



The President in Tucson

President Barack Obama went to Tucson on January 12th to take part in the memorial service held at the University of Arizona at Tucson to express the nation's solidarity with the citizens of Tucson and Arizona in paying tribute to the dead and wounded of Saturday's massacre.

For 30 minutes he spoke of the lives that had been lost and injured by the dark work of a madman. He quoted the Book of Job in expressing our inability to understand the mind of the killer. He spoke about each of the victims, describing their lives in ways that moved the audience. But the gist of his message was that the senseless murder of nine-year-old Christine Green should make us strive to make America the ideal kind of country that Christine would have expected it to be. Christine had been born on September 11, 2001.



While Obama talked of the need to have a more civil discourse among those who disagree, he avoided getting involved in the blame game which so many of his liberal colleagues have engaged in. "The hope of the nation is here tonight," he said. It was a good speech that pulled at the heart strings of the people of Tucson. And it was quite presidential in the traditional meaning of the word. He spoke for the entire country, not as a polarizing liberal. "We should strive to become better people," he said.

The service was opened by a professor at the university of Indian descent providing a traditional Native American blessing. He has a son in Afghanistan. That was followed by the playing of the National Anthem. The president of the university then spoke of Tucson and wondered how this horrible event could have happened in such a caring community. But despite these tragic events, Tucson showed its unity in this memorial service. He then introduced Daniel Hernandez Jr., Gabrielle Giffords' young intern, who saved the Congresswoman's life. He gave a short eloquent speech on the need to come together as Americans.

Next spoke the Governor of Arizona, Jan Brewer. She thanked the President for coming to Arizona. She then spoke of those who had been killed, and what their loss meant to Arizona. She said that one man's act of darkness could not destroy the caring spirit of Arizonans. Next on the podium was Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano, former governor of Arizona, who read from the Book of Isaiah. Attorney General Eric Holder followed, reading from the New Testament, the Second Letter of Paul to the Corinthians, in which the name of Jesus is mentioned. But the main event was the speech of the President, which received many moments of applause.

Earlier in the day former Governor of Alaska Sarah Palin released a video in response to the attempts by liberals to blame her for the actions of an evil, apolitical madman. She characterized such



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accusations as “blood libel,” a term used in superstitious Russia when Jews were accused of killing Christian children to use their blood for sacrificial purposes. Alan Dershowitz, the Jewish law professor, commented that the use of the term by Palin was quite appropriate.

Palin also stressed that debate and political disagreement were part of the American democratic process and that the actions of an evil madman were not going to stop the American people from exercising their normal right to disagree with their government’s policies. She pointed out that the changes made in Congress by the elections in November proved that the ballot box was the proper way to change government policies.

As the days go by, more and more information about the killer is coming to light. Apparently he was well known to the Sheriff of Pima County and law enforcement agencies. That they were unable to prevent him from committing this massacre is an indication that the government cannot protect us from the deeds of evil men.

The only person who seems to be rejoicing in what took place on Saturday, January 9th, is the killer himself, whose ugly, smiling, bald-headed mug shot seems to say in defiance, “I did it and I’m happy that I did it.”

All in all, this Memorial Service will become part and parcel of the American political canon, and will probably be used in classrooms as an example of Presidential eloquence and thoughtfulness.

Photo: President Barack Obama takes his seat after finishing his speech at a memorial service in Tucson, Ariz.; AP Images



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