

To Dean Obeidallah: If You're Right, Then Debate, Don't Run

In response to my article "The Liberals' Misguided Love Affair With Islam," radio host and columnist Dean Obeidallah tweeted, "Hey @DrMichaelLBrown U win award award [sic] for dumbest article of the day – be proud. #moron."

This was not the first time Mr. Obeidallah attacked me, offering rhetoric without substance, so I responded: "Let's have a public, civil debate about the issue. You've challenged me before, but never with substance. Let's deal with facts. Shall we?"

Some of his followers chimed in with their own mockery, and I responded to each one, wanting to move beyond the invective. Can we interact about specifics? Can you tell me what is factually inaccurate about my article? With one exception, I was greeted with either silence or further insult.

I then tweeted Mr. Obeidallah again: "Sir, please be kind enough to point out any factual errors in my article. I assume you read it carefully, correct?"

He responded: "Ur a joke – I just give ur views sunlight to destroy the [expletive]- now go run along to Pam Geller."

Actually, I don't need this gentleman to give my views "sunlight." By God's grace, I have lots of internet exposure, with my articles posted on numerous websites. My Facebook page has more than 530,000 likes, I have a daily, syndicated radio show, an active YouTube channel and three TV shows, two of which air internationally. So he has his fine platforms and I have mine.

Unfortunately, Mr. Obeidallah's attitude is typical of the condescending, "progressive" left: "We will ridicule and mock

you because you are unworthy of our time.”

I replied to his tweet more forcefully: “You provide the perfect example of someone who has no facts to support his views: You mock and ridicule, devoid of substance.”

I also posted (to Mr. Obeidallah and one of his Twitter followers): “I call on peace-loving Muslims to join me in standing against radical Islam. You respond with mockery and insult. This is tolerance? Sad.”

Mr. Obeidallah then responded to my call to debate: “The answer is I don’t debate punchlines. Ur a joke.”

I answered: “The truth is you bring no substance, only insults, and your ideas would be instantly exposed in a civil, academic debate. Don’t run.”

He did not reply to me.

Was I surprised? Not in the least. I’ve seen the same thing happen time and again, and if anything, this approach suggests that the mocker is not ready to defend his viewpoint. Why not have your ideas challenged? Why not allow your viewpoints to be cross-examined? And if I am so wrong, why not expose me?

In the course of just three tweets, Mr. Obeidallah ridiculed my article as “the dumbest” of the day; used the hashtag #moron to describe me; then twice called me “a joke,” also accusing me of writing junk. And he did this without pointing out a single error in my article. Ah, the voice of tolerance!

Perhaps my esteemed critic can tell me if my Ph.D. in Near Eastern Languages and Literatures from New York University was a joke. Or if my three years of studying Classical Arabic was a joke. Or if my public debates at schools like Oxford University and Ohio State University, or outreach lectures at schools like the Hebrew University in Jerusalem or USC or Yale University, or scholarly papers delivered at schools like

Harvard University were a joke.

Or am I “a joke” because I claim that radical Islam can trace its roots back to the Quran? Or that I believe that Robert Spencer should not have been shouted down when he tried to quote violent Islamic texts at the University of Buffalo?

A colleague of mine in Australia pointed out that “the annual Freedom of Thought report published by the International Humanist and Ethical Union found that 13 nations punish apostasy with the death penalty.

“The 13 countries are all Islamic: Afghanistan, Iran, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritania, Nigeria, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, United Arab Emirates and Yemen. Says the report, ‘All of these countries, except Pakistan, allow for capital punishment against apostasy, while Pakistan imposes the death penalty for blasphemy—including a disbelief in God.’”

Does Mr. Obeidallah deny that these countries are Islamic? Does he claim that what they are doing is in violation of the Quran and of Sharia Law?

He might say that their practices are abhorrent, that enlightened Muslims reject this, that as a Muslim himself he believes the Quran is being twisted. All that is fine and good, and that’s part of what we can discuss.

I am not one of those who believe a true Muslim is always a radical Muslim, and I often take flak from some on the right who believe that Islam is always murderous. That’s why I use the adjective “radical” before the word “Islam.” At the same time, I get flak on the left from those (like Mr. Obeidallah, apparently) who believe that radical Islam is not Islam at all.

That’s why I invite Dean Obeidallah to have a civil, moderated, public debate. We could debate the question, “Is

Radical Islam True Islam?" Or "Is the Left Giving Islam a Free Pass?" Or perhaps something else that is related. I'm open to possibilities. I would even come on his radio show, where he controls the mic, or he could come on mine.

Whatever the format, for the sake of truth, for the sake of those affected by radical Islam, for the sake of our nation, we should hash the issues out.

And on a personal note, Mr. Obeidallah, when you respond with mockery and disdain, you make yourself look bad, not your opponent. Surely you can do better than that.