

THE UNTRUTHS OF GLENN BECK AND AMERICA'S HONOR

By Nick Gier

Glenn Beck is small man with a mean message. He is provocateur who likes to play with matches in the tinderbox of racial and ethnic confrontation.

--Bob Herbert, *Washington Post* columnist

If Imam Faisal Rauf must move his cultural center away from Ground Zero out of respect for 9/11 victims (56 of whom were Muslims), then why didn't Glenn Beck move his April 28th rally from the Lincoln Memorial out of respect for the 3,446 African Americans lynched from 1882-1968? At least he and Sarah Palin had the decency to stand several steps below where Martin Luther King stood 47 years ago.

Beck claims that he didn't realize that April 28, 1963 was the day of the "I Have A Dream" speech, and it was divine providence that his rally was scheduled then. Sparing us the theological explanation, he could have said that the venue had already been booked. But Imam Rauf could also say that he has already paid \$4.6 million dollars for the building at Park Place 51, not visible from the edge of Ground Zero.

Beck says that he held the Lincoln Memorial rally to celebrate three American principles: truth, honor, and integrity. These are eminent values that no one nation or people can claim to possess. Nevertheless, let us see if Beck has embodied this great trinity of virtues.

Does Beck preserve America's honor or the truth when he spreads the insulting falsehood that President Obama is a "racist" who "has a deep-seated hatred for white people and white culture"? Admitting to Chris Wallace that he has a "big fat mouth" and was behaving badly, he apologized for this comment, but the damage was already done. To this self-described "entertainer" and "rodeo clown," Wallace asked Beck the perfect question: "How can you have any credibility?"

Beck is notorious for ascribing--willy nilly--motives to those whom he opposes. He claims that Obama "chose to use the name, Barack, for a reason. You take the name Barack to identify with the heritage of your father in Kenya who is a radical." Yes, Obama is proud of his

African heritage—just as European Americans are of theirs—but what a mean-spirited and spiteful way describe Obama’s heritage. I just hope that GOP gubernatorial candidate Nimrata Nikki Randhawa Haley doesn’t ever use her full name so that she can be accused of being a closet Hindu.

Does Beck have any intellectual integrity left when he hosts people on his show who systematically distort American history? A frequent guest on Beck’s “Founders Fridays” is David Barton, an evangelical minister and Republican activist with a B.A. in religious education from Oral Roberts University.

Pretending to be a historian, Barton cannot give primary resource citations for 11 quotations that he attributes to Franklin, Jefferson, and Madison. He is also responsible for spreading, along with those in the neo-Confederacy, the myth of the happy American slave. Barton conveniently forgets that those slaves who attended “integrated” churches in 1790 (Barton’s big discovery) were there as their white owner’s property. His claim that many Founding Fathers were abolitionists is simply false, but it is true, according to historian Diana Bass, for many Founding Mothers.

Another guest on Beck’s show was Peter Lillback, another conservative preacher parading as a historian. Primarily because of Beck’s enthusiastic promotion (“Wow, all the scholars are wrong!”), Lillback’s book *George Washington’s Sacred Fire* has risen to number two at Amazon.com. Lillback’s self-published, 1,200-page tome is nothing but an exercise in wishful thinking that Washington was an orthodox Christian.

Anyone can do a word search of Washington’s published works, and only once does “Jesus Christ” appear. Washington never took communion (a requirement for being a Christian in Washington’s Episcopalian Church), refused to answer repeated questions about whether he was a Christian, and made it clear that no clergy should be present at his death. For more on the liberal religion of our founders please read www.class.uidaho.edu/ngier/foundfathers.htm.

After decades of opposition from the right to the civil rights movement, Beck has the audacity to declare that America’s social conservatives “are the people of the civil rights movement. We are the ones that must stand for civil and equal rights, justice, equal justice. Not

special justice, not social justice. We are the inheritors and protectors of the civil rights movement. They [liberals I supposed] are perverting it.”

In King’s day “liberal” wasn’t a dirty enough word for many conservatives for describing him. Would Beck now support Republican Senators Jesse Helms, John P. East, and John McCain, who in 1983 voted against (along with 15 other Republicans and 4 Democrats) the King Holiday primarily because of his presumed communist connections? Conservatives smeared King just as badly back then just as Beck and his ilk are slandering Obama today.

King’s Dream Speech was the culmination of the March on Washington, a huge rally for social justice (Yes, Beck, that is what “equal” justice means) organized by labor unions and civil rights organizations. King frequently spoke of America’s “debt to the poor” and called for an “economic bill of rights” that would “guarantee a job to all people who want to work and are able to work.” Quoting these words columnist Kate Zernike states: “In Mr. Beck’s taxonomy, this would make him a Marxist.”

How can Sarah Palin claim to support the civil rights movement—let alone a sense of decency—when she urged Dr. Laura, who had repeatedly called an African-American caller a n---r, “don’t retreat and reload”? Bob Herbert has something to say to Palin and Beck: “Chill, baby, chill!” This is probably good advice since Palin’s disapproval rating has climbed to new heights: 55 percent in a Washington Post poll and 49 percent in a Quinnipiac poll.

Another goal of Beck’s Lincoln Memorial rally was to honor America’s military personnel, something that all Americans have done much better at than our shameful treatment of Vietnam veterans. With more and more Republicans taking Ron Paul’s anti-war position on Afghanistan, even Beck and Palin will now have to admit that one can be anti-war and still be a patriot. This must include sincere Americans who oppose on principle any and all wars.

I note with great relish that right-wingers can desecrate the flag just as badly as left-wingers can. Some Teabaggers hate Obama so much on one of the items for sale at their events has his face X’d out where the field of stars should be. This abomination is in direct violation of Section 8, subsection (g) of the U.S. Flag Code.

Will a perfectly good man—regardless of the merits or demerits of his presidential leadership—be destroyed by right-wing extremists? Elaborating on an old saying, lies shouted loud enough and long enough become destructive pseudo truths.

Alexander Zaitchik, who has thoroughly researched Beck's rise to fame, says it all in the title of his book *Common Nonsense: Glenn Beck and the Triumph of Ignorance*. Rodeo clowns stick to their job of being funny, but this one, incredibly enough, may bring down a presidency. I conclude by redirecting the famous denunciation of Senator Joseph McCarthy by army lawyer Joseph Welch: "Have you no sense of decency, sir?"

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