



Written by [Ralph R. Reiland](#) on July 26, 2013

Muzzling for Political Correctness

America is “a nation of cowards” when it comes to discussing race, declared Attorney General Eric Holder on February 18, 2009, just two weeks after he was confirmed as head of the U.S. Justice Department and the chief law officer of the federal government — and the nation’s first African-American attorney general.



Speaking to Department of Justice employees at an event celebrating Black History Month, Holder stated, “Though this nation has proudly thought of itself as an ethnic melting pot, in things racial we have always been and we, I believe, continue to be in too many ways essentially a nation of cowards.”

America “has still not come to grips with its racial past,” stated Holder, contending that we “simply do not talk enough with each other about race.”

To make progress, “we have to have the guts to be honest with each other,” he advised, the guts to talk “freely and without fear,” and become “tolerant enough of each other to have frank conversations.”

Instead, said Holder, “certain subjects are off limits and that to explore them risks, at best, embarrassment, and, at worst, the questioning of one’s character.”

Holder was right. Plenty of subjects have been placed “off limits,” and not just relating to race.

NPR News, for instance, fired longtime news analyst Juan Williams because of a politically incorrect remark he made on *The O’Reilly Factor*.

“Look, Bill, I’m not a bigot,” said Williams, one of the nation’s top African-American commentators. “You know the kind of books I’ve written about the civil rights movement in this country. But when I get on a plane, I got to tell you, if I see people who are in Muslim garb and I think, you know, they are identifying themselves first and foremost as Muslims, I get worried. I get nervous.”

Similarly, Joyce Carol Oates created what a recent *Wall Street Journal* headline called a “furor” after simply tweeting the following after monitoring news from Egypt: “Where 99.3% of women report having been sexually harassed and rape is epidemic — Egypt — natural to inquire: what’s the predominant religion?”

Oates also tweeted a few more questions: “Religion has no effect on behavior at all? ‘Rape culture’ has no relationship to any ‘religious culture’ — how can this be?”

In reaction to those simple and reasonable questions, “fellow writers and intellectuals freaked” reported *New York Times* columnist Frank Bruni.

Oates, accused of “Islamophobic tweets” and “anti-Muslim bigotry,” became the issue, rather than the level of misogyny and sexist aggression in Egypt.



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In the same way, longtime Washington Post columnist Richard Cohen recently created a furor by writing about “the reality of urban crime in America” and “the widespread fear of crime committed by young black males.”

Explained Cohen, “In New York City, blacks comprise 23.4 percent of the population yet they represent 78 percent of all shooting suspects — almost all of them young men. We know them from the nightly news.”

There is “no doubt in my mind that Zimmerman profiled Martin,” continued Cohen, and the result was a quintessentially American tragedy — the death of a young man understandably suspected because he was black and tragically dead for the same reason.”

To ignore the racial component of America’s murder statistics is “an Orwellian exercise in political correctness,” wrote Cohen. “Crime where it intersects with race is given the silent treatment,” not unlike “sex in the Victorian era (or the 1950s), an unmentionable but unmistakable part of life. We all know about it and take appropriate precaution but keep our mouths shut.”

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