

Every Crime Is a Hate Crime

By now the nation is fully aware of a heinous crime committed in Chicago against a mentally challenged young man who is white. Four black adults kidnapped him, bound him with duct tape, tortured him for days as he huddled in a corner, made him drink water out of a toilet, and threatened him with a knife, which they used to cut his scalp.

He managed to escape, and the police found him wandering dazed and traumatized in a T-shirt and shorts in the January cold.

The perpetrators were so enamored with themselves they posted a video on Facebook that includes footage of them yelling obscenities about President-elect Donald Trump and white people. Even after they were apprehended, they showed absolutely no remorse for what they had done.

The cops and the media worked themselves into pretzels trying to call this thing anything but a hate crime. The cops for a full day and a half said they simply did not have enough information to call it a hate crime or a politically motivated crime despite the overwhelming *prima facie* evidence that was obvious to every other living American.

Don Lemon on CNN refused to call what these perps had done “evil” and instead blamed bad parenting. It’s not their fault, you see; it’s all a function of bad home training, even though one of them is 24 and all of them are adults. At what point, exactly, Mr. Lemon, do we insist that people stop blaming everybody else and accept responsibility for their own actions?

One of the police department spokesmen said on Wednesday—before they finally decided to call it a “hate crime”—that the incident was not a hate crime because the victim was not targeted because of his race but because he was a “special needs” individual. What? The implications of this

statement are staggering and pernicious. Apparently in this person's mind, torturing someone because he is disabled isn't as bad as torturing someone because of his skin color.

In other words, in this individual's fevered imagination, disabled people deserve less legal protection than white people. Punishment will be less severe if you pick on a handicapped person than if you pick on somebody because of their skin color.

This sad, sorry, tragic affair shows us that it's time to dispense with the category of "hate crimes" altogether. Even having a "hate crimes" category means we are establishing two tiers of victims, some of whom deserve more legal protection than other victims of the same crime.

If you're tortured because of your disability, yeah, we'll punish the perps, but just wait until you see what we do to somebody who tortures you because of your skin color. We'll rap the knuckles of those who torture the handicapped, but we'll land like a falling safe on anyone who does the same thing because of race.

Having two categories of victims, some of whom get more protection than other victims of the same crime, is fundamentally, egregiously and unconscionably unjust, unfair and un-American. Crime is crime, and justice dictates that the punishment be the same for the same crime. That's equality under the law. Dispensing unequal justice based on some perceived special status is shameful inequality under the law, and a violation of the Pledge of Allegiance, which promises "liberty and *justice* for *all*," not just for the politically favored few.

It makes no difference to this young man whether he was forced to drink out of a toilet because he is disabled or because he is white. His pain and his suffering are the same.

Another way to put this is that every crime is a hate crime.

You may accuse me of exaggerating, but ask this one question: What's the opposite of love? It's hate. Every crime represents a failure to act out of love toward our neighbors. The epistle of 1 John repeatedly says life is a binary matter—we are either acting in love toward our brothers or acting in hate, even if the form that hatred takes is mere cold-hearted indifference.

Punishment under the law should be based on one thing and one thing only: criminal conduct. Hate-crimes laws create a whole new and dangerous category of thought crimes, wherein we punish an individual not for what he did but for what he was thinking while he did it. This is how a nation winds up with re-education camps.

As Thomas Jefferson so eloquently put it, “The legislative powers of government reach actions only and not opinions.” The author of the Declaration of Independence is right. Conduct is the proper subject of the law, opinion is the proper subject of debate. Woe to a culture which confuses the two. In the interests of justice, let's scrap the whole category of “hate crimes” as soon as humanly possible. {eo}

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