



Vice President's Outrageous Rhetoric Is Largely Unrebuked During Campaign's Final Hours

What If Bush Called His Opponent "Evil"?

At the end of his losing presidential campaign in 1992, President George Bush caught a lot of flak from the networks for calling Al Gore "Ozone Man" and declaring that "my dog, Millie, knows more about foreign affairs than these two bozos." Network correspondents were appalled that the Democratic ticket would be likened to a pair of clowns.

Trailing in the final pre-election polls, Gore this weekend likened his opponent to an evil, slave-holding racist, but few TV reporters had the same outrage they manifested eight years ago.

■ Gore begged worshipers at a Memphis prayer breakfast to support him. "Good overcomes evil if we choose that outcome," he said, and "Tennessee and Memphis is going to lead the way." Gore denied that he meant to say that George W. Bush was evil, FNC's Jim Angle later reported.

Broadcast coverage? NBC's Chip Reid covered the prayer breakfast on Saturday's *Nightly News*, but skipped over the "evil" comment. While it was a topic of discussion on the Sunday morning interview shows, neither ABC nor NBC mentioned the comment Sunday night. Gore appeared on all three Monday morning shows via satellite from Iowa; ABC's Charles Gibson and NBC's Matt Lauer both asked Gore about that line, but CBS's Bryant Gumbel ignored it.

■ Later in Pittsburgh, Gore pushed the idea that Bush would subjugate African-Americans: "When my opponent, Governor Bush, says he'll appoint strict constructionists to the Supreme Court, I often think of the strictly constructed meaning that was applied when the Constitution was written — how some people (slaves) were considered three-fifths of a human being."

Neither CBS nor NBC touched the three-fifths comment this morning, nor did any of the evening news programs bring it up last night. But ABC's Gibson asked Gore: "Do you really, honestly think that Governor Bush would take us back in civil rights 225 years?"

■ Gibson also voiced bewilderment that Gore should be trailing at all. "When you look at this objectively," he told the Vice President, "the incumbent party is dealt a very strong hand here. We have full employment in the United States, we have unparalleled prosperity in terms of wealth created, we have low interest rates, we have low inflation, we have few perils to our nation overseas. So you were dealt a very strong hand coming into this election, and yet it's still close. Why?"

On *Today*, Katie Couric consulted Doris Kearns Goodwin, NBC's resident historian, about the hardships of defeat. "It'll be much harder for Gore because he has to say goodbye to his staff, he has to leave his house, he has to leave the place where he's been in such a long period of time." She added, "At least Mr. Bush is

going home to the house that he's had. He's going back to a job. He'll have structure in his day."

Sunday's *Washington Post* quoted Gore manager Donna Brazile as saying that by the third debate she knew "Al Gore was quite ready to finish this race with a sense of style and grace." Reporters should ask Gore if it's really classy to brand your opponents evil racists. — Rich Noyes

Is This What Brazile Meant By Gore's "Sense of Style and Grace"?

"I believe, as I stand here in Memphis, that America has a rendez vous with redemption. I believe that we are moving toward the nation that we are intended to be. But we've got work that lies just before us, and we've got to recognize the obstacles that need to be cleared away, and they too are obstacles of the spirit. Deep within us, we each have the capacity for good and for evil. I am taught that good overcomes evil if we choose that outcome. I feel it coming. I feel a message from this gathering that on Tuesday we're going to carry Tennessee and Memphis is going to lead the way."
— Al Gore, speaking at a prayer breakfast, Nov. 4

L. Brent Bozell III, Publisher; Brent Baker, Tim Graham, Editors; Jessica Anderson, Brian Boyd, Geoffrey Dickens, Ted King, Paul Smith, Brad Wilmouth, Media Analysts; Kristina Sewell, Research Associate; Liz Swasey, Director of Communications. For the most complete media bias analysis, see the *CyberAlert* at www.mrc.org