



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on July 14, 2014

Nebraska: DOJ Investigates Anti-Obama Parade Float

As always, the Justice Department is on the case, this time investigating a popular July parade float in Norfolk, Nebraska, that was critical of President Obama.

The *Washington Times* reported, “A Fourth of July parade float featured at the annual Independence Day parade in Norfolk sparked criticism when it depicted a zombie-like figure resembling Mr. Obama standing outside an outhouse, which was labeled the ‘Obama Presidential Library’.”



According to the Nebraska Democratic Party, the float is one of the “worst shows of racism and disrespect for the office of the presidency that Nebraska has ever seen.”

The Department of Justice reportedly dispatched a Community Relations Service team member who deals with discrimination disputes to a meeting in Norfolk on Thursday to investigate this incident. At the same meeting were the NAACP, Norfolk mayor Sue Fuchtman, and the Norfolk Odd Fellows, which coordinated the parade.

Dale Remmich, creator of the now-controversial float, claims that the figure in the float was himself, not President Obama, and that representation was meant to reveal his frustration with the president’s handling of the Veterans Affairs Department.

But the NAACP disputed this assertion. NAACP chapter president Betty Andrews stated, “Looking at the float, that message absolutely did not come through.”

Meanwhile, even if the mannequin in the float was in fact a depiction of President Obama, many observers have wondered how the portrayal is racist, as opponents have claimed, and further, have questioned whether respect for the president should override one’s ability to showcase criticism of the president. Is it unlawful to show disrespect for the president? Absolutely not.

The Founding Fathers understood the value in protecting the right of citizens to air their grievances publicly. George Washington warned, “If freedom of speech is taken away, then dumb and silent we may be led, like sheep to the slaughter.”

Likewise, Benjamin Franklin declared, “In those wretched countries where a man cannot call his tongue his own, he can scarce call anything his own. Whoever would overthrow the liberty of a nation must begin by subduing the freeness of speech.”

Later presidents voiced similar sentiments. Theodor Roosevelt asserted, “To announce that there must be no criticism of the President, or that we are to stand by the President, right or wrong, is not only unpatriotic and servile, but is morally treasonable to the American public.”

However, critics of the Norfolk parade float, like those of previous anti-Obama displays, argue that the demonstrations are disrespectful and therefore inappropriate.

Yet showing respect for a presidential administration was certainly not a requirement when protesters often portrayed President George W. Bush as a Nazi or made parallels between Bush and Adolf Hitler.



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In 2009, Real Clear Politics reminded us of such displays.

“Any mildly alert American old enough [will] remember the anti-war protests of 2003-2007. Images of George Bush with a Hitler moustache and a Nazi uniform [were] everywhere at swastika-choked marches and rallies,” wrote RCP’s John Leo. “‘Stop the Fourth Reich-Visualize Nuremburg,’ said one sign at a Hollywood march. ‘The Fuhrer already in his bunker,’ said another.”

Leo continued,

On far-left Internet sites, where basic Bush-Is-Hitler commentary became too familiar to attract attention, Bush aides were quickly assigned Nazi roles; Tom Ridge was the new Himmler and Colin Powell became Nazi Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop; Ari Fleisher, Karen Hughes and Karl Rove were all Josef Goebbels figures. Some thought Vice President Cheney was the most important Hitler figure — he commands “storm-trooper legions,” said famous crackpot Lyndon LaRouche.

One fevered lefty connected Bush to Nero as well as Hitler, saying “Nero burned Rome, Hitler burned the Reichstag and Bush burned the World Trade Center.”

Of course, the First Amendment is meant to protect free speech even when the free speech may be abhorrent to some.

The Supreme Court reaffirmed this truth in 2011 when it ruled 8 to 1 that the Westboro Baptist Church had a constitutional right to protest military funerals, regardless of the deplorable nature of the protests.

The Topeka-based Westboro Baptist church attracted public attention for holding boisterous protests at the funerals of fallen U.S. soldiers, where demonstrators declared military deaths to be God’s punishment for homosexuality. Protesters were seen bearing signs that read “Thank God for Dead Soldiers,” “God Hates Fags,” and “You’re going to Hell.”

The Supreme Court still [held](#) that the First Amendment protects the members of the Westboro Church, and that freedom of speech cannot be restricted simply because “it is upsetting or arouses contempt.”

And even those who detested the Westboro Church’s beliefs defended the church’s right to protest. In fact, 21 news organizations joined the brief defending the Westboro Baptist Church. Though they admitted the church’s behavior was “inexplicable and hateful,” they claimed that a ruling against the church could ultimately be used to stifle anyone who speaks out on controversial issues, and that it could potentially “threaten to expand dramatically the risk of liability for news media coverage and commentary.”

And unlike the protests of the Westboro Baptist Church, the Nebraska float was much more well received. A member of the parade committee indicated that the Obama float was among the most popular in the parade.

Still, constitutionalists have pointed out that the popularity of the float is irrelevant in this argument, since freedom of speech is fundamental, and the right to showcase one’s opposition must be protected.

Many observers find the Department of Justice’s arbitrary action in this case galling considering all the situations in which the DOJ should have acted and did not. For example, in 2012, the Department of Justice announced it would not prosecute Wall Street firm Goldman Sachs or its employees for financial fraud. A Senate panel had investigated allegations that the company marketed four sets of risky mortgage securities without informing its clients of the nature of the securities.



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The Senate panel, chaired by Senator Carl Levin (D-Mich.), asserted at the time that Goldman Sachs bet against investors' positions and tricked investors about those positions in order to shift the risk. But Justice Department officials stated that they "have determined that, based on the law and evidence as they exist at this time, there is not a viable basis to bring a criminal prosecution with respect to Goldman Sachs or its employees in regard to the allegations set forth in the report" from the Senate subcommittee.

The DOJ also elected to dismiss charges of voter intimidation against the New Black Panthers who, in November 2008, stood outside a Philadelphia polling facility bearing nightsticks and employing an intimidating stance. When questioned about their presence and their possession of weapons, the Panther members claimed that they were concerned citizens and "that's why we're here."

The DOJ compromised with the New Black Panther members, who agreed not to carry "a deadly weapon" within the vicinity of a polling place.

Frustrated by his department's decision to pursue charges against the New Black Panthers, DOJ official Christian Adams resigned his position, claiming that the Obama administration has generally failed to prosecute "non-whites" in voter intimidation cases.

However, in 2011, the Justice Department did examine the test for applicants to the Dayton Police Department, and even pressured the department to lower its standards because not enough African-American candidates passed the written exam.

And now the DOJ is once again making its presence known in a case of alleged racism revolving around anti-Obama speech.

It is to be hoped that a situation actually requiring DOJ involvement does not arise while the department is busy investigating that dastardly float in Norfolk, Nebraska.



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