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Critics pounce after Obama talks Crusades and slavery

at prayer breakfast

By Juliet Eilperin

*President Obama has never been one to go easy on America.*

Juliet, considering how horribly, nearly half of America has treated him, I can't say as I blame him. For those of us too young to have experienced the life of Jackie Robinson, American racists went out of their way to show us all ... what we missed.

*As a new president, he dismissed the idea of American exceptionalism, noting that Greeks think their country is special, too.*

Juliet, I'm going to have to disagree with Obama on that one. America IS exceptional: we are the most militaristic nation on Earth; we were the last modern nation to allow institutionalized human slavery; and despite having more money than God, America has allowed the rich to regain the stranglehold on wealth that it enjoyed right before The Great Depression.

Yeah, we do have our good points, but pounding our chests and claiming to be superior to everyone else ... is not one of them.

*He labeled the Bush-era interrogation practices, euphemistically called “harsh” for years, as torture. America, he has suggested, has much to answer given its history in Latin America and the Middle East.*

*His latest challenge came Thursday at the National Prayer Breakfast. At a time of global anxiety over Islamist terrorism, Obama noted pointedly that his fellow Christians, who make up a vast majority of Americans, should perhaps not be the ones who cast the first stone.*

*Speaking of the tension between the compassionate and murderous acts religion can inspire, Obama told the group “Humanity has been grappling with these questions throughout human history; and lest we get on our high horse and think this is unique to some other place, remember that during the Crusades and the Inquisition, people committed terrible deeds in the name of Christ. In our home country, slavery and Jim Crow all too often was justified in the name of Christ.”*

*President Obama spoke about the common theme of treating others with love during his speech at the National Prayer Breakfast on Feb. 5, 2015, in Washington, D.C. Here are highlights from that event.*

*Some Republicans were outraged.*

Juliet, of course Republicans were outraged. Treating others with love and respect goes against everything Republicans stand for. It goes against all the time and money that they pour into doing the exact opposite of Christ's teachings.

*Former Virginia governor Jim Gilmore (R) said “The president’s comments this morning at the prayer breakfast are the most offensive I’ve ever heard a president make in my lifetime. He has offended every believing Christian in the United States. This goes further to the point that Mr. Obama does not believe in America or the values we all share.”*

Juliet, Gilmore assumes he speaks for all "believing Christians" but I can assure you - he does not. But Gilmore is right about one thing: Obama doesn't believe in the America or the values that Gilmore believes in.

The U.S. Civil War ceased hostilities in 1865. But the war for the hearts and minds of Americans continues to this day. The Confederacy is one of the most foul cancers ever to strike mankind; and the battle ... is far from over.

*Obama’s remarks spoke to his unsparing, sometimes controversial, view of the United States — where triumphalism is often overshadowed by a harsh assessment of where Americans must try harder to live up to their own self-image. Only by admitting these shortcomings, he has argued, can we fix problems and move beyond them.*

Juliet, has the Confederacy ever apologized for slavery?

They still fly the Confederate flag in the state capital of South Carolina. They will never admit the truth: that they are among the most vile, disgusting humans to be found anywhere on Earth.

We beat them militarily. Now the battle has moved onto the ideological battlefield. This is where we need to finish the job.

*Obama said “There is a tendency in us, a sinful tendency, that can pervert and distort our faith.” But many critics believe that the president needs to focus more on enemies of the United States.*

Juliet, a country's greatest enemies usually come from within. Yes, you may quote me on that.

To distract their victims (their fellow citizens) they most often will try to focus attention outwards, towards foreign enemies, both real and imagined. It is the same method used by magicians when they pick the pockets of their audience. You can't pick someone's pocket without first distracting them. That is why our real enemies are constantly trying to get us to focus on threats abroad.

*Russell Moore, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, called Obama’s comments about Christianity “an unfortunate attempt at a wrongheaded moral comparison.”*

Juliet, historical facts burn like acid, don't they?

Now let's see how Moore manages to distract everyone from the historical facts that he cannot refute, and onto a different track.

*Moore said "What we need more is a “moral framework from the administration and a clear strategy for defeating ISIS."*

No Juliet, I'm not psychic. These religious apologists are just so predictable that they hardly present any challenge at all.

*When the Dalai Lama was recognized at the 63rd annual National Prayer Breakfast, President Obama could be seen bowing and placing his palms together in a gesture of greeting.*

Juliet, personally I would disagree with Obama on this one. I would have bowed, placed both my fists together and slowly extended the middle finger on each hand.

Though I will admit that the Lama isn't anywhere near as bad as many of the leaders found in Christianity and Islam, he still represents theocratic rule.

*Obama spoke a day after meeting with Muslim leaders, in what participants said was his first roundtable with a Muslim-only group since taking office. The Muslim leaders argued that they feel their community has faced unfair scrutiny in the wake of terrorist attacks overseas. Although the White House released only a broad description of the meeting — which touched on issues including racial profiling — participants said it gave them a chance to express their concerns directly to the president.*

*Farhana Khera, executive director of the civil rights group Muslim Advocates, one of 13 participants, said the session gave Obama a chance to focus on Muslim Americans the way he has done with other constituencies, such as African American and Jewish groups.*

*Khera also said that he started off by telling Obama that the biggest concern he hears from Muslim parents is their fear that their children will be ashamed to be Muslim because of discrimination. We are asking him to use his bully pulpit to have a White House summit on hate crimes against religious minorities, much like the summit on bullying reset the conversation around LGBT youth.*

*Obama emphasized the need to respect minorities in his speech, saying it was part of the obligation Americans face as members of a diverse and open society. Obama stated “And if, in fact, we defend the legal right of a person to insult another’s religion, we’re equally obligated to use our free speech to condemn such insults — and stand shoulder to shoulder with religious communities, particularly religious minorities who are the targets of such attacks.”*

Juliet, that's the way it's done in a civilized society. Insults, arguments, etc., are thrown back and forth ... in lieu of rocks.

*For the president, the prayer breakfast represented a role he has played before: explaining to Americans why others might see things differently. Joshua DuBois, who headed the White House Office of Faith Based and Neighborhood Partnerships under Obama and has served as an informal spiritual adviser, said the president is conscious of the fact that Islam is an abstraction for much of the general public.*

*DuBois said “The president, as a Christian, knows many American Muslims. Unfortunately, a lot of folks in our country don’t have close relationships with Muslims. The only time they’re hearing about Islam is in the context of the foreign policy crisis or what’s happening with ISIS.”*

*As a result, many Americans have an increasingly hostile view of Islam.*

Juliet, that increasingly hostile view of Islam is based on hard facts. While individual Muslims, like individual Christians, can be wonderful people, the ideologies of both faiths, as recorded in their holy books, is deserving of disgust.

As a contrast, compare Buddhism or Jainism with the Abrahamic desert dogmas. You won't find genocide, slavery, torture, and many of the other horrors ... listed as features.

*A Pew Research Center survey last fall found that half of Americans think the Islamic religion is more likely than others to encourage violence, while 39 percent said it does not.*

Juliet, those 39% are idiots. Either that or they have never gone anywhere near a news broadcast.

*The view that Islam is more apt to encourage violent acts rose 12 percentage points from the beginning of 2014 and was double the number who said so in March 2002 — less than a year after the Sept. 11 attacks.*

Juliet, that's called ... education. Those are people who actually have working television sets and internet connections.

*In the past, Obama has used stark, personal terms to describe ongoing tensions between African Americans and America’s white majority. When discussing the acquittal of George Zimmerman in the February 2012 shooting of Trayvon Martin, a black teenager, Obama spoke of being trailed while shopping in a department store and hearing the locks on cars click as he walked down the street.*

*But he has also framed the most incendiary aspects of race relations — whether it’s the moment when his former pastor, the Rev. Jeremiah Wright, thundered “God damn America” from the pulpit or the shooting of another unarmed young black man, Michael Brown — as an opportunity to test the concept of American exceptionalism.*

*He titled the 2008 speech he delivered in Philadelphia about Wright “A More Perfect Union,” a phrase he echoed 6 1/2 years later when he addressed the United Nations General Assembly.*

*Obama said “We welcome the scrutiny of the world — because what you see in America is a country that has steadily worked to address our problems and make our union more perfect. America is not the same as it was 100 years ago, 50 years ago or even a decade ago. Because we fight for our ideals and are willing to criticize ourselves when we fall short.”*

Juliet, it should be noted that Obama's description of America only fits the progressive half. It does not apply to Conservatives.

To verify my claim, simply open a dictionary and read the definition of Conservatism.

*But each of these admissions of fault — whether it is Obama’s acknowledgment during his 2009 Cairo speech that the United States was involved in the 1953 coup, overthrowing the government of Iranian Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh or the suggestion that America has “a moral responsibility to act” on arms control because only the United States has used a nuclear weapon — has drawn sharp criticism from opponents.*

Juliet, those damn historical facts always irritate the shorts of Conservatives who do everything in their power to rewrite history.

*Obama has argued that the United States is exceptional because it responds to its citizens’ frank assessments of whether it lives up to its core values. And he has defended the exceptional role it plays in the world given its military power and political traditions, like when Obama decided to intervene in Libya on the grounds that it is not in America’s nature to stand by while a civilian population is threatened.*

*But he has always argued that straying from those values, as he believes happened during the George W. Bush administration, weakens the United States. Obama said of the detention and interrogation practices of his predecessor, that we went off course. Obama pledged to end torture, close the military prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and correct what he defined as mistakes America made during the country’s season of fear.*

*Russell Moore said “The evil actions that Obama mentioned were clearly outside the moral parameters of Christianity itself and were met with overwhelming moral opposition from Christians.”*

Juliet, I guess Moore didn't see the polls that showed that the more religious one is, the more accepting of torture they tend to be. Or maybe ... he just can't admit it.

*Moore added that while he understood Obama’s attempt to make sure “he is not heard as saying that all Muslims are terrorists, I think most people know that at this point.”*

Juliet, it doesn't sound like Moore had all that much criticism to offer, after all. I think it is clear that Christians simply don't like to be reminded of history ... since it hasn't been very kind to them.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/obamas-speech-at-prayer-breakfast-called-offensive-to-christians/2015/02/05/6a15a240-ad50-11e4-ad71-7b9eba0f87d6_story.html>

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THE SCIENCE SEGMENT

Sea slug has taken genes from algae it eats,

allowing it to photosynthesize like a plant

The emerald green sea slug's chromosomes have some genes that come from the algae it eats, allowing it to live for months at a time "feeding" on sunlight, like a plant. These genes help sustain photosynthetic processes inside the slug that provide it with all the food it needs.

Importantly, this is one of the only known examples of functional gene transfer from one multicellular species to another, which is the goal of gene therapy to correct genetically based diseases in humans. Figuring out the mechanism of this naturally occurring gene transfer could be extremely instructive for future medical applications.

Researchers used an advanced imaging technique to confirm that a gene from the alga V. litorea is present on the E. chlorotica slug's chromosome. This gene makes an enzyme that is critical to the function of photosynthetic "machines" called chloroplasts, which are typically found in plants and algae.

E. chloritica "steals" chloroplasts from V. litorea and embeds them into its own digestive cells. Once inside the slug cells, the chloroplasts continue to photosynthesize for up to nine months--much longer than they would perform in the algae. The photosynthesis process produces carbohydrates and lipids, which nourish the slug.

How the slug manages to maintain these photosynthesizing organelles for so long has been the topic of intensive study and a good deal of controversy. One of several algal genes needed to repair damage to chloroplasts, and keep them functioning, is present on the slug chromosome. The gene is incorporated into the slug chromosome and transmitted to the next generation of slugs. While the next generation must take up chloroplasts anew from algae, the genes to maintain the chloroplasts are already present in the slug genome.

There is no way on Earth that genes from an alga should work inside an animal cell; And yet they do. They allow the animal to rely on sunshine for its nutrition. So if something happens to their food source, they have a way of not starving to death until they find more algae to eat.

This biological adaptation is also a mechanism of rapid evolution. When a successful transfer of genes between species occurs, evolution can basically happen from one generation to the next, rather than over an evolutionary timescale of thousands of years.

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FAMOUS QUOTES

John Fugelsang (no biography - previously quoted)

"Can George Bush's brother beat Bill Clinton's wife?

Or will it be Ron Paul's son?

And aren't you glad the American Revolution

got us away from inherited power?"