

Glenn Beck's Demagoguery, Right Wing Extremism, and Racism

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At a time of 24-hour news and a proliferation of television and radio talk shows featuring hatemongers and demagogues like Rush Limbaugh, Bill O'Reilly, Sean Hannity and Lou Dobbs, Glenn Beck may stand out as the most unhinged and extremist of all as evidenced by his jihad against anyone to the left of his views, disadvantaged minorities, Muslims, Latino immigrants, and progressive change in some of his most outlandish comments, including:

- calling Barack Obama a “racist (who) has a deep-seated hatred for white people or the white culture; I don’t know what it is....This guy is, I believe, a racist;”
- calling Van Jones “an avowed, radical, revolutionary communist,” then saying “Jones is the tip of the iceberg” as part of his over-the-top campaign against anyone less extremist than himself;
- stating “The most used phrase in my administration if I were to be President would be ‘What the hell do you mean we’re out of missiles;’ ”
- saying “We need to be the first ones in the recruitment office lining up to shoot the bad Muslims in the head....In 10 years, Muslims and Arabs will be looking through a razor wire fence at the West;”
- telling Muslim Congressman Keith Ellison to “prove to me that you are not working with our enemies;”
- advocating disposing of Guantanamo detainees by shooting them in the head;
- accusing Al Gore of creating a new “Hitler youth” by promoting environmental awareness, and called for kicking California out of the union;
- in 2003, telling listeners he was praying for a gruesome death for Democrat presidential candidate Dennis Kucinich, and in 2005 saying he fantasized about strangling filmmaker Michael Moore;
- characterizing Obama’s new regulatory czar, Cass Sunstein, as a crazed animal rights activist who believes that rats matter more than people; and
- in September 2005, expressing open “hate” toward Katrina victims, calling them “scumbags” for not waiting patiently for emergency aid at a time their lives were devastated, and the Bush administration was forcibly removing them to distant locations, then preventing them from returning so predatory developers could exploit their neighborhoods for profit.

In May 2008, a Media Matters Action Network report titled, “Fear & Loathing in Prime Time: Immigration Myths and Cable News” highlighted undocumented Latino immigrant hatemongering by Lou Dobbs, Bill O’Reilly, and Glenn Beck, each making outlandish claims, including:

- an alleged connection between undocumented Latinos and crime;
- how they exploit social services and don’t pay taxes;
- the “reconquista” myth about a supposed Mexican plot to take over the US Southwest; and
- an epidemic of Latino voter fraud.

According to Beck, “It’s time to wake up in this country. We are dealing with an illegal alien (read Latino) crime wave, and drug smuggling is just the beginning.” He opened a special 2008 “Border Crisis” program saying: “America’s border crisis. Rape, drugs, kidnapping, even murder. It is beginning to look a lot more like a border war....Every single illegal immigrant is guilty of a crime, every single one....Every undocumented worker (read Latino) is an illegal immigrant, a criminal and a drain on our dwindling resources.”

He added:

- “I’ve got a quick message for illegal aliens if you happen to be watching; you better start packing your bags; and to the politicians in Washington who are soft on illegal immigration, start packing up your office, because when the terrorists strike, which they will, and when we find out that they’re here illegally from some other country, we will be telling all of you to get the hell out;”
- earlier he said “I told you about the five-part plan that I believe may lead to the end of the West as we know it; I called it my ‘Perfect Storm;’ one of the elements....is illegal immigration; it is still a great way for terrorists to come here and mess with us; but even if that doesn’t happen....at the very least (they’re) attacking our culture, and our way of life; they are not melting into our melting pot; they’re here for the cash;” and
- “I also know our country is on fire, and the fuel is illegal immigration; they (threaten) our national security;” they come for “three reasons: one, they’re terrorists; two, they’re escaping the law; or three, they’re hungry (because) they can’t make a living in their own dirtbag country.”

This is what passes for American mainstream “journalism” that’s in no worse form than from Glenn Beck - on Fox News, the radio outlets that give him a platform, and the sponsors that make his kind of programming possible. More on them below.

Joe McCarthy’s Earlier Jihad Against the Left

In the 1950s, Joe McCarthy’s witch-hunts against alleged communists, those on the left, and Democrat administration and other “subversives” included Secretary of State Dean Acheson whom he called “a pompous diplomat in striped pants,” General George Marshall when he was Secretary of State for being “soft on communism” and being “a man steeped in falsehood,” and many others on his so-called “blacklist.”

In 1950, with no proof, he said he had a list of 205 known communists in the State Department, later reduced the number to 57, but said they were passing secret information to the Soviets. He claimed:

“The reason why we find ourselves in a position of impotency is not because the enemy has sent men to invade our shores, but rather because of the traitorous actions of those who had all the benefits that the wealthiest nation on earth has had to offer – the finest homes, the finest college educations, and the finest jobs in Government (and the private sector) we can give.”

He characterized enemies as “card-carrying communists.” Others as “loyalty risks” or being “soft on communism.” For political gain, he vilified patriotic Americans, created years of hysteria, targeted anti-American books in libraries and got them removed, then overstepped enough to be hung on his own petard with publications like the Louisville Courier-Journal reporting that:

“In this long, degrading travesty of the democratic process, McCarthy has shown himself to be evil and unmatched in malice.” On December 2, 1954 the Senate censured him and took away his power base. Later ill with cirrhosis of the liver from years of abusive alcoholism, he died a broken man on May 2, 1957.

Today, the term “McCarthyism” is synonymous with baseless malicious slander, unscrupulous fearmongering, vilifying the innocent, accusing them of disloyalty, and calling them terrorists, Islamofascists, illegal immigrants, and unpatriotic for supporting progressive change and ideas to the left of right wing views.

McCarthyism Redux Through the Right Wing Media

Nightly on Fox News, Glenn Beck delivers some of the worst of it to his estimated 2.3 million faithful and millions more on The Glenn Beck Program, a nationally syndicated talk-radio show aired by Premiere Radio Networks (a Clear Channel Communications subsidiary) throughout the country on over 300 stations, according to a Premiere Speakers Bureau promo about him stating that his program “is presently the third highest-rated national radio talk show among adults ages 25 - 54.”

It said that he debuted on CNN’s Headline News in May 2006 “with his self-styled topical talk show and quickly soared in popularity.” CNN at the time called it “an unconventional look at the news of the day featuring (Beck’s) often amusing perspective on the top stories from world events and politics to pop culture and everyday hassles.”

In early January 2007, he also joined ABC News’ Good Morning America as a regular contributor with its senior executive producer, Jim Murphy, saying:

“Glenn is a leading commentator with a distinct voice. At times, he is the perfect guest for many of the talk topics we cover on morning news programs.”

In 2008, Beck won the Marconi Radio Award for Network Syndicated Personality of the Year from the National Association of Broadcasters. Previous winners included Rush Limbaugh and Fox News’ Sean Hannity. After his award, Premiere Radio Networks president, Charlie Rahilly, said:

“Glenn’s conversation with millions of Americans weekly on The Glenn Beck Program....makes him a familiar voice in our culture. We salute his work, creativity, and humor, and congratulate him on his genuine recognition by our industry.”

He regularly features guests like Karl Rove, John McCain, Sarah Palin, Rudy Giuliani, Rick Santorum, Rush Limbaugh, and an array of the most extremist Republican members of Congress, others from right wing think tanks, and former Bush administration officials.

His syndicator, Premiere Radio, is a subsidiary of Clear Channel Communications, the world’s largest radio broadcaster, concert promoter, and billboard advertising firm. It’s also a major player in US television and Spanish language broadcasting, and very much to the right of center in ideology. As one of America’s most powerful media companies, it’s played a leading role in destroying media diversity by airing the same content on many dozens of its stations simultaneously, suppressing everything not supportive of its views.

In 2002, Clear Channel attracted the attention of Senator Russ Feingold and several other members of Congress over its anti-competitive behavior and alleged shady business practices. In 2009, the company remains a powerful force, ranking ninth among the top 20 US media companies ahead of The New York Times Co., the Washington Post Co., Hearst Corp., and McGraw-Hill.

More on Beck’s Background

He’s written three New York Times-listed bestsellers, publishes the entertainment Fusion Magazine, and tours the country twice yearly in his own one-man show to promote himself as a national institution.

Instead of condemning his extremism, on December 4, 2006, The New York Times described him as a “tearful rising star” in calling him “brash (and) opinionated (with an) unfiltered approach (in) saying what others are feeling but are afraid to say.” Writers Brian Stelter and Bill Carter said he “has a gift for touching the passion nerve (by) tapping into fear about the future.”

They quoted Old Dominion University’s Jeffrey Jones saying Beck engages in “inciting rhetoric. People hear their values are under attack and they get worried. It becomes an opportunity for them to stand up and do something” without realizing how destructive Beck’s extremism is to their own well-being. Even Beck once said about himself: “I say on the air all the time, if you take what I say as gospel, you’re an idiot.”

His Premiere’s Speakers Bureau bio says he debuted in radio at age 13 in Seattle, and grew up in nearby Mount Vernon. After high school, he got jobs “as a Top 40 DJ” in Baltimore, Houston, and New Haven, CT.

It also explained that at age 30, he became consumed by alcoholism and drug addiction, then regained sobriety and “found a new direction.” He remarried, became a baptized Mormon, and decided to pursue talk radio after being offered his own show on Tampa, Florida station WFLA-AM. In his first year, it became number-one rated, and within 18 months, Premiere Radio Networks offered him national syndication.

In January 2002, The Glenn Beck Program debuted on 47 stations. Today, he’s on over 300 as well as XM satellite radio.

LDS Living Magazine (for Latter Day Saint Mormon families) provides more details about Beck's background. It said he was fired from his first three radio jobs in Washington State. Six months later, he returned on WPGC in Washington, DC. Was again fired. Then he became program director and "morning guy" on a small Corpus Christi, TX station. After two years of "moving around from city to city, he ended up in Baltimore." He also worked at WRKA in Louisville, KY and WKCI-FM in Hamden, CT.

Three days after converting to Mormonism, he was offered his first radio talk show in Tampa. It propelled him to national prominence and his current positions at Fox News, his syndicated radio program (first from Philadelphia in January 2002, now in New York), and as a hot topic on other programs, including MSNBC's Keith Olbermann's war of words with Beck.

He posted a September 6 request on The Daily Kos to "Send Me Everything You Can Find About Glenn Beck." He added that he'll "expand this to the television audience and have a dedicated email address to accept leads, tips, contacts, on Beck, his radio producer Burguiere, and the chief of his tv enables, Ailes (head of Fox News)...."

It may simply be a PR stunt to boost ratings and get added revenue for General Electric, MSNBC's owner, that certainly can stop this if it wishes.

Sponsors Bailing Out on Beck

To date, over five dozen decided they'll no longer be associated with his kind of antics, fearing, of course, it may harm their image and hurt sales and profits.

In 2005, Van Jones (now inactive) and James Rucker co-founded ColorOfChange.org "to strengthen Black America's political voice" toward the goal of making "government more responsive to the concerns of Black Americans and to bring about positive political and social change for everyone."

In the wake of Beck calling Obama a "racist" and attacking Van Jones, it sent a letter to his sponsors urging them to boycott "the kinds of views and tactics" he espouses and cease all advertising on his program.

FoxNewsBoycott.com joined in as part of its campaign "to help people realize that Fox News Channel and its personalities are a detriment to journalism and journalistic integrity." It urges supporters "to boycott, not only Fox News Channel, but Fox News sponsors and companies that air Fox News in their places of business."

To date, over 60 companies no longer advertise on Glenn Beck, including:

- AT & T
- Bank of America
- Bell & Howell
- Best Buy
- Campbell Soup
- Capital One

- Clorox
- Berkshire Hathaway's GEICO Insurance
- General Mills
- HSBC
- Johnson & Johnson
- Kraft Foods
- Mercedes-Benz
- Procter & Gamble
- Sanofi-Aventis
- Sprint
- Travelers Insurance
- UPS
- Verizon Wireless, and
- Wal-Mart

Many others still advertise, but more keep pulling out, showing the effectiveness of the national campaign, backed by many tens of thousands of signatures from ColorOfChange.org and FoxNewsBoycott.com supporters.

The Internet's power is real and proves when enough committed people back progressive issues, constructive change follows. If it works against Glenn Beck and Fox News, why not in a campaign to reclaim the kind of America people deserve and can have if they work hard enough for it.

If not now, when? If not us, who? If not soon, maybe never? If that's not incentive enough, what is?

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