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SARAH PALIN AND THE CRIME CONNECTION: BAD POLITICS AND GUN CONTROL

After the recent shootings in Tucson, Arizona of Congresswoman Gabby Giffords and nineteen other innocent bystanders, a number of social issues have been raised from gun control to the negative tone in current political discourse in the U.S. Some have blamed the shooting on loose gun laws in Arizona and the U.S. in general. Others have pointed to the arguably violent rhetoric of people like Sarah Palin, former Alaska Governor. While each has drawn attention, none-more-so than the "Palin Politics".

THE VIOLENT NATURE

Palin denies that her brand of political discourse influenced the alleged Tucson shooter and she asserts that she "hates violence". Palin has gone so far as to post a rambling eight minute video arguing the alleged violent nature of her discourse is a "blood libel" and she does not advocate violence in any way what-so-ever. But is that true?

While Palin claims to "hate violence", a closer look seems to point otherwise. In her new reality t.v. show Palin is shown looking through the cross hairs of a gun scope and shooting an animal. While I'm not anti-hunting, I think it is universally accepted shooting an animal is arguably a form of violence. Standing alone it may not seem like a big deal, however, taken with other Palin-style antics it becomes a grim situation.

Palin asserts the killing was a "necessity" to provide food for her family. Palins daughter just moved to Arizona for college and Palin and her family have been traveling the U.S. on book tours and political rallies for the so-called "Tea Party". Palin and her family are exceedingly rich, and presumably not starving. They all appear to be well fed. Nor do we see Palin hauling the several

hundred pounds of animal meat on her book tours. Its more likely Palins killing was more a show to promote the Alaska hunting industry, the pro-gun lobby and to tweak the never ending parade of Palin haters.

That means that her statement it is a "necessity" is likely not true and was motivated more by politics than any real need to eat. While Palin claims to "hate violence" it is apparently not enough to stop her from shooting the animal. More disturbing is how the act runs into her political life.

On Palins website she has gun cross hairs over the districts of a number of political leaders, including Gabby Giffords, who complained it was inappropriate less than a week before she was seriously injured in the Tucson shootings. We can see what Palin did with the cross hairs in her reality show, so it is not a stretch of imagination to figure out what she implied by the cross hairs on her web page. The interpretation is supported by Palin herself when she calls for her supporters, "don't retreat, reload". While Palin claims that the imagery and slogan do not advocate violence, is that true?

Anti-abortion activists use similar images on pictures of abortion doctors and clinics. Members of those groups have gone on to bomb clinics and kill doctors. White Supremacy groups have also utilized similar images. Those groups promote a poster called the "running nigger", which depicts gun cross hairs on the back of a running black male. One hardly needs to guess what message they are trying to convey with that image.

In a prison context if a prisoner is caught drawing a picture that contains a gun, he is accused of promoting violence, even if he has never committed a violent crime. No excuse is accepted and a prisoner is given a misconduct report, can lose good time and even family visits.

Palin argues that her gun cross hairs and

her "don't retreat, reload" slogan is simply a call for people to vote. I wonder if that excuse would be so readily accepted if a White Supremacist group, like National Alliance, used it. I doubt it. And Palin's explanations is just as unbelievable. Besides, one would think that someone like Palin could come up with more appropriate imagery and slogans.

Palin's political convictions also show lack of conviction. Shortly after the shooting of Gabby Giffords, Palin removed the gun cross hairs from her web page. That alone is a near admission she knew the imagery was not only tasteless but inappropriate. However, if Palin really believed the images were just a call for people to vote she would not have taken them down and would have stuck to her guns; no pun intended, and stood by her explanation. The fact she didn't speaks volumes.

In addition to the above mentioned, Palin is also a strong advocate of the Death Penalty. While there are arguments for and against the Death Penalty, there is a universal agreement it is a violent act. In fact, almost all first world nations have banned the Death Penalty. Hitler believed in the Death Penalty, too, in the form of gas chambers.

All of the above mentioned together speak clearly how much Palin truly "hates violence", or her definition of it, and how she sees political adversaries (as animals in cross hairs to be "targeted"), as well as how she values life in general.

"Palin Politics" lacks a genuine base in debate and the slogans and imagery are designed to provoke an emotional response rather than meaningful debate.

GUN CONTROL

Besides the Palin connection that has grown out of the Tucson shootings there has been a huge call for tougher gun laws to control who can buy and possess guns, ammo and even the size of ammo clips. Whenever a ~~tragedy~~ tragedy, like what happened in Tucson, occurs people jump on the opportunity

to push their flavor of gun rights laws (either pro or con). Watching what arguments have sprouted from the tragedy I can say from experience and certainty that neither side has offered a solution that would reduce crime or prevent similar incidents from happening. There are a number of deficiencies in their arguments.

The arguments thus far have included restricting the purchase of ammo, barring extended clips, barring anyone with mental health issues from purchasing a gun. None of these are meaningful resolutions.

My criminal conviction involves a gun. Two other teenagers and myself (I was 19 yrs old at the time), stole a 22 caliber target pistol from one of my codefendants uncles. The gun had a standard factory clip with a capacity of about ten rounds or so. We used the gun in target shooting for several days before we turned to use it in a robbery. The store owner was shot and killed with a single bullet. The only bullet in the gun.

No law on restricting ammo, clips or Mental health purchasers would have changed the situation. Most crimes are committed with guns that have been stolen from people who legally purchased them. And that is where gun restriction laws fail. No matter how restrictive the law a person determined to use a gun can easily get access to one through theft. And it takes only one bullet to kill someone.

Incidents like the Tucson Tragedy often bring crime and gun rights to the forefront, but incidents like that are rare. The reason it became so electrified is because it involved a congresswoman. You can go into any large town or city in the U.S. and see people being shot and killed every day. It rarely garners national or even state attention. The only time it does draw attention is when it involves four or five bodies, or the rich and powerful.

In my case, we were three teens high on Meth who stole a gun which by the time of the crime had only one bullet. The only thing that could have prevented the use of that gun in a crime would have been a "trigger lock". Trigger locks block the entire

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trigger and cannot be removed without a key. Without the key the gun is nearly useless.

Rather than putting restrictions on gun purchases, ammo clips or even based on a persons mental health status a far better solution is to require the owner to have a trigger lock on any gun they own when not in use. That alone would significantly reduce the killing deaths involving guns. Children who accidentally shoot other children with guns, guns stolen and used in other crimes or stolen at all would be reduced.

Laws regarding trigger locks would be far more effective than over broad laws on gun rights and ownership.

CONCLUSION

I agree with President Obama when he said the discussion should not be about what twisted logic the shooter used. The gunmans alleged political outlook is not necessarily important. Whatever his reasoning it was his choice, his responsibility and liability lies with him alone.

People should take stock of their own lives and remember blood does not clean blood. And we should all think more deeply before we voice our views to insure they wont have collateral consequences. A sentiment that Gabby Giffords expressed regarding Sarah Palin's cross hairs only a week before she was shot.