

A Tale of Two Outhouses
by John Littig

A 2006 political cartoon by Pulitzer Prize winner Mike Luckovich depicted an outhouse with the sign out front: "Bush Presidential Library." Hilarious, right? You might be delighted or outraged but, whatever your take, you probably saw this as an exercise of free speech---not a punishable offense.

The Attorney General at that time (Alberto Gonzalez, although that doesn't matter) did not launch an investigation into the cartoon, the cartoonist, or the legality of his drawing.

You and I would have been horrified if he had. The offensive cartoon was protected by the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Period.

Well, fast forward to 2014 and the Attorney Generalship of Eric Holder.

The town of Norfolk, Nebraska, had a Fourth of July parade. One of the entrants was a float (a flatbed truck, actually) featuring an outhouse labeled---you guessed it---"Obama Presidential Library." In addition, there was a mannequin emerging from the facility. According to the local paper, the Lincoln Journal Star, most folks laughed and applauded (after all, it's middle America, not Manhattan or Mendocino).

But one viewer was not amused. Glory Kathurima, an immigrant from Kenya, was offended. She declared the display to be racist. She saw the mannequin as a black person, and thus a depiction of President Obama. Dale Remmich, whose float this was, said the figure represented himself, not Obama. I've looked at it on line, and I can't tell if the depiction is a black person or a white person. But "what difference, at this point, does it make?"

If the mannequin was intended to depict Obama who is, as far as I know, black---then how is it racist to have a black representation? Is there an alternative?

Nevertheless, the Attorney General has leapt into action. He has dispatched investigators from his Community Relations Service team to Nebraska to determine whether there is some sort of civil rights violation going on.

Now for perspective, let's remember that this is the same Eric Holder who found it unworthy of his Department to pursue investigations of Black Panthers armed with nightsticks who were videotaped committing voter intimidation; an illegal gun-running operation launched by his own ATF; an IRS official who invoked her protection against self-incrimination rather than testify before Congress; the DOJ itself spying on Associated Press and FoxNews reporters; and a plethora of other apparent crimes by the government which many of us common folk think ought to be looked into.

But, following the president's lead, Holder cannot find even a smidgen of evidence warranting investigation. Except in the case of the Nebraska Fourth of July parade outhouse.

Now I suspect Holder's Justice Department didn't really think there was a prosecutable case here, but just wanted to intimidate the local yokels who had dissed the president. And maybe make them lose some sleep and spend some money on legal defense. Or maybe grovel and apologize.

What we have here is a Justice Department which will demurely avert its gaze when the crime is being committed by the Obama administration or its friends, but will exert its considerable power against ordinary law-abiding citizens who express dissent---or even disrespect---against the administration.

A Department of Justice that practices selective enforcement and uses its power to bludgeon its political or ideological foes---I'd bet that's not what the Founding Fathers had in mind.

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