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Media Scold America's "Fear," "Rage" and "Racism"

"We turn now over the debate of the proposed Islamic center and mosque near Ground Zero....The controversy has raised profound questions about religious tolerance and prejudice in the United States."

— Christiane Amanpour on ABC's *This Week*, August 22.

"There is a lot of hate speech, and it's getting louder and more vicious....In these mosque protests, we've seen that hate speech take on a new and more venomous tinge....As somebody who I spoke to during the story told me, Islamophobia is now the accepted form of racism in this country."

— *Time*'s Bobby Ghosh during the 1pm ET hour of CNN's *Newsroom*, August 19.

"The Pew Research Center found 18 percent of Americans believe that [President Obama is Muslim] and a whopping 43 percent are not sure what religion he is. For the record, he's Christian. It might be Islamophobia, Obamaphobia, or both, but when loud speakers are blaring 'Born in the USA' and signs say 'No Clubhouse for Terrorists,' it's clear we aren't just talking about a mosque anymore. There is a debate to be had about the sensitivity of building this center so close to Ground Zero. But we can not let fear and rage tear down the towers of our core American values."

— *Evening News* anchor Katie Couric in her "Katie Couric's Notebook" video posted at CBSNews.com, August 23.



"Right Wing Attempt to De-Americanize" Obama

"Yesterday, the Republican leader of the Senate [Mitch McConnell] played 'birther' politics with abandon. What did he say when asked whether President Obama is of the religion he says he is? Quote, 'I take him at his word.'...Pitch perfect, dog whistle to the haters. 'Yeah sure, whatever he says, right.' This is not about belief. It's an accusation that President Obama is not one of us. The right wing's attempt to de-Americanize the President is our top story tonight."

— MSNBC's Chris Matthews opening *Hardball*, August 23.



Selfless Obama Spent Too Much Time on Nation's Problems

"Ever since Mr. Obama became a national political figure, some of his political enemies have fanned the flames of religious prejudice by trying to make people believe the President is a Muslim....During the campaign, Team Obama repeatedly refuted these charges with a special Web site they created called FightTheSmears. Well, when he took office, the anti-Obama campaign continued, but the White House tackled a slew of other issues, and efforts to refute those other attacks took a backseat."

— NBC White House correspondent Chuck Todd on the August 19 *Nightly News*.

Don't Call Our "Cotton-Pickin' President" a Muslim!

"If one in five Americans thinks that President Obama is a Muslim, is it his fault?...I'm sitting here just shaking my head. He is the cotton-pickin' President of the United States. If the President of the United States doesn't have enough of a bully pulpit to convince people of a lie — that a lie is a lie, I should say — then, you know, where are we? What kind of planet are we living on? What the hell is going on here?"

— CNN's Rick Sanchez on *Rick's List*, August 30.

"I was just saying cotton-pickin' because it's a term that I've used because I grew up in the South. It's a point that's often used to illustrate frustration. Not in any way shown to use — used to show any kind of disrespect. However, I apologize nonetheless for using it."

— Sanchez a few minutes later in the same show.

“Right-Wing” Beck vs. Non-Ideological Sharpton?

“The right-wing radio show host insists the timing was an oversight, but he seized on the King legacy as compatible with his message.... The Reverend Al Sharpton, among others, worries that their day and King’s legacy has been hijacked.”

—ABC’s Claire Shipman on *Good Morning America*, August 28.

“One rally will be hosted by civil rights leaders, one by controversial conservative talk show host Glenn Beck.”

— Correspondent Whit Johnson on CBS’s *Early Show*, August 27.



CBS vs. “Nearly All-White” Rally

Reporter Nancy Cordes: “Beck, who is a converted Mormon, likes to call himself a clown, but today he played the role of ring-master, preaching racial tolerance to the nearly all-white crowd. A change in tone from the Fox News host who notoriously called President Obama—”

Clip of Beck from July 2009: “a racist.”

Cordes to two black women at Beck rally: “I’m noticing that there aren’t a lot of minorities here today. Why do you think that is?”

One of the women: “They’re probably over there with Al Sharpton.”

— *CBS Evening News*, August 28.

Obama Victory = “Hope Election” but Potential GOP Wave = “Fear”

“Now, it doesn’t take a polling expert to tell you the economy is the number one issue for pretty much every American out there. I had one observer tell me, if 2008 was the “hope election,” 2010 may be known as the “fear election,” as both Republicans and Democrats are playing on the fears of voters about the future of the economy to try to win votes in November, Brian.”

— Chuck Todd on the August 24 *NBC Nightly News*.

GOP Candidates: “Very Extreme,” “an Exotic Crew”

Host Bob Schieffer: “You have also taken some fairly controversial, some would say very extreme, positions. First, you say you want to phase out Medicare. You want to privatize Social Security. I have to say, there are a lot of people in Alaska who are on Medicare and are getting Social Security. Isn’t that position going to be a problem for you in the election, in this general election?”

Republican Senate candidate Joe Miller: “I would suggest to you that if one thinks that the Constitution is extreme, then you’d also think that the Founders are extreme....”

— Exchange on CBS’s *Face the Nation*, August 29.



Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz: “Americans really are going to have a very clear choice set up in November between moderate Democrats who are centrist, where the country is, and Republicans who are really off on the right-wing fringe. And there’s countless examples of that across the country.”

Bob Schieffer: “Well, let me ask [Mississippi] Governor [Haley] Barbour about that.... You’ve got Joe Buck, who won the nomination up in Colorado, who’s talking about bicycle paths being a, might lead to UN control or something or other. It seems to me that you do have kind of an exotic crew out there this time.”

— Schieffer later on the same program, erroneously referring to Colorado GOP Senate candidate Ken Buck. In fact, the conjecture about bicycle paths and the UN was voiced by gubernatorial nominee Dan Maes, not Buck.

Tell Me Everything, My Darling

“Finally, I’m hoping to find you in a reflective mood on a cloudy day. We’re the first to speak to you coming off your summer vacation. How does it re-charge you? What do you think about? What do you see? What do you read about? How are you thinking about your job these days?”

— *NBC Nightly News* anchor Brian Williams to President Obama, in an August 29 interview, complete video of which was posted on MSNBC.com.

How Dare Obama Say Anything Nice About Bush!

“We shouldn’t get past how remarkable it is, how much the proponents of the Iraq war are getting off easy here.... These kind words for President Bush, describing his ‘commitment to our security,’ despite the recklessness with which President Bush discarded that national security in favor of this war of choice, which only diminished our security, and is responsible, probably, for the Afghanistan war still going on today, for the deaths of people who have died in Afghanistan after the time after which that war would have ended had we not gone to Iraq – not to mention all of the people who died in Iraq.... Anybody in the pro-Iraq war, pro-Bush camp who doesn’t feel like they’ve been given the greatest political present they never deserved, was not listening to this speech.”

— MSNBC’s Rachel Maddow during live coverage after President Obama’s August 31 speech on Iraq.



NBC’s No Iraq War Fantasy: “Moderate” Saddam, War Over in Afghanistan

NBC’s Richard Engel: “If there had been no invasion, Saddam would still be in power. He was probably getting more moderate.... He was heading in a direction of accommodation.... Iran would be a lot more contained. So it [Iraq] would be a dictatorship that was trying to break out of its box, but Iran would not be as dangerous as it is, as it is today.”

Fill-in co-host Ann Curry: “And had the United States not invaded Iraq, would we be done in Afghanistan?”

Engel: “Probably. That was a giant distraction of resources, of intelligence assets. That war would probably be over.”

— NBC’s *Today*, August 31.

Imagining if America Were Still “Blessed” by Teddy’s Presence

“It seems as though his legacy only grows in contrast to how low, what low regard the Senate is now held.... If he were trying to pull things together politically today, if we were blessed by his presence, what would be his focus? Do you think it would still be the passion for health care, or would he be looking to the larger economic issues?... This is a figure who becomes larger even after life, as large as he was in life.”

— NBC’s Andrea Mitchell talking about the late Ted Kennedy, MSNBC’s *Andrea Mitchell Reports*, August 20.

Ridiculing Tea Party as Anti-Trilateralist Ignoramuses

“It makes people feel better to say ‘Take our country back.’ If you ask them, they would say from, ‘from the Trilateral Commission, from the big bankers, from the Council on Foreign Relations.’... You see a lot of signs, ‘Federal Government Out of My Social Security,’ ‘Federal Government Out of My Medicare and Medicaid,’ but for the federal government, of course, those programs would not exist.”

— NBC’s Brian Williams talking about the Tea Party on CBS’s *Late Show with David Letterman*, August 23.



Ruing “Racism and Bigotry” of Mosque Foes, Limbaugh’s “Airborne Sludge”

“These are not proud moments in my heritage. But now, I’m genuinely ashamed of us. How sad this whole mosque business is. It doesn’t take much, it seems, to lift the lid and let our home-grown racism and bigotry overflow. We have collectively taken a pratfall on a moral whoopee cushion.... A heyday is being had by a posse of the cheesiest Republican politicians (Lazio, Palin, quick-change artist John McCain and, of course, the self-anointed St. Joan of 9/11, R. Giuliani). Balanced, of course by plenty of cheesy Democrats. And of course Rush L. dependably pollutes the atmosphere with his particular brand of airborne sludge.”

— Former TV talk show host Dick Cavett in his *New York Times* online column, August 20.

Notable Quotables

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