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Obama Calls for Peace and Comity at Home, But Favors Wars and Killer Drones Abroad

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President Barack Obama made an eloquent plea for sanity and peace following the latest deadly assault on police officers — this time a gunman with an assault rifle shooting and killing three cops in Baton Rouge and wounding another three, one critically injured.

He struck just the right tone, condemning the killings but also warning against politicians and media talking heads using the incident to stir up more divisions. As he put it:

Someone once wrote, “A bullet need happen only once, but for peace to work we need to be reminded of its existence again and again and again.”

The president continued:

“My fellow Americans, only we can prove, through words and through deeds, that we will not be divided. And we’re going to have to keep on doing it “again and again and again.” That’s how this country gets united. That’s how we bring people of good will together. Only we can prove that we have the grace and the character and the common humanity to end this kind of senseless violence, to reduce fear and mistrust within the American family, to set an example for our children.”

It was a moving call to bring this violence-plagued feuding country together — people respecting the police, and police respecting the people, black, brown, red, yellow and white.

And yet I wonder, why did the president say this only applying to violence in our own country? This is, remember,

the same president who chairs weekly meetings to decide who will be killed next somewhere in the world by our high-tech drones — remotely piloted killing machines with grotesque names like Predator and Reaper, armed with their obscenely but aptly named Hellfire missiles. Victims who include not just suspected or alleged “terrorists” but also innocent members of their families, including young children, not to mention the all too many innocents who either happen to be in the wrong place at the wrong time, or who are simply victims of targeting errors or “intelligence” errors.

How can this president, who is so quick to approve bombing campaigns in Libya, Syria, Iraq and Somalia, or to send in Special Forces death squads to countries like Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan and elsewhere, or to extend a war launched in 2001 by his predecessor against one of the poorest nations in the world — Afghanistan — for not just the eight years of his own violence-plagued presidency, but into the next one, be so eloquent about not turning to violence in the US?

Curious about his unattributed quotation, I googled it, and discovered it had been penned by Colum McCann, a writing professor at New York’s Hunter College, a native of Dublin, Ireland and author of several novels, including *Let the World Spin* and *TransAtlantic*.

I can see why the president didn’t mention McCann’s authorship of that line, or more importantly, the context in which he used it.

In fact, it appeared in an essay by McCann, which ran as [an opinion piece in the New York Times on March 30, 2013](#). And that article recalled how peace was finally achieved in the endless war zone of Northern Ireland, where Catholics and Protestants, along with the British Army, had spent over half a century slaughtering each other. It was written to commemorate the 15th anniversary of the Good Friday peace agreement between the two mutual enemies which was brokered by George Mitchell, the former Democratic senator from Maine who as US Special Envoy to Northern Ireland oversaw two years of tough negotiations to end the violence and bloodshed.

That article went on to say of that peace agreement:

“It is one of the great stories of the second half of the 20th century, and by the nature of its refusal to topple, it is one of the continuing marvels of the 21st as well. While rockets fizzle across the Israeli border, and funeral chants sound along the streets of Aleppo in Syria, and drones cut coordinates in the blue over Kandahar, Afghanistan, the Irish peace process reaffirms the possibility that — despite the weight of evidence against human nature — we are all still capable of small moments of resurrection, no matter where we happen to be.

“This is the Easter narrative: that the stone can be rolled away from the cave.

“Hundred of years of arterial bitterness, in Ireland and elsewhere, are never easy to ignore. They cannot be whisked away with a series of signatures. It takes time and struggle to maintain even the remotest sense of calm. Peace is indeed harder than war, and its constant fragility is part of its beauty. A bullet need happen only once, but for peace to work we need to be reminded of its existence again and again and again.”

McCann, in other words, wrote those words as a rather direct criticism of President Obama and his default policy of war in Syria, in Afghanistan, as criticism of Obama’s enthusiastic use of drone warfare, and as criticism too of America’s ally and protectorate Israel’s brutal attacks on its occupied Palestinian population. He was saying clearly in that essay that the answer to these conflicts is not war but peace.

How relatively easy it is for those words to flow from the president’s lips when he’s talking about America’s domestic disputes, but how unwilling he is to admit that the same truth applies to international conflicts. For these conflicts will not be solved by killing and brutality, by war and occupation, much less by escalating the violence. They can only be solved by the painful and slow process of negotiation, diplomacy and compromise, and ultimately by the achieving of mutual understanding, tolerance and trust.

If we needed any evidence of that reality, we only need to look at Nice, where 84 people this week were slaughtered by a French Tunisian immigrant acting in the name of ISIS, which is itself the product of the years of US destruction of Iraq, Libya and now Syria, in which hundreds of thousands of innocent Arab people have been

slaughtered by American military forces, cooperating NATO forces, including those of France, and by the unleashed hatreds of feuding Arab populations themselves, whose festering internecine hatreds were stoked, often deliberately, by US policy-makers.

If I were McCann, I'd sue President Obama for stealing and not crediting my words, and would demand that he either pay damages or concede that the usurped words apply equally well, if not better, to his two disastrous presidential terms of endless wars and extrajudicial killing-by-drone.

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