

Why Won't Pamela Geller Behave?

by Lorna Salzman (June 2015)

Thought Precedes Action. Sometimes it is just speculation or daydreaming or what precedes a work of fiction, a conversation or mere opinion. It is a fundamental characteristic of the human species. Those who would ban the expression of "hurtful," disrespectful, controversial or dissenting views are those who believe in Thought Control. Like pornography, defamation is in the eyes of the beholder.

Why is a racist thought that vanishes within seconds considered indefensible? Why is an act of violence purportedly motivated by hate deserving of a harsher sentence? What external evidence determines that hate is the motivation behind a specific crime? Are those famous Polish jokes told around the family table hate speech deserving punishment? And, to be fair, what about the anti-Semitic comments made by blacks like Louis Farrakhan and Cynthia McKinney's father? Why did American Jews not file a complaint about those? Or the public vilification of Israel and the Jews by American Muslims (and some Jews) on our college campuses? If hate speech were ever banned, the practitioners of these attacks would be the first to go to jail. Now they hide behind our First Amendment right but would deny Pamela Geller that same right. Nor are those Jews who tried to prevent the performance of John Adams' opera, *The Death of Klinghoffer* any different from the Muslims who want to silence Geller and other critics of Islam.

Look at the word Islamophobia, invented by Muslims to distract our attention away from the bigotry, misogyny and violence of the Qur'an. It is a fear of Islam, a religion. It is not a fear of Muslims individually. Attacks on the Catholic Church for its own authoritarian doctrines and pedophilia have so far not led to persecution and threats against practicing Catholics or complaints from them about "hate speech." Only Muslims insist on perversely identifying personally with their religion. Only Muslims cannot tolerate dissent and criticism. Only Islam mandates death for those who leave the faith. In this situation it is clear that assimilation of religious Muslims into secular societies will never happen.

Indeed, the only clear example we have of real hate speech is what Muslim terrorists utter when they murder journalists, writers, apostates and women in the name of Islam or when Hamas vows to exterminate Jews. We need to take this seriously but liberal spinelessness refuses to recognize Muslim hate speech even as it pillories people like Pamela Geller for "provocation."

Provocation is the excuse of rapists: blame the victim, not the perpetrator. This reluctance reaches its extreme when the American left ignores the shouts of "Allah akbar" followed by bombings, beheadings or stonings, excusing the murderers on grounds that they are poor and powerless and oppressed by American "imperialism." "They need jobs," stated one State Dept. woman recently.

Just why do religiously motivated criminals get cut more slack for their crimes than someone like Geller who has committed no crime at all? It all goes back to the Marxist belief that only society shapes humans and that human failings and criminal acts are the result of societal failure. This implies that humans have no innate sense of morality or justice, and that they are at the complete mercy of society's inadequacies or their upbringing or their lack of education. The list of excuses for committing crimes is endless.

This further suggests that humans are incapable of making choices. When applied to Muslims, this is of course the most blatant form of patronizing racism: the assumption that those of a different religion are incapable of making moral choices BECAUSE of their religion. This is precisely the position of the American left today regarding Muslims. Despite the fact that Muslims here and in western Europe have suffered no threats or violence due to their religion, the Muslim propaganda machine churns out the same refrain – echoed by Glenn Greenwald and others – about the "powerlessness and disenfranchisement" of Muslims and how this supposed lack of power, enhanced by "provocation," is responsible for the violent Muslim backlash, not their religious beliefs (which are identical to their political and moral beliefs). Muslim anger, hatred, bigotry and violence all get off lightly, while those like Geller and Ayaan Hirsi Ali who point out their origin in the Islamic religion are targets of that same violence.

Nothing demonstrates the failure of liberalism more than the contemporary tolerance for anti-social behavior and intolerance of those who point it out. Classic American liberalism has basked in self-adoration too long and for little reason. Compassion, tolerance, social justice, free thought, human rights, civil liberties: all of these were taken as liberal doctrine for decades. The latest manifestations are the attacks on the "mass incarceration" of the American prison system where the majority of prisoners are black men. Not all of them are guilty of serious crimes and distinctions need to be made in how sentences are applied. But no one has yet suggested that most of them never committed ANY crime. If America has so many prisoners, liberals assert, then something is wrong with the system. Our gun worship, sexist power hierarchy, military and academic rape culture, domestic abuse, economic inequality...all of these indeed are the cultural contributors to crime just as Islam motivates Muslim terrorism. But in the end the one who commits the crime is, correctly, the only one to be held

responsible.

Liberal dominance has fallen by the wayside. In the face of uncontrollable alien forces and events, liberal tolerance is being challenged on all fronts. But the reaction of liberals has been perverse. Instead of doubling its commitment to these values, liberalism has gone over to the dark side, refusing to acknowledge human agency in evil. It has, instead, chosen to defame and cast out those individuals who insist on pointing out evil even-handedly, wherever it exists. The ad hominem tactic has found its perfect target in Pamela Geller. Geller alone, liberals have decided, is the one who can restore the power and influence of liberalism because (they reason) she is such an abomination and a behavioral anomaly that society will flee from her dire predictions and blindly embrace the preachings of liberalism.

Here is how liberals reason: Geller will stimulate hatred of non-liberals and the right, and deny them legitimacy, especially their fear of radical Islam. (This is already happening). Geller will expose the irredeemable ignorance of the lower classes, Republicans, the Tea Party, neo-cons, southern bigots and brutal policemen. By being immoderate and outspoken Geller will weaken her case against Islamism and strengthen the impeccable moral case of the left which, in its twisted Chomskyan mode, finds the U.S. guilty of all the evil in the world. Geller will prove the moral superiority of liberalism, the Satanic evil of American foreign policy, the validity of post-modern cultural relativism, and the rightness of liberals' judgment...unlike Muslim terrorists who test our ambivalence about a single standard of morality, our laws and our confidence in our own institutions and values. Indeed, they rightfully perceive our uncertainty and fear...uncertainty about whether, even in the middle of a religious war, it is considered acceptable to acknowledge the religious motivation of terrorists even as they declare it repeatedly.

In a sense Geller is the polar opposite of Pres. Obama. She is blunt, disrespectful, immoderate, anathema to polite civil society. She is not an intellectually aerated pundit like David Brooks or Nicholas Kristov. She is not a scholar. She is not, by the usual criteria, an intellectual. She has no aspirations to be a mass media hero or public intellectual. She does not care what the public thinks about her. Horror of horrors, she speaks the same as she thinks, a rarity today. Geller has willingly sacrificed any hope of respect. She cares not for the opinions of others. She speaks truth to power, something liberals used to boast as their modus operandi. Geller has chosen to play by her own rules. Her rule is Truth; she took it from the liberals and is one of its strongest guardians, asking why the liberals have abandoned it. But she has another accomplishment: she has forced liberals and leftists to put their double standard on display.

Since the attack on the "Draw Mohammed" exhibit in Garland, Texas, quite a few critics of Geller have, in essence, rationalized the attack by saying that she was being deliberately provocative, and that she should not be surprised that those who were "poked in the eye" responded angrily. This point needs dissection. Who decides what kind of "poke" is defamatory? In this case it was simply Speech. It was not a threat nor was it an attack, verbal or physical, on individual Muslims but graphic commentaries on a prophet of a religion, and Muslim leaders have unilaterally decided that they and they alone set the criteria for what is offensive. Their own threats against and attacks on Christians and Jews are, of course, acceptable.

If speech (and cartoons in this case) are offensive, then the debate is over, completely pre-empted by Muslims who have set the rules in concrete. The rules are simple: anything Muslims consider offensive is provocative and Islamophobic. End of discussion. No other religion has taken this position of complete authority over an entire society, in pure contempt for that society's own laws and principles. No other religion has asserted that no matter where they live, Muslims' own religious doctrines take precedence over other religions and non-Muslims. No other religion has made it mandatory to forcibly convert non-Muslims and to kill them if they refuse. No other religion has deprived half of its population of its rights. This arrogance, sense of superiority and continual demand for the highest position of privilege are unique to Islam. Muslims should therefore not be surprised that the rest of the world fears, distrusts and dislikes them. Islamophobia is a normal human response to religious authoritarianism, especially that which ceaselessly announces its violent objectives with clarity and consistency.

Stephen Schwartz, in the *Huffington Post* and *Middle East Forum*, wrote this: "I despise Wilders and Geller....(their) vulgar and prejudiced campaign...they are participants in the cynical industry of fear." Quite a mouthful there, but what does it accomplish? Nothing except a self-burnished medal declaring that Schwartz, unlike the target of his vitriol, is an unbiased liberal of good will who would never dream of indulging in such outlandish behavior...even though he professes in that same article to be an enemy of radical Islam and terrorism. No, this attack on Wilders and Geller has no substance, no purpose, except to underscore Schwartz' contrasting goodness and moral superiority.

But let's reflect on his statement that he "despises" Geller and Wilders. What does it mean to despise someone whom one has never met and probably never will, who, unlike Hamas, Anwar Awlaki or Jahar Tsarnaev, has never slandered or harmed you or threatened to do so, who does not infringe upon your rights or in any way inconvenience you? What it means is that you despise that person's OPINIONS, which is (and should be) quite different from despising that

person. But wait a minute: why is it all right for a liberal to despise someone because of her opinions.....but not all right for someone like Pamela Geller to express HER hatred of a religion and its violent strictures? Why is Schwartz' hatred justified but not Geller's?

I won't make a guess as to what kind of self-serving rationalization Schwartz would use to justify this double standard. It's impossible to know the lengths to which a liberal will go to distance himself from bothersome people with starkly opposing political views. Small wonder that the American left has recused itself from the debate about the threat of radical Islam; were they to acknowledge it, they would find themselves on the same side of that issue as their adversaries on the right...adversaries who of course lack the proper civility and moderated tone. "Those Islamophobic extremists really go too far to be taken seriously.....we have to keep our distance from them or we will be tainted and lose our position of moral authority."

So then there is our president. Being bi-racial is half the game for liberals. The other half is his Ivy League education, his higher degrees, his social and political accomplishments starting with community activism, rising to state government, to the U.S. congress and finally the presidency. Highly intelligent, well-spoken, a person of self-respect and public integrity, he has played by the rules of liberalism and won the prize. His wife and children became instant social symbols to emulate. Obama is the *summa cum laude* of politicians, embodying the civility liberals expect of the leading public liberal in the nation. I would wager that no four-letter word ever enters his mind, much less conversation. Indeed, he is as equally respectful of radical Islam as liberals: he has banned any mention of it. He plays by the rules of the liberal game, re-naming the unnameable, deleting the unthinkable. He is well-mannered, respectful, moderate. He is worthy of being taken seriously.

Which is worse? Being an uncouth truth teller or a polite dissembler? Being uncouth is a violation of social protocols, just nasty bad manners. Being mendacious, censoring speech and making excuses for religious-based violence are policy "crimes" and do more damage to the political fabric than anyone like Geller could do. Those who dislike her aren't being forced to listen to her any more than they are to Ann Coulter or Rush Limbaugh. The fact that she has attracted more attention and resentment is arguably a testament to the veracity of what she says. No one pays attention to the soothsayers who predict the End Times. But they do pay attention to someone whose pronouncements are substantiated daily in the media. If Geller prevails, it will not be a measure of the success of right wing paranoia but because she has given us the evidence to back up her opinions...in contrast to Glenn Greenwald, Chris Hedges, Juan Cole and other leftist bloggers who make a career out of promoting hatred of America. But no one ever built a successful movement based on hatred of one's country. Nor can they build

one based on palpable lies or fanatic ideology, secular or religious.....except Islam.

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