

CIVILITY DOESN'T EXIST IN A VACUUM

By Don Feder

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About a week ago, I had another lesson in liberal civility.

I was pulling into the parking lot of a burger-joint when an agitated young man drove up next to me. He rolled down his window, as I did. I thought I might have cut him off in traffic and prepared to apologize.

The first words out of his mouth were: "Are you a retard?" This is known as a rhetorical question. I was tempted to answer, "No, but I am still beating my wife."

The graduate of the Charlie Sheen School of Refinement was incensed by one of my bumper stickers, "Global Warming: a dangerous man-made phenomenon caused by the mixture of recycled Marxist ideas and junk science."

I told him I wasn't going to have a conversation with someone who begins by asking if I'm "special." We went into the restaurant. He was calm for a while, but as soon as he finished eating, he began loudly berating me again.

I was a "cretin." I was too stupid to live in a superior state like Massachusetts and should move to Tennessee, where people are such mental defectives that they question the revealed truth of global warming. "Like Al Gore," I innocently asked? That enraged him further. Finally, he delivered what he considered the coup de grace, telling other diners that I was a product of FOX News. Then he stormed out.

One of the cooks came out from behind the counter and asked if I wanted him to call the cops. I said no, my assailant was probably an Obama supporter who was off his medication. Massachusetts is lousy with such louts -- not surprising, as we are the capital of thumb-sucking liberalism.

But, not to worry. The civility-mongers just opened the National Institute for Civil Discourse at the University of Arizona. By this time next year, we'll all be going around bowing or curtsying to each other and saying: "Pray, pardon me" and "I beg to differ." Soon, the entire country will resemble a Regency drawing room out of "Sense and Sensibility."

According to the Institute's website, it will be a "national, nonpartisan center for debate, research, education and policy generation regarding civic engagement and civility in public discourse consistent with First Amendment principles."

In a Q&A describing its purpose, the Institute answered hypothetical questions about the Big C, including – Question: “Are you blaming heated rhetoric for the Tucson shootings? Answer: Absolutely not. But the shootings created a *space* for people to focus on civility, and the Institute is building on that positive outcome of a tragic event.”

If the shooting of Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords and the murder of 6 others had “absolutely” nothing to do with civility, how exactly did it create a “space for people to focus” on same? Caution: Never expect consistency from the left or ask liberals to define their terms (like “climate of hate”), it only confuses and agitates them

The only connection between the Tucson tragedy and civility is that a lot of people on the left blamed the rampage on lack of civility among conservatives, without a scintilla of evidence to corroborate the claim. The alleged perp was living on his own planet. From the testimony of classmates, when he was still coherent, he expressed liberal views.

Pima County Sheriff Clarence Dupnik, who’s a serious contender for the Rosie O’Donnell Liberal Hysterical of the Year Award, was like a car without brakes careening down a mountain road. The University of Arizona, home to the Institute, is located in his county. It’s also where Giffords and the others were shot.

The question isn’t who Dupnik blamed for the shootings, but who he didn’t blame on the right. His cast of villains included Sarah Palin, “irresponsible political rhetoric,” the Tea Parties, talk radio and Arizona’s “racist” immigration law. I was waiting for him to drag in Richard Nixon, Joe McCarthy, and the House Un-American Activities Committee.

Bill Clinton and Bush 41 are the Institute’s honorary chairmen. Having Clinton associated with a civility institute is like – well – having Clinton associated with an institute that opposes sexual harassment and promotes marital fidelity.

During the impeachment process, Clinton’s war room (where “bimbo eruptions” were handled during the ’92 campaign) was in full swing, trying to dig up dirt on Special Prosecutor Ken Starr -- this from the man who coined the term “the politics of personal destruction.”

Bubba blamed the Tucson shootings on “political rhetoric.” He was suitably vague about which politics and what rhetoric, alluding to the “tone” of debate in Congress (unstated assumption, now that Republicans control the House).

Clinton was more direct in 1995, blaming the Oklahoma City bombing on “the many loud and angry voices in America today whose sole goal seems to be to try to keep some people as paranoid as possible and the rest of us torn up and upset with each other..” In 2010, he was still blaming the slaughter on “extreme right-wing views’ that “demonize government.”

Clinton's 1995 indictment probably had nothing to do with the fact that those "loud and angry voices" in talk radio were exposing his incompetence, corruption and dogmatism. His charges would have been more credible if he'd put them in an affidavit signed under penalties of perjury.

The anti-taxpayer demonstrators in Madison, Wisconsin, and elsewhere across this broad land, once again showed the left at its well-mannered, thoughtful and fair-minded best.

Budget-balancing Governor Scott Walker is regularly compared to Hitler. For the left, economy measures invariably end in an iron dictatorship, war and genocide.

Bob Fittrakis, a poly-sci professor at the University of Wisconsin, whose student-robots are demonstrating with members of SEIU and AFSCME, warned that the dispute about pension and health insurance contributions and collective bargaining is "ultimately about preventing the United States from becoming a full-on fascist state" and "saving the last shreds of American democracy."

If Fittrakis wants to see fascism in action, he should try holding a pro-Tea Party sign at one of the labor rallies in support of Wisconsin public employees. He would be well-advised to wear a combat helmet and Kevlar vest and take a bodyguard with him.

If you want to understand how deeply ingrained incivility is on the left, consider the college campus.

There is no place in America that liberals dominate more completely than academia. If today's liberalism had anything to do with civility, the campus would be a place of tolerance, diversity of opinion and polite debate.

Instead, American higher education is characterized by intimidation, forced uniformity of opinion and brutish behavior. Out of cowardice or complicity, on many campuses, administrators have given the most obnoxious students a de facto veto on which views may be expressed.

The list of conservative speakers who've been shouted down or had their speeches disrupted is longer than Lindsay Lohan's rap sheet. Among the victims are David Horowitz, Ann Coulter, Daniel Pipes, Star Parker, former Congressman Tom Tancredo, John Yoo (a member of the Bush Justice Department), the late Jeane Kirkpatrick and yours truly.

At Columbia, which resembles la Place de la Guillotine during the Reign of Terror when it comes to dissent, a student who's a decorated Iraq War veteran (who was shot 11 times in the line of duty and spent two years undergoing rehabilitation for his wounds) was heckled and called a "racist" by fellow students for defending U.S. involvement in the Middle East.

Occasionally, the savages suffer the consequences of their assault on free speech. It was just announced that 11 members of the Muslim Student Union will face criminal charges for shutting down a speech by Israel's Ambassador Michael Oren at the University of California at Irvine last year.

Orange County Asst. District Attorney Tony Rackauckas warns: "We must decide whether we are a country of law or a country of anarchy. ... in our democratic society, we can not tolerate a deliberate, organized, repetitive and collective effort to significantly disrupt a speaker who hundreds have assembled to hear."

Most of the liberals who run our colleges and universities don't agree. Civility for them, but not for us.

Definitions of civility often include "civil," "polite (not rude)," "courtesy," "good manners" and "the act of showing regard for others." The left views these habits of the heart as mindless conformity and artificial social constructs designed to stifle individuality.

Civility doesn't happen in a vacuum. It's founded on things like religion (which teaches the worth of every human being and that we are answerable to a higher authority), etiquette and democracy (which stresses the rights of all). There was a time, fading from memory, when the watchword of liberalism was: "I may disagree with what you say, but I'll defend to the death your right to say it." Now, it's, "Agree with us, or die."

The old virtues were in vogue when I was growing up in the '50s, but now are almost entirely abandoned by liberals. The latter started to swing away from civility during the anti-war movement of the '60s. This accelerated with the rise of radical feminism, gay militancy, multiculturalism, misanthropic environmentalism and the other angry movements of the left.

Yet, they still they complain about our lack of civility, while kicking us in the groin.

A great statement on civility is contained in the movie "Blast from the Past." In it, Brendan Fraser plays Adam, a 35-year-old man raised in a fallout shelter by his eccentric but loving parents. He emerges into the world of 1990s Los Angeles with 1950s values.

He falls in love with Alicia Silverstone's character (Eve) and she with him. In the movie's best dialogue, Eve's brother discloses that Adam told him, "Good manners (*civility*) are just a way of showing other people we have respect for them." Also, "His short and simple definition of a lady or a gentleman is someone who always tries to make sure the people around him or her are as comfortable as possible."

If this sounds like today's liberalism to you, then you must have spent the past 50 years in a fallout shelter yourself.

It's not just the slander and intimidation that's going on in Wisconsin – the signs comparing Gov. Walker to Der Fuhrer, the Tweets calling for his assassination – but the fact that liberal leaders either refuse to condemn such extremism, or egg on the mob.

Appearing on NBC's "Meet the Press" on Sunday, AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka ignored repeated calls to condemn, or at least disassociate himself from, the more violent rhetoric of striking public employees.

Speaking at a labor rally in Boston, in support of the Madison strikers, Massachusetts Congressman Mike Capuano urged the assembled goons to "get out on the streets and get a little bloody when necessary." Not that they needed much encouragement, but the hard hats preceded to rough-up and terrorize counter-demonstrators.

Capuano later issued a pro-forma apology for his "choice of words," which is also SOP for the left. "You're racist/fascist scum in league with the Devil, who deserves to die. Oops, sorry about my poor choice of words. Now, can we please discuss how talk radio has debased the political debate?"

Trumka and Capuano will probably end up lecturing at the National Institute for Civil Discourse, which should be treated with the disdain it deserve.

This commentary originally appeared on GrassTopsUSA.