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by Steve Krulick, Senior Civics Columnist

Ignorance and Want, Part 3

"Fear always springs from Ignorance" – Ralph Waldo Emerson

Scapegoating in America is as American as apple pie. When underlying Ignorance about a convenient underclass became the conventional "wisdom" – "The only good Injun is a dead Injun"; "No dogs or Irish allowed"; Blacks were only three-fifths of a person – those casual canards, or similar consensual dehumanizations, made it easier to treat the members of those classes, or the class as a whole, as having few or no rights... so taking their possessions was not theft, attacking their families was not violence, even killing them was not murder.

That scapegoats often lack power to fight back, or even defend against varied and repeated injuries and injustices, is often ignored, so as to paint them as a dire threat, whether as savage, inhuman brutes (yet with stealthy, deadly cunning), or as an unstoppable tide of reproduction that will push the true-blue Americans off the continent they "stole fair and square."

Some bigotries were more regionally-concentrated, such as against Mexicans in the Southwest, Blacks in the Deep South (and later in urban centers), or Chinese in 19th century California. Even today, you won't find the same level of animus in Maine regarding "illegal aliens" from Mexico as is found in Arizona. Others reach a more pervasive level, usually during periods of greater national stress, such as the anti-Masonic and anti-Catholic virulence before the Civil War, or the "Commie Red Menace" during the Cold War era.

We're now in one of those "greater national stress" periods; though some old standby bogeymen can still be propped up to spit at, decades of constant demonizing can deflate their scariness, particularly as promised dire impacts didn't occur. So, one of the oldest of "Others" was dusted off, given a fresh coat of warpaint, and lined up in the cross-hairs.

Where movies once pitted their heroes against Nazis & Nips (40s), Russkies & ChiComs (50s-60s), and then (after the Cold War mellowed and the Chinese became our department store) Latin American drug lords or greedy corporate tycoons, the past two decades' action films have been rife with evil and fanatical *ragheads*, *camel jockeys*, *hajjis*, and *sand ni**ers* from Libya, Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan as the villains. And thus, by extension, 1.5 billion Muslims around the world.

When the US (through the CIA) created and supplied the Mujahideen to vex and beat the Soviets in Afghanistan, it begat a Frankenstein monster which, depending on your view, either went power-mad and turned on its maker (the "official" story), or became the stateless rogue operatives known as Al Qaida (which just means "the Base," because it was "the database" originally referring to the computer file of the thousands of Mujahideen militants) in order to serve the CIA as the convenient new threat to American interests and "our freedoms" that would keep the war machine and spies well-funded and in charge in the post-Soviet era. Oh, and to justify our invasion of oil-rich and resource-rich countries (which we reinforced by backing, then tricking, then boxing-in, then bombing, then booting Saddam Hussein in what Bush Jr. insensitively dubbed a "crusade" and, embarrassingly first labeled as "Operation Iraqi Liberation," or OIL).

So effective was the Orwellian morphing of anti-Soviet "freedom fighters" into "Islam-fascist jihadists" responsible for nearly every attack or threat against the US or allies, that trillions of dollars to war funding, covert ops, and government expansion (and severe curtailment of "our freedoms") has been foisted on a terrified and (kept) ignorant populace.

This is the geo-political and profit-driven strategy that grew into the broader cultural and social virus we now call *Islamophobia*. Opportunist demagogues and cranks latched onto this new scapegoat with a venomous fury unmatched for decades. Here's some of what they've gotten away with, as they're still allowed to poison the airwaves and newsprint without the fate that would befall similar bile directed at, say, Jews or Christians:

Ann Coulter, black-dressed anorexic doyenne of neo-con bimbos: "Bumper sticker idea for liberals: News magazines

don't kill people, Muslims do." "We should invade their countries, kill their leaders, and convert them to Christianity."

Pat Robertson, squinty diverter of storms (except those God sent to punish gays or liberals): "This man [Muhammad] was an absolute wild-eyed fanatic, he was a robber and a brigand. And to say that these terrorists distort Islam... they are carrying out Islam. I mean: This man [Muhammad] was a killer and to think that this is a peaceful religion is fraudulent."

Gary Bauer, bug-eyed Munchkin pancake flipper: "The cause of this violence is an Islamic culture that keeps hundreds of millions of people right on the edge of murder and mayhem... 24 hours a day... [9/11] was the first chapter in a war with radical Islam. At this very moment, the reality that we all face is that there are evil men that worship death that want to bring us a day much worse than the morning of 9/11."

Terry Jones, 15-minute-famer-would-be-Quran-flamer: "Islam is of the Devil." (We *should* be listening to the *real* Terry Jones, of Monty Python fame: "We will destroy terrorism" is about as meaningful as saying: "We shall annihilate mockery." ... War on terrorism? You can wage war against another country, or on a national group within your own country, but you can't wage war on an abstract noun. How do you know when you've won? When you've got it removed from the Oxford English Dictionary?... What is meant by: "We mustn't give in to the terrorists"? We gave in to them the moment the first bombs fell on Afghanistan.")

Flip Benham of "pro-life," anti-Islam *Operation Save America*, called Islam "a lie from the pit of hell."

Newt Gingrich, philandering hypocrite amphibian, made the bizarre proposal that "there should be no mosque near Ground Zero in New York so long as there are no churches or synagogues in Saudi Arabia," (So, we should drop USA standards to SA levels?!!) and later compared building a Muslim community center near Ground Zero to Nazis putting "up a sign next to the Holocaust museum in Washington."

Rev. Franklin Graham, Billy Graham's son: "I understand what the Muslims want to do in America. They want to build as many mosques and cultural centers as they possibly can so they can convert as many Americans as they can to Islam... And I believe... the majority of mosques in this country have been hijacked by the radicals and Islamists who want to destroy this country. Islam is a very evil religion. All the values that we as a nation hold dear, they don't share those same values at all. I just don't have the freedom to do this in most Muslim countries. We can't have a church. We're not able to build synagogues. It's forbidden." Bzzzzt! Nope. Other than in Saudi Arabia (and that will soon change), experts on religion and government in Muslim lands concur there are churches and/or synagogues in almost every Muslim country.

Bryan Fischer, *American Family Association*, called for "no more mosques" in the US. Islam is a "totalitarian ideology that is anti-Christian [and] anti-Semitic," and seeks "the extermination of Western civilization... Each Islamic mosque is dedicated to the overthrow of the American government... Islam is not just a religion. It's a subversive ideology. As a subversive ideology, they can't seek protection under the First Amendment... Muslims continue to have as their objective the Islamization of the entire world, including the US, and are taught by their god to use force where necessary to accomplish the goal. The current objective of Muslim activists is to create a brand new Islamic state – meaning a state like New Jersey or Montana – out of existing jurisdictions and establish a virtual Islamic homeland in our midst."

Mark Williams, Tea Party leader/radio host, wrote "the animals of Allah... are drooling over the positive response that they are getting from New York City officials over a proposal to build a 13-story monument to the 9/11 Muslim hijackers."

Mike Rosen, Denver columnist and Rush Limbaugh wanna-be, when asked whether an Islamic Center should be allowed to be built in Lower Manhattan, said, if one is built, he supports terrorists blowing it up. "I think they should be allowed to build it, followed by the hijacking of an Iranian plane right into that building and blow it to smithereens." Houston-based radio host Michael Berry also called for the "mosque" to be "blown up."

Ignorance, Fear, Hatred, calls for Violence; should we be surprised that actual attacks on innocent US Muslims have already occurred when *these* are the seeds being sown daily?

(As my research turned up more material than I expected, the thrilling series conclusion has been pushed to Part 4!)