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Ann Coulter vs. One Billion Arabs

By Scott C. Smith

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In a recent column, Ann Coulter expressed indignation regarding an apparent Federal Aviation Administration policy not to perform searches on more than two Arabs at a time. I was not aware of this policy, but not surprisingly, Coulter would like all Arabs stopped and searched. You know, because they're Arab. I think Coulter is applying some sort of twisted logic to this subject. Something along the lines of, "The terrorists that attacked the United States on 9-11 were Arabs. Therefore, all Arabs are terrorists." In essence, Coulter is advocating racial profiling. Which is an odd position for an attorney with a background in constitutional law to take. Innocent until proven guilty? Not if you look like you are an Arab. It was John Lehman, a member of the 9-11 Commission, that had brought attention to the policy that prohibits airlines from searching more than two Arabs at a time. To this, Coulter writes, "In a sane world, Lehman's statement would have made headlines across the country...that it is official government policy to prohibit searching more than two Arabs per flight."

African-Americans have dealt with this kind of injustice for years. And while Coulter thinks racial profiling is sound law enforcement policy, I have another word for it: racism. But that's just me. And when you apply Coulter's logic to other scenarios, the logic stops making sense. For instance, The FBI has profiled serial killers and what has emerged is that the majority of serial killers are white males. Does that mean the FBI should stop every white male in a particular city or region where a serial killer has struck? Of course not. That would be stupid.

So, even though she supports a racist method of law enforcement, it would not be fair for me to say Coulter was a racist. I don't know Ann Coulter, so I can't say she's a racist. That would be wrong. Maybe we can find some answers in her columns!

Here's a good one. September 25, 2002. Why We Hate Them. Coulter writes, Americans don't want to make Islamic fanatics love us. We want to make them die. There's nothing like horrendous physical pain to quell angry fanatics. So sorry they're angry - wait until they see American anger. Japanese kamikaze pilots hated us once too. A couple of well-aimed nuclear weapons, and now they are gentle little lambs. That got their attention.

No love lost there, eh Ann? Maybe we should emulate the policies of the Hitler-era German government. They didn't like Jews very much, so they rounded them up and killed millions of them.

Conservatives do a lot of whining about how liberals are always quick to label conservatives as "racists" or "homophones" or "stupid." These assessments, at least for me, are based on what I hear coming out of a conservative's mouth, or what they write.

Actually, conservative hate-speak is very easy to pick up on. Take Sean Hannity. He likes to begin sentences with statements like "You liberals..." or he'll say "You and your liberal friends..." The key is to take the word liberal and replace it with a minority. Give it a try the next time you hear Hannity, or some other right-winger, on television or read it in print. If you can stomach hearing Hannity. Maybe you'll need to find someone less annoying.

Speaking of annoying, let's get back to Coulter. In her Sept. 4, 2002 column, titled Murder for Fun and

Prophet (get it? Prophet refers to the Prophet Muhammad. Hilarious!), at the end of the column, Coulter dismisses the Muslim faith as irrelevant. "Muhammad makes L. Ron Hubbard look like Jesus Christ. Most people think nothing of assuming every Scientologist is a crackpot. Why should Islam be subject to presumption of respect because it's a religion?"

That's right, Ann! Over one billion people around the world are crackpots because they are Muslims. Idiots! As a comparison, there are only a few million members of the Church of Scientology, according to the Religious Tolerance web site.

And let's not forget Ann's most infamous column, from Sept. 12, 2001. At the end of that column, she says, "We should invade their countries, kill their leaders and convert them to Christianity. We weren't punctilious about locating and punishing only Hitler and his top officers. We carpet-bombed German cities; we killed civilians. That's war. And this is war."

Call me crazy, but I get the impression that Arabs and/or Muslims are not Ann's favorite people.

For instance, in an interview with the Guardian of London newspaper on May 17, 2003, Coulter said, "This is my idea...I think airlines ought to start advertising: 'We have the most civil rights lawsuits brought against us by Arabs.'" Oh, man, Ann, my sides are splitting! In fact, as a solution for Muslims to use air travel, Coulter offers helpfully, "They could use flying carpets!"

Flying carpets! Brilliant! Ann, you know, if the whole racist pundit thing ever comes to an end, you'll have a career in stand-up comedy.

We know Ann hates liberals, and it's pretty clear she hates Muslims. And, apparently, Scientologists. I don't know what Ann likes. My guess will have to be, hearing her voice. Or Sean Hannity's voice.

About the author: Scott C. Smith is a freelance writer from Beaverton, Oregon. Scott's column, What's In Scott's Head, appears at several progressive web sites, including the Democratic Underground, The Smirking Chimp, Op Ed News, and Counter Bias. Scott also writes for his web site, at <http://www.scottcsmith.net>

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Everything's All Right in the Middle East

By Robert Levin

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Can we, just for a minute, dispense with the hand-wringing and acknowledge that the problem Israel and the Palestinians have with one another is actually their mutual solution to the problem of being mortal?

Of course to understand what I mean it is first necessary to recognize that it's not love or sex or money that makes the world go around but the fact of death; that what drives virtually everything we believe and do is the need to reduce, to at least a manageable degree of fear, the terror and panic the anticipation of death causes us. (If you can't quite grasp this notion, if you have to be reminded that terror and panic constitute the human default condition, then whatever you're believing and doing is working for you.)

Of the myriad subtle and blatant ways we've come up with to make living with an impossible reality tolerable, one example would be the symbolic immortality we assure ourselves of by leaving behind a scientific discovery, or a work of art, that will continue to have an influence on the world. Another is the accumulation of inordinate wealth. The god-like trappings great sums of money buy enable us to feel not just superior to the common man, but less vulnerable to the common fate. Still another is getting high, which is about getting *above* the body that we know will one day be our undoing.

And then there's our invention of an afterlife. Presenting us with a chance to survive death—if we honor the pronouncements and follow the dictates we've assigned to deities of our own fashioning—it's this immortality illusion that's at the heart of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The Arabs are qualifying for eternity by doing what they've determined to be God's work, which is to make war on those who, ignoring or questioning His authority, are undermining His plan for the planet. And Israel, dropped in the Arab's midst, its diverse culture implicitly challenging the validity of Arab beliefs, provides the Arabs with the infidel they need to carry out their mission. For Arabs, it's not about killing Jews, per se. Jews are simply a fortuitously placed means to a purchase on heaven. (You could say that—their culture being, by all appearances, limited in its repertoire of immortality illusions to the resources of Islam—suicide is the only instrument of self-perpetuation available to the Palestinian terrorists.)

On the other hand, the Arabs afford Israelis an opportunity to continually certify their biblically bestowed "chosen" status—and to assure themselves of the post-corporeal rewards implicit in the anointment—by constantly threatening, but never accomplishing, Israel's destruction. Persistently testing Israel's exalted designation, but never disproving it, enabling Israel to be embattled and remain intact, the Arabs are every bit the blessing to Israel that Israel is to the Arabs.

It follows that the violence each side visits on the other must be measured; balances and proportions need to be kept. For one side to win, after all, would be for both sides to lose; would, that is, end the game and return *both* sides to a contemplation of the void. We might call this aiding and abetting of one another's immortality illusions—the cooperation and the accommodations it requires—the deeper

definition of the "social contract."

So we can engage ad infinitum in the most earnest discussions about anti-Semitism, about Hamas, about Sharon, about territory and occupation, and forever miss the real dynamic of the situation. The Arab-Israeli problem is, again, a solution to a more pressing problem, to what is, literally as well as figuratively, the mother of all problems. And what accounts for the tenaciousness of the conflict is the ongoing success it's enjoying in the service of its underlying agenda. As long as this holds true, Arabs and Israelis will, for all the anguish it induces, remain at odds because the enmity between them is their buffer against the spectre of oblivion.

The pain we are witnessing is a palliative. These are not the worst of times in the Middle East.

Former contributor to The Village Voice and Rolling Stone. Coauthor and coeditor, respectively, of two collections of essays about jazz and rock in the '60s: "Music & Politics" and "Giants of Black Music."

Everything's All Right in the Middle East

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