

Smearing the Trumps: Will We Become as Hateful, Insensitive and Boorish as The Opposition?

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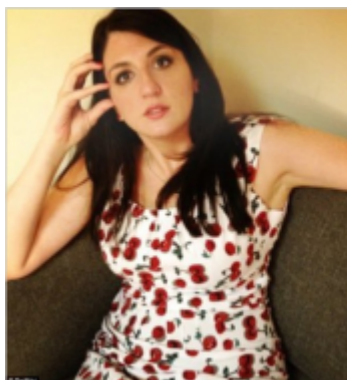
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The news has been so overwhelming these weeks. So I hadn't fully grasped the implications of one incident, namely, what Katie Rich, comedy writer for NBC's popular Saturday Night Live, tweeted about President Trump's 10-year-old son.

Even though she withdrew her invocation that "Barron will be this country's first homeschool shooter", it's still with us. It's done. And it's bad. Has her taunt been widely condemned by our liberal press? Or are they taking off their gloves and recruiting her for the forthcoming battle?

Satirists enjoy considerable license. But there's always a line. Rich apologized, and NBC suspended her. Are we to be satisfied with this? Not this woman or her employer; no, I'm asking if such remarks are to become the norm.



What do we do? What shall I do? How shall liberals who want to resist the Trump agenda respond? What should thousands of SNL followers do if they too feel repulsed by Rich's words? Do we retort with: "Hey, Trump himself set today's standard for insults; that makes him and his family fair targets"? If so, where will this lead? Nowhere useful, to be sure.

I'm not a loyal fan of SNL, the long running satirical program which I understand is the mother of American TV parody and satire. (Jon Stewart's Daily Show and Stephen Colbert's Report arrived in US homes much later.) Yet after Alex Baldwin's parodies of Donald Trump on SNL, I've gone out of my way to watch clips of the show. Baldwin is terrific, and although the butt of his caricature himself takes to twitter in reply, Baldwin stays within an established border- although barely, I admit. You may argue that anyone entering the celebrity spotlight has to grow thick skin. But are celebrity children not protected?

Mr. Trump Sr. is a big boy; as a public official now, he's fair game. The problem is the standard that these clever comics set for the rest of us.

This brings me back to what I might do. Shall I condone the growing public ridicule against anything and anyone in the other camp? Frankly, I find Katie Rich's remark repugnant and unconscionable. I expect my condemnation of Rich may garner accusations that I'm a Trump supporter. Still, I must speak out. If I refuse to indulge this nasty dialogue, what's left? Signing the change.org petition to NBC (only 41,000 names to date) to fire Rich's seems inadequate.

What are the choices for me? (Perhaps for you too.) I (we) could boycott SNL. In my public platform, I could advocate against these tit-for-tat attacks that have become accepted in our profession—gossip, scandal, candid photos, personal politics. These are a major part of journalism; and they attract real talent.

We've got find a bigger, nobler response.

Because today so much that I value is threatened. (Not to mention having personally devoted decades of my life and my career defending my Arab and Muslim people and culture, enhancing the dialogue between us and others, joining a rising community of energetic Muslim comics, educators, writers, poets, performers and filmmakers in the uphill struggle.)

Today we face a bruising time. Institutions we worked so doggedly to build and sustain, and with such hope, are threatened. The education of our own people to assert our rights, to strengthen our efforts in solidarity with others: all that's in jeopardy. The battle will get uglier than it is now. It could become violent and the gap between opposing views could widen.

I belong to the tribe who calls itself 'progressive'. Maybe liberal too. Although I digress from American liberals on many issues. I've always known Democrats are in step with the Republican Party on many issues, but Democratic Party behavior in this past election alienated me, maybe forever. I've had to distance myself from associates whose short memory, whose opinions and attitudes I have found only 'selectively' progressive, whose real life experience is increasingly narrow, and whose news sources are even more limited, despite their educational degrees.

Katie Rich's tweet about Barron Trump may seem like a passing issue; it's over, she apologized. Liberal friends will defend her by invoking the intolerance and disrespect Barron's father habitually exhibits. "This is the son of the monster who now threatens all our values, our human rights," they plead.

<https://www.pastemagazine.com/articles/2017/01/if-you-work-for-snl-now-is-the-time-to-stop.html>

I observed Saturday's (women's) march at close hand, embedded among that gleeful, self-satisfied crowd moving through Manhattan. It was a largely White people's march; that surprised me. Apart from a scattering of South Asian faces and a few groups of Latina women, I glimpsed only an occasional African American there. And, although I searched those faces for fellow Muslims, I couldn't identify any. I saw only one kaffiyeh, the iconic Palestinian scarf so prominent at protests during the 90s. Three marchers of Turkish origin who I know personally were as inconspicuously Muslim as I am. OK; I accept that many in our community feel especially vulnerable these days; but if we're not comfortable among this crowd of protesters declaring their alliance with American Muslims, then where?

Perhaps these friendly marchers are out-of-touch with the Muslims they now celebrate.

Not to forget Aziz Ansari <http://azizansari.com/>; he was stunning on SNL last week. But I'm still resolved to boycott the show. It's a start, until I can figure out my long-term agenda.





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