

No Longer Sarah Plain and Tall!

☒ Last week Sarah Palin appeared on Bill O'Reilly's cable news talk show discussing a crude joke levied at her on the animated television show – *The Family Guy*. For those who may not have seen either the show itself or the O'Reilly interview, here's what happened.

In the animated show two Sundays ago, a teenaged character named Chris is romancing Ellen, his classmate. She has Down syndrome. As Chris delves into Ellen's background, she makes this statement, "My dad's an accountant and my mom is the former governor of Alaska." The fact that the actress who does the voice for Ellen, Andrea Fay Friedman, has Down syndrome in real life complicates this story. In fact, Friedman attempted to make Palin the bad guy by saying that the former governor has no sense of humor.

In an e-mail statement sent to the *New York Times* Friedman went on to say, "I thought the line ... was very funny. I think the word is sarcasm. My parents raised me to have a sense of humor and to live a normal life." Not a bad statement for an adult with Down syndrome.

Friedman's plausible defense of the program is obviously self-serving. Unfortunately, she reminds me of a black comedienne who uses the "N" word in her routine; but would picket any white person who did so.

Even more ironic than the fact the Down syndrome actress wants to secure her career at all costs, is the fact that the program was aired on the Fox family network. The Fox news network has hired Sarah Palin as a commentator, and is obviously very protective of the governor. This glitch shows that the Fox news network operates independently from its entertainment branch.

Before I go forward with my comments, let's take a moment to define Down syndrome. The WebMD says that most kids with this condition have distinct facial features, such as a flat face, small ears, slanting eyes and a small mouth. They also tend to have a short neck and short arms and legs. Another common trait is weak muscles and loose joints though muscle tone usually improves by late childhood. They also tend to have below-average intelligence.

For my money, Bristol Palin gave the quintessential comment on the matter in a statement on her mother's Facebook page. Bristol declared: "People with special needs face challenges that many of us will never confront ... why could anyone want to make their

lives more
difficult by mocking them? If the writers of a particularly
pathetic cartoon
show thought they were being clever in mocking my brother and
my family yesterday,
they failed.”

As the national debate rages about the
latest set of tasteless remarks about the former governor and
her family, there
is a shift in the tone and tenor of the criticism levied
against her. The
comments about her do not reflect a new level of political
persecution; instead
they reflect the fact that the ex-governor is starting to
reach icon
status. Cultural icons like Sarah Palin and Tiger Woods are
famous because
of who they are –not just because of
what they do. Icons don’t just make the news; they are the
news. Their fans
dote and their detractors persevere. They fight the
harassment of the
paparazzi and the gratuitous use of their names and images.
Simply
sighting an icon can be a life-defining event versus sighting
the garden-variety
celebrity.

A great example of how one rises from
celebrity to iconic ranks is the meteoric ascent of Paris
Hilton. Her family
name brought her into the limelight and her “jet set”
lifestyle made her the
envy of everyone on the celebrity party scene a few years ago.
Suddenly she

stepped into the icon zone. Wikipedia defines her career as follows: “an American socialite, heiress, media personality, model, singer, author, fashion designer and actress.” This means that she has no permanent job other than being a celebrity.

Returning to the assertion that Sarah Palin has become an icon, let me quote Time magazine, which said last week, “Palin hits the same mystic chords as [Bill] Clinton. A woman who goes to war against the 19-year-old boy who knocked up her daughter and then posed for Playgirl is far more comprehensible to most Americans than deficit spending is. In her Fox interview with Chris Wallace the day after her Nashville speech, Palin said she’d been focusing more on ‘current events’ since she quit as governor of Alaska.”

Even her political allies are starting to weigh in on the love vs. hate Palin campaign. A prominent Tea Party leader from Texas (Dale Robertson) is warning that the movement “is becoming nothing more than a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Republican Party.” He goes on to slam Palin as being part of “a growing insider’s attack to the heart of the Tea Party.”

Contrary to Mr. Robertson’s sentiments, countless newspapers and magazines are hailing Palin as the de

facto leader of the Tea Party movement. If these writers are correct, her best selling book *Going Rogue* may become a manifesto. In addition, her commentaries on Fox may help focus and refine the insights of millions of followers.

Sarah,

Plain and Tall

is the title of a book and a trilogy of movies known by children everywhere.

The award-winning book is a study of the universal themes of loneliness and

abandonment. For months many Americans wondered if Palin and her family could

survive the rough and tumble atmosphere of modern American politics.

Fortunately for Palin, her epitaph will not be "Sarah Plain and Tall." In

fact her destiny is to become a culturally defining icon. She will undoubtedly

become a role model of what a wife, mother and citizen can be.

You go girl!!!!

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3,000-member Hope Christian Church in the nation's capital.

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