

OP/ED



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Fox Brings Out the Long Knives for Obama



George Curry
Guest Columnist

President Obama, doing everything from letting Mitt Romney advisers masquerade as objective commentators to ignoring facts when a high-profile Obama critic or Fox News commentator makes unfounded charges.

MediaMatters.org, the watchdog group, has cataloged numerous instances of Fox's on-sided and unethical behavior.

Fox News has repeatedly hosted advisers to presumptive Republican presidential nominee Mitt Romney without disclosing that they are helping his campaign.

Greta Van Susteren, host of "On the Record with Greta Van Susteren," said on May 3: "One year after the killing of bin Laden, Republicans are blasting President Obama for spiking the football. And now, a veterans group is slamming the president for taking the credit instead of giving it to the special forces."

She aired part of the ad and said, "What I take away from that ad is that the veterans are deeply disturbed - this group of veterans, maybe not all veterans, but this one - and they were saying that he was arrogant and taking credit, that he was not humble and had no humility... it's very boorish to take credit away from those brave men... at the scene, who did actually execute this unbelievable killing of Osama bin Laden."

Fox also allowed guests get away with a similar line of attack.

During the Fox News' Special Report on May 3, guest host John Roberts announced that a group called Veterans for a Strong America had released an ad "accusing President Obama of spiking the football over Osama bin Laden." Fox aired part of the ad that claimed "heroes don't spike the football."

Fox contributor and Washington Post columnist Charles Krauthammer said on the program: "It isn't just that Obama has managed to turn a positive, something he did well, into a negative by attacking, using it as a partisan weapon which diminishes him, also it diminishes the solemnity of the event, which was a national event, and he used it, he appropriated it for himself. It is the narcissism, and that is the

deeper issue here, how they quote Obama again and again, using the first personal pronoun in his announcement of the event. It's all about me, I, commander-in-chief, I ordered, I did this. What about the guys out there who did it and who risked their lives?"

As Media Matters points out, the personal references by Obama were taken out of context and the president has often given credit to field operatives. In his May 2, 2011 announcement that Bin Laden had been killed, the president said, "A small team of Americans carried out the operation with extraordinary courage and capability. No Americans were harmed. They took care to avoid civilian casualties. After a firefight, they killed Osama bin Laden and took custody of his body."

He also stated, "We give thanks for the men who carried out this operation, for they exemplify the professionalism, patriotism, and unparalleled courage of those who serve our country. And they are part of a generation that has borne the heaviest share of the burden since that September day."

In a rare dissent from Fox News orthodoxy, Host Megyn Kelly said in an interview with the founder of the veterans group, "He [Obama] did give thanks to the others, and of course had to mention the first person in discussing how things went down."

Neither Kelly nor anyone else at Fox News disclosed that Joel Arends, whose group created the veterans' ad, is a longtime Republican operative. He worked on the presidential campaigns of George W. Bush and John McCain and is chairman of the Lincoln County, S.D. Republican Party.

Fox News was created by Roger Ailes, a former media adviser to Richard Nixon and other Republican figures. He supported the 1988 scheme to link Democratic candidate Michael Dukakis to Willie Horton, a Black convicted felon. Ailes told the New York Times, "The only question is whether we depict Willie Horton with a knife in his hand or without it."

There is no question that Ailes' network is using a knife this time - to stab Obama in the back.

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Photos by Garrett Garris

The crowd listens to Deion Sanders speak.

Sanders

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Tejado Hanchell, who co-authors a Christian blog with Sanders, says the unstoppable athlete has been every bit as effective in the community as he once was on the field.

"He has even displayed much more greatness in his daily walk with the Lord," said Hanchell, pastor of Mount Calvary Holy Church of America in Winston-Salem. "This is a man who is busy doing the work of the Lord in the community."

Despite living out his boyhood dream as a pro baller with millions of dollars in the bank, Sanders said he was unhappy, so much so that he once attempted suicide by swallowing an entire bottle of aspirin in the midst of a Cincinnati Reds series.

"I crawled on my knees that night," related the Fort Myers, Fla.-native. "I said, 'Lord, I'm Yours because I can't do this by myself.'"

Following his formal remarks, Sanders opened himself up to questions from the audience, who questioned him on everything from the details of his faith journey to his most important achievement.

"My greatest accomplishment was retiring my mother for the rest of her life," he said without hesitation. "She hasn't worked since the day I went pro."

Sanders also alluded to his much-publicized divorce from estranged wife, Pilar. About a week before his Winston-Salem appearance, the two got into a skirmish at Sanders' Dallas area home. He told the crowd that he had a court appearance that morning related to that incident. He praised God for putting him in a more positive environment - the Forsyth Jail and Prison Ministries event - just a few hours later.

Ministries Senior Chaplain Rodney Stilwell said he hoped Sanders' message hit home with those in attendance.

"Deion's story shatters a lot of the myths that we have," concluded Stilwell, who has served the ministry since 1985. "Deion had and has all the things that many of us think are what life's about... but that took him farther away from God instead of getting him closer to happiness."

Like Sanders, countless inmates in Forsyth County have discovered hope and peace by deepening their relationship with God through the many programs offered by FJPM, Stilwell said.

Harry Neal is among them.

An ex-offender who now works at a car dealership and serves as a deacon at his church, Neal says he and other offenders are blessed to have the organization at their disposal.

"I got saved in prison, so I'm the fruit of this ministry," he told the audience during a brief interview-style conversation on stage with Chaplain Robert Wolfe. "...The men that are in (Forsyth Correctional Center on) Cherry Street: it's by the grace of God they're there because they get that opportunity to hear about grace so much."

The event served as a fundraiser for FJPM. Although admission was free, an offering was taken during the program to benefit the organization.

Stilwell said he hoped the event would have a powerful



Dr. Tejado Hanchell

impact, not just on the inmates who performed at the outset of the event as part of the Cherry Street Ensemble, but on the hundreds of com-

munity members who were in attendance.

"We are ecstatic that Deion has agreed to give of his time and his resources to make this possible," he said just before the event started. "I think this will be a community event that will transform people's lives and will help them to open up to God like he did."

For more information about Forsyth Jail and Prison Ministries, visit www.forsythjpm.org or call 759-0063. Sanders and Hanchell's blog can be viewed on Sanders' Web site, www.deionsanders21.com.



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'War on Drugs' is a 'War on Black People'



Gary Flowers
Guest Columnist

Contrary to public opinion, White people in the United States account for more arrests for drug use than do people of color. Yet, the widely-held and erroneous belief is that 1) most drug crimes are committed by people of color, and 2) most people of color commit drug crimes that result in the disproportionate imprisonment of non-Whites. How did America become come to target people of color for so-called "war on drugs"?

Most Americans have no idea that drugs such as opiates, cocaine and marijuana were not always illegal in the United States. In fact, in the early 1900s, many wealthy people commonly used such drugs recreationally, peaking with 250,000 American addicts among the nation's 76 million citizens.

During the 20th Century, while some Americans were addicted because of doctor-issued prescriptions, drug-use by the wealthy Whites was considered a medical problem. For others, addictive drugs were considered chic. So much so that Congress enacted the first Food and Drug Safety Act in 1906, requiring drug compa-

nies list contents in drugs on their labels. Accordingly, largely due to economic status, the rich were given rehabilitation rather than incarceration.

The phrase "war on drugs" was first used and targeted Chinese, African American, and Mexican people as drug users. California passed laws prohibiting smokable opium as people of color were perceived as the "problem."

For example, Chinese immigrants became the face of opium use, despite their low percentage of California's population. In 1902, the Committee on the Acquisition of the Drug Habit of the American Pharmaceutical Association declared: "If the Chinaman cannot get along without his dope, we can get along without him." Truth be told, competition for cheap labor by Mexicans influenced the discrimination towards Chinese.

Similarly, African Americans were - and are today - the primary target of discriminatory drug laws. In 1910, Dr. Hamilton Wright, considered by many as the father of American anti-narcotics laws, reported that White employers gave Black workers cocaine as a stimulant for harder work.

For Mexicans living in America, the pattern of blaming people of color for drug use continued. In 1937, the Marijuana Tax Act was passed by Congress to target

Mexican Americans. As competitors for agricultural jobs sought by poor Whites, Mexicans were blamed for marijuana-induced violence against White people.

By the 1980s, Congress had passed mandatory minimum sentencing guidelines that disproportionately impacted Black and Brown people. Legislators who supported such laws argued that they would target high-level drug offenders. Instead, drug kingpins were allowed to plea bargain down their sentences and small time drug possessors went to jail for longer periods.

Today, American jails more of its citizens than any other industrial nation, an overwhelming majority of whom are African American and Latino. In fact, Latino children are three times as likely to have a parent in prison than White children. Similarly, African American children are nine times more likely to have an incarcerated parent than White children.

As Congress has historically passed legislation to target people of color for drug use it should now legislate penalties against over zealous police, prosecutors, and judges who racially discriminate. Further, rehabilitation should replace incarceration. America should practice what it preaches.

Gary L. Flowers is executive director and CEO of the Black Leadership Forum, Inc.