

The Left's Response to the Attempted GOP Massacre Is Shameful

Maybe I'm just too naïve.

I'd expected that liberals would eventually turn to talk of gun control after Wednesday's violent, horrible shooting targeting GOP lawmakers.

This was an attack that left House Majority Whip Steve Scalise in critical condition as of Wednesday night, according to the hospital treating him, as well as wounding three others—a lawmaker's aide, a Capitol Police officer and a lobbyist. One of them, lobbyist and former Capitol Hill aide Matt Mika, also is in critical condition, according to reports.

I'd thought liberals would at least react with sympathy and sorrow that innocent people had been targeted by former Bernie Sanders volunteer James Hodgkinson, the man police say was the shooter and allow some time to pass before switching to gun control.

And maybe there even would be some honest self-reflection on whether there had been too much levity about comedian Kathy Griffin's decision to pose with a red-stained replica of Trump's head, ISIS-style, or a New York theater director's choice to portray a Donald Trump look-alike's assassination in "Julius Caesar."

Now, of course, neither Griffin nor "Julius Caesar" director Oskar Eustis is at all responsible for the shooter's decisions—but, just as I would hope no conservative would have done such things to President Barack Obama, it's reasonable to ask the left to behave better, to not forget that Donald Trump, too, is a person. (And yes, it was inappropriate when a

2012 version of "Julius Caesar" starred an actor resembling Obama.)

And of course some, perhaps even most, on the left have been acting in a respectful way.

But there's been some glaring exceptions.

The New York Times, rightly, is getting pilloried for its editorial, published Wednesday, that insinuated Sarah Palin's target map was to blame for the shooting of Gabby Giffords. Here's the language from the original editorial (via *National Review*):

Was this attack evidence of how vicious American politics has become? Probably. In 2011, when Jared Lee Loughner opened fire in a supermarket parking lot, grievously wounding Representative Gabby Giffords and killing six people, including a 9-year-old girl, the link to political incitement was clear. Before the shooting, Sarah Palin's political action committee circulated a map of targeted electoral districts that put Ms. Giffords and 19 other Democrats under stylized cross hairs.

The New York Times has since corrected the piece, noting: "An earlier version of this editorial incorrectly stated that a link existed between political incitement and the 2011 shooting of Representative Gabby Giffords. In fact, no such link was established." Indeed.

National Review's David French dismantled the argument, writing: "In its zeal to create moral equivalencies and maintain a particular narrative about the past, the Times flat-out lied. There is simply no 'link to political incitement' in Loughner's murderous acts. The man was a paranoid schizophrenic who first got angry at Gabby Giffords years before Palin published her map."

And CNN's Jake Tapper, no conservative, similarly disputed the

Times account:

[E]ven way back in Jan 2011, we knew that Loughlin's obsession began 3 years before the Palin map.

You know what wasn't mentioned in that *Times* editorial, which noted their grief in 2011 at "vicious American politics"? Kathy Griffin wasn't mentioned, nor was the *Julius Caesar* play. Oh sure, the *Times* offered a pabulum take on civility, writing:

Conservatives and right-wing media were quick on Wednesday to demand forceful condemnation of hate speech and crimes by anti-Trump liberals. They're right. Liberals should of course be held to the same standard of decency that they ask of the right.

But without naming names or calling out any specific instances, that's a pretty toothless take.

And when I went to The Slot, an offshoot of my favorite liberal site Jezebel, I found this comment on the article about the Scalise shooting:

Yeah, [expletive] these people. Scalise voted for the AHCA [American Health Care Act] and got a good chunk of change from insurance and pharmaceutical companies and health professionals. [Republican Rep. Mo] Brooks is a Freedom Caucus member, so he can [obscene phrase], too. Worst thing they'll have is a traumatic memory, but they have insurance that allows them to get PTSD treated. Scalise will probably have a scar on his hip. No sympathy for these people.
(*Editor's Note: Language edited for decency.*)

This comment was liked 156 times.

And while many Democrat politicians seem to be acting with humanity (including the wonderful display of Democrat lawmakers praying at a Washington, D.C., baseball field when

they heard about the shooting), some almost immediately brought up gun control after the attack at the baseball field in Alexandria, Virginia, just outside Washington.

Virginia Gov. Terry McAuliffe, a Democrat, had this to say Wednesday: "I think we need to do more to protect all of our citizens. I have long advocated—this is not what today is about—but there are too many guns on the street. We lose 93 million Americans a day to gun violence."

McAuliffe, who clarified he meant 93 Americans a day after a reporter asked, said those words just a few hours after the shooting.

And Rep. Don Beyer, the Democrat who represents the district that includes the baseball field (and is, sadly, my House member), sent his constituents an email Wednesday afternoon that concluded with this sentiment: "I believe strongly that our nation should rethink its policies regarding gun violence, and I will have more for you soon on that issue."

While I'm certainly aware of how fast the news cycle moves, could McAuliffe and Beyer maybe have held on to these hot takes, for oh, a whole 24 hours? After all, as of Wednesday night, Scalise was still in critical condition.

Never let a crisis go to waste, indeed.

Let's refresh: The shooter was a former Bernie Sanders volunteer, whom lawmakers said started shooting after confirming those on the field were Republicans, and whose social media use shows a clear liberal tilt.

Hogkinson's alleged violent actions are his own responsibility, and nobody else's.

But would it have been so crazy for the left to have taken a step back and reflected on its overheated rhetoric of the past few months, its willingness to depict Republicans and

conservatives as monsters who want to hurt minorities and LGBT Americans and take away everyone's health care? (Instead of people who have different views on appropriate discrimination policies, religious freedom and the best way to ensure everyone has access to health care, not just insurance.)

No. It wouldn't have been crazy.

It would have been refreshing.

But unfortunately, that's not the America we live in today.

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