo is inevitable, then you should logically want this event to occur sooner rather than later, for the dangers grow greater each day. And this brings us to Barack Obama, who, as we said earlier, may – just may – make the mistake of saving the frog by being too impatient, too petulant, too self absorbed, and too stupid to refrain from turning up the heat under him so quickly that he jumps out of the pot. There is, of course, not a chance in hell that this will happen in time to prevent the frog from suffering severe injuries. But he could live to hop and again. And that's worth something.

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