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The Gift of Gaffe: What's next?

By Steve Bakke  February 3, 2022

**"I am a gaffe machine"
- Joe Biden, December 2018**



R. Emmett Terrell, Jr., founder and editor-in-chief of *The American Spectator*, wrote an article titled "Joe's Gaffes Now Matter." He concluded: "...there are people in Beijing and the Kremlin trying to put Bidens' gaffes to good use...These missteps will not go away..." The author is reminding us that rather than just being humorous, gaffes can often be harmful.

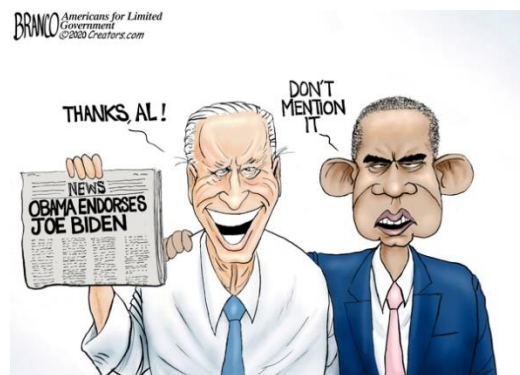
Terrell cleverly refers to President Biden's gaffes as "preposterousities." He recalls the interview in which Biden reimagined the then-president's reaction after the 1929 stock market crash. He declared that President Roosevelt immediately "got on television" to communicate with the American people. The problem? Hoover was President, not Franklin Roosevelt. And TVs existed only in an inventor's workshop. Another example was Biden's recollection of his helicopter being forced down by enemy fire along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. It never happened.

I decided to expand on Terrell's list by finding more of Joe Biden's gaffes, twists of memory, and examples of a creative imagination.

Back in 1987, then Senator Biden was running for his party's presidential nomination when he characteristically lost his temper after his academic history was questioned. Quoting Joe: "I think I have a much higher I.Q. than you do.....I went to school on a full academic scholarship..... the only one in my class" to do so. He stated that he had "graduated with three degrees from college." He explained that after performing poorly in law school, he quit. Upon returning, he "ended up in the top half of my class."

Candidate Biden later admitted that he was near the bottom of his law school class, didn't have three undergraduate degrees and had received a "financial need-based half-scholarship."

While at Syracuse law school, Biden was involved in a plagiarism incident. He used five pages of someone else's work without attribution. He was given an F in the course,



but later successfully completed the course. That and attribution questions involving speeches, along with the academic record issues, ended his candidacy.

Most will recall what happened recently when a Washington correspondent asked the President at the end of a news conference whether he thought the issue of inflation would be a political liability in the midterm election. The President commented into a hot mic: "What a stupid son-of-a-b****."

He once gave a presentation in which he referred to the death of a person who was present in the audience. Another time he asked a paraplegic to please "stand up" to receive recognition. In 2007 he described another presidential wannabe, Barack Obama, like this: "...you got the first mainstream African American who is articulate and bright and clean and a nice-looking guy.....that's a storybook."

Moving to more consequential incidents, President Biden recently seemed to give permission to the Russians to make a "minor incursion" into Ukraine by Russian forces. The implication seemed to be that a limited action would (wink/wink) be mostly overlooked. Was it a message or was it a gaffe? Either way, that could result in real harm to the U.S. as well as international security.

And finally, let me quote Supreme Court Justice Lewis Powell in the 1978 "Bakke" (no family relationship) ruling: "Preferring members of any one group for no reason other than race or ethnic origin is discrimination for its own sake. This the Constitution forbids." And on January 24, 2022, our current Supreme Court announced it will be hearing a case challenging race-based admissions in higher education.

Given that introduction and context, consider what the President stated after Justice Breyer's resignation announcement: "I will nominate...someone with extraordinary qualifications, character, experience, and integrity. And that person will be the first black woman ever nominated to the United States Supreme Court."

According to the "Bakke" decision, isn't that selection process illegal? Could the President's Supreme Court nomination be challenged as unconstitutional if it's limited to a black female? The 1978 decision stated that "this the constitution forbids."

While the issue I present is real, it isn't likely to develop into a formal challenge. The real gaffe was that the announcement was ham-handed in its presentation, and the statement's apparent impropriety will have to be dealt with in some fashion.

