

## **A Bigot? Not me, not me, not me!!!!**

I've heard the veteran journalist Juan Williams on NPR as long as I've lived in the United States: a few months shy of 20 years. I came to like him and respect him for his incisive analysis and in-depth reporting.

Among all, what stands out in recent times is his coverage of the Jena episode. As I listened to Juan's captivating narrative from that little town in Louisiana on Thursday, September 20, 2007, it was almost like being transported to the cities like Selma, Oxford, Montgomery and Birmingham from 1960s – a perfect setting for the civil rights movement of the 21st century. Yes, 'almost' – because there *were* no rifle-butt assaults or baton charging or blood gushing. That day, Juan's voice and emotions conveyed the pain, anguish and suffering in the Black communities all across and beyond the land-of-free-and-fair.

In Juan's words, for the black youth, the September 20 march on the streets of Jena was an 'I've a dream' moment albeit without Dr. MLK. For the elders who had been in the center of it once before, it was a moment of déjà vu, a spark of unforgettable painful nostalgia and, the revival of a nightmare all over again. Irrespective of who was there, it was indeed a golden moment with a bit of romanticism as it showed what unity for a common cause could do.

Then earlier this week, he plummeted. So, some good things had to be said in his journalistic obituary and the two paragraphs above are dedicated to that.

Your allegations, Mr. Williams, that "NPR was anyway looking for ways to fire you and chose this incidence" of acute mouth diarrhea, might be valid. But is it not possible that you too were looking a way out of a respected public owned national radio to join the hatemongering clownship at Fox fully? Is it also not possible, that just like the proverbial Italian Mafioso, your host wanted to test your mettle to be a true Fox persona, and you succumbed to the bait?

Shame on you; being a veteran journalist, you should have been a better judge of your loyalty to once-a-noble profession. But don't worry, at Fox you will never be sacked for making such comments.

Fox News is not more than a circus where the Australian-born Islam-hating ring master (aka CEO) tries to entertain America 24/7 through the likes of O'Reilly, Hannity, Beck and now Palin. It also has the distinction of presenting 'noise' as 'news'.

Before we know it, you will be sitting on the elevated stool, next to your hate-spewing buddies. But remember, you will be joining the company of those who did not know a thing about Islam on 9/10/2001 but became experts on everything from veil, to hijab to Sharia by the time night fell on 9/11/2001. Imagine sitting in the company of people who make irresponsible comments like, "Muslims killed us on 9/11" and call the CEO of NPR a "pinhead". Their myopic outlook is detestable; by making those remarks recently about your discomfort when Muslims are in the vicinity, you too seem to have joined their ranks.

It is rumored that the high-stools that Fox provides to its anchors, have sharp invisible conical protrusions. While perching on them, you ought to be careful lest it should lead to moral hemorrhage. But you need not worry; you seem to have bartered your journalistic conscience for \$2 million with Fox News already.

By now, the Muslim and Islam bashing should have become a part of some Constitutional amendment, since it is so popular in the country and has gained such a good traction. Even celebrated history professors are using it as their course material, though they can hardly differentiate a place of worship from a community center. But like everything else in life and world, this too will come to pass and America will look for another pastime: just like in musical parlance when 'Crescendo' arrives you know the show is over!

How do we know that? Do you remember, what finally happened in Jena - an otherwise quiet and sleepy town in Louisiana? It was succinctly summed up by Bill Quigley in San Francisco Bay View:

*"An all-white jury sitting before a white judge agrees with a white prosecutor and all-white witnesses and convicts Black youth in a racially charged high school criminal case."*

Had your host asked you about your feelings when you come across a group of orthodox Jews with beards, long locks of hair, black hats and gazing at you intently as you pass them in Chicago, would you have said?

*I mean, look, Bill, I'm not a bigot. You know the kind of books I've written about the civil rights movement in this country. But when I get on the plane, I got to tell you, if I see people who are in JEWISH garb and I think, you know, they are identifying themselves first and foremost as Jews, I get worried. I get nervous.*

Of course not. That is anti-Semitism and you know that. And by Divine law - as someone might passionately argue - punishable by lynching. You know that too.

But Muslims? They are fair game even to an accomplished journalist who 'has written books about civil rights movements in this country'. If this is not bigotry, well, may the lexicographer Webster rot in hell!