

Johnny Carson's Reaction to Reagan Shooting Goes Viral After Trump Targeted

In 1981, this was a very different country. Readers of a certain age will know exactly what I mean.

Monday on the social media platform X, podcaster and fatherhood advocate Alec Lace posted a clip of legendary late-night comedian and host Johnny Carson showing “genuine class and respect” only one day after an assassination attempt on President Ronald Reagan.

The clip evoked powerful responses from nostalgic X users, particularly in light of the controversy surrounding current late-night host and liberal propagandist Jimmy Kimmel's joke about First Lady Melania Trump looking like an “expectant widow,” which came two days prior to Saturday's assassination attempt against President Donald Trump at the White House Correspondents' Dinner in Washington, D.C.

“I'm sure that all of you here and most of you watching tonight understand why we delayed this program for 24 hours,” Carson said at the opening of the 1981 Academy Awards. “Because of the incredible events of yesterday, that old adage ‘the show must go on’ seemed relatively unimportant. The Academy, ABC Television, and all of us connected with the show felt, because of the uncertain outcome as of this time yesterday, it would have been inappropriate to stage a celebration.”

Would-be assassin John Hinckley Jr. shot and wounded Reagan on Monday, March 30, 1981. The Oscars, originally scheduled for that evening, instead took place the following night.

“But the news today is very good, as you know,” Carson

continued. "The president is in excellent condition at last reports. He's been conducting business. And he happens to be in very good spirits. After all, you must remember, this is a man who, yesterday, while he was in the hospital, unable to speak, wrote on a sheet of paper, 'All things considered, I'd rather be in Philadelphia.' So tonight, the show does go on."

Note, too, that the Hollywood liberals applauded when Carson reported the president's "excellent condition."

□ *MUST WATCH:*

Johnny Carson (a Democrat) opens the 1981 Oscars, a day after the assassination attempt on President Reagan, with genuine class and respect.

The entire liberal Hollywood crowd erupts in applause.

Today? Jimmy Kimmel jokes about Melania Trump becoming a widow.

– Alec Lace (@AlecLace) April 28, 2026

Lace has roughly 55,000 followers on X. After he posted the Carson clip, however, it spread far and wide.

As of Thursday afternoon, in fact, the clip had more than one million views. And comments from X users explain why.

"And just like that I grieve just how much we've lost. It really was such a better time," one user wrote.

"It was a different time," another user wrote. "Most of those Democrats from era are or would be Republicans today. Including me."

"How times have changed?" a third user wrote. "Miss those days."

Conversely, in the wake of Saturday's attempt on Trump's life, Kimmel faced the wrath of the first lady.

During the April 23 episode of "Jimmy Kimmel Live!" the host conducted a mock roast of the president. At one point in the skit he joked that Melania Trump had a "glow like an expectant widow," per Yahoo.

The first lady responded on X by calling Kimmel a "coward" and demanding that ABC fire him. The president later echoed those sentiments.



Order Troy Anderson's New Book, "Designated Disrupter" on !

But Kimmel responded by defending the joke and insisting that he meant nothing by it.

"It was a very light roast joke about the fact that he's almost 80 and she's younger than I am," the host said on Monday's show, referring to the 23-year age difference between the 79-year-old president and the 56-year-old first lady.

"It was not by any stretch of the definition a call to assassination, and they know that I've been very vocal for many years speaking out against gun violence in particular."

Kimmel, of course, will answer to God for his intentions, as we all will. We cannot read his heart, and in any event his intentions in this particular instance are almost irrelevant.

After all, the first lady had good reasons to suspect that Kimmel meant ill by that joke. Night after night, for years on end, Kimmel, fellow late-night host Stephen Colbert of CBS' "The Late Show with Stephen Colbert," and an endless parade of their insufferable guests have spewed the same establishment propaganda and the same hateful anti-Trump vitriol.

Kimmel also drew controversy for his comments after the

assassination of conservative activist Charlie Kirk.

Thus, if an angry Melania Trump regarded Kimmel's joke as the last straw, who could blame her?

Moreover, if Reagan were here today, we could imagine what he would say to Kimmel.

"Well, Jimmy," the late president might say. "I knew Johnny Carson. He was a friend of mine. And you, sir, are no Johnny Carson."

Truth be told, Carson's political views fell somewhere left of center.

"In my living room I would argue for liberalization of abortion laws, divorce laws, and there are times when I would like to express a view on the air," Carson told Life magazine in 1970, per the Freedom from Religion Foundation.

"I would love to have taken on Billy Graham," he added. "But I'm on TV five nights a week; I have nothing to gain by it and everything to lose."

Indeed, viewers would never have known Carson's views from his monologues or from his show's content.

Furthermore, younger readers might struggle to believe that the country once felt unified in the way that Carson's 1981 remarks about Reagan indicated. Those same younger readers, without a doubt, would disbelieve that in the 1980 presidential election Reagan, a Republican, carried 44 states, including modern leftist strongholds California, Oregon, Washington, Illinois, Delaware, New York, Vermont, Connecticut, and Massachusetts.

Yes, it was a very different country, and not only in a political sense.

Of course, not everything has gone downhill since 1981. One

senses, for instance, that kids face less bullying today than in those days. And young people certainly show more respect for veterans than they once did.

Nonetheless, those X users had it right. We have lost something crucial, and it has infected our political discourse.

That something, put rather simply, is humility.

As Carson himself indicated, people of his generation did have liberal views. They did not, however, feel empowered to shove those views down their audience members' throats.

Call it "self interest," if you like, but it was more than that. People who grew up during the Depression and World War II simply had a different way of looking at the world. It would never have occurred to them, for instance, to treat their liberal views as a badge of righteousness or to parade their presumptive virtue in public for the approval of their peers while simultaneously sneering at half the country.

How regrettably different the attitudes of Kimmel, Colbert, and those who have cultural power in our day.

This article originally appeared on The Western Journal and is reposted with permission.