

Inglorious Politics: The Hunter Biden Problem

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In May last year, the Washington Post ran a fairly typical [piece](#) about what the paper perceives as an unjustified conservative mania regarding President Joe Biden's son. While those in the US worried "about such things as inflation and the war in Ukraine, the top concerns of congressional Republicans can be ranked roughly as follows: 1) Hunter Biden; 2) Hunter Biden; 3) Hunter Biden; 4) Hunter Biden."

None of this can get away from the fact that Hunter Biden is an inkblot for his father and the Democrats. What matters is how big that blot is, and how far the ink has gone through the copybook. For Republicans, and Donald Trump in particular, the blot is so large as to be visible from space, an electoral opportunity to quarry and mine. When cocaine was found in the West Wing of the White House, Trump jumped at the chance [via posts](#) on Truth Social to link father and son in a seamless charge of criminal collusion.

"Get Deranged Jack Smith to take just a 'tiny' portion of the millions of dollars he is spending illegally 'targeting' me, and let him go to the White House with his army of thugs to solve the Cocaine dilemma."

The inevitable question followed:

"Is it Crooked Joe and his wonderful son, Hunter? Release the findings, release the tapes. We can't have a crackhead in charge of our Nuclear Arsenal!!!"

Trump's social media effusions agitated Hunter sufficiently to encourage his lawyer, Abbe Lowell, to send a [cease and desist letter](#) in July to the former president, insisting that Trump's comments had "caused harm in the past and threaten to do so again if he does not stop". According to Lowell,

"The Biden family was not at the White House (let alone in the vestibule) in the period when the cocaine was found."

The congressional GOP have also toyed with the idea of impeachment proceedings against Joe Biden, which would be, at this point, a long bow indeed. The whole matter is also wearing a bit thin with some party members, with Rep. Richard Hudson (R-NC), chair of the National Republican Congressional Committee, [suggesting](#) that the party focus on “the economy, the border, crime”.

For the Democrats, Hunter’s own fate does not deserve discussion. This, to say the least, is problematic. When his father entered the White House, Hunter’s own salty resume was always going to surface as an issue, be it the more prurient details, a history of drug addiction and various international business dealings in both Ukraine and China. The latter were always going to raise questions about the paternal connection. (For its part, the White House has repeatedly denied any involvement in such dealings.)

One issue that has not gone away is Hunter’s lengthy legal battle with his former personal assistant Lunden Roberts, with whom he fathered a child in 2018. It took a DNA test to confirm his paternity of Navy Joan, who has been a notable absentee in the scrubbed public image of President Biden, the family man. Media reports and releases continue to mention Joe Biden’s six grandchildren, omitting the seventh.

“The Bidens have taken such great pains to avoid acknowledging Navy Joan,” [write](#) Molly Olmstead and Christina Cauterucci in *Slate*, “that it has begun to make the president and first lady look callous.”

Last month, Hunter and his lawyers attempted to enter a plea deal with the Department of Justice relating to various charges covering tax payments and guns. This [included](#) a guilty plea for misdemeanour counts for not paying, in timely fashion, his 2017 and 2018 taxes. As part of the deal, he would have also been charged, though not prosecuted, for purchasing a handgun in 2018 while using drugs, on the proviso that he remain clean for two years and agree never to own a firearm again. The plea deal subsequently collapsed, [quashed](#) by US District Court Judge Maryellen Noreika as being “unusual” in its proposed resolution of the gun charge, and for using “non standard” terms.

The polls regarding the Hunter problem are mixed. One [Reuters/Ipsos poll](#) found that half of the respondents, including 1 in 3 Democrats, felt that Hunter was getting more generous treatment from prosecutors by virtue of his father being the president. Not that this would necessarily affect their 2024 vote: the polarities of US politics have petrified.

The latest addition to the ongoing saga comes in an [announcement](#) by Attorney General Merrick Garland that David Weiss, the federal prosecutor responsible for investigating Hunter since 2019 when he was made attorney general for Delaware, will be given special counsel powers. This will enable him “to continue the investigation, take any investigative steps he wanted, and make the decision whether to prosecute in any district.”

The US House Committee on Oversight and Accountability, for its part, was unimpressed. Its chairman, James Comer (R-Ky) [accused](#) the DOJ of attempting “a Biden family coverup in light of the House Oversight Committee’s mounting evidence of President Biden’s role in his family schemes selling ‘the brand’ for millions of dollars to foreign nationals.”

The Democrats nurse their own paranoid demons and obsessions, crowned in no small part by their terror of Trump and their own imbecilities for having selected Hillary Clinton as their candidate in 2016. Having lost to the orange-hued demon that year, the party has made it

its one object to make sure the keys to the White House will be forever out of his reach. While the GOP concocts its own fantasies of the Father-Son nexus of alleged crime and corruption in the Biden family, all manner of conspiracies have been concocted by the Democrats to achieve much the same aim. These, it should be said, keep company with genuine, prima facie assertions of impropriety, if not outright illegality on Trump's part.

In the mix of loathing and paranoia, it has become hard to disentangle the fable of Russiagate with Trump's own electoral interference in the aftermath of the 2020 election. The paranoid, desperate mind rejects such distinctions, fusing demonology and fact. It is precisely that state of mind, so ascendant in US politics today, that makes Hunter a political liability. How it computes electorally is something that remains enigmatic.

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