

Wallace, The Unforgiven
by **Patrick J. Buchanan**
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Two men would today be damned as racists.

The first believed in the superiority of the white race and in apartheid, and felt a “glorious consummation” of slavery would be to send all slaves back to Africa. His name was Abraham Lincoln.

In his first inaugural address, Lincoln offered to support a constitutional amendment making slavery a permanently protected institution in the 15 states where it existed and said he would not oppose a law whereby his administration would help recapture runaway slaves.

The second wrote, after a 1924 law ended Asian immigration, “Californians have properly objected (to Japanese immigration) on the sound basic ground ... that the mingling of Asiatic blood with European or American blood produces, in nine cases out of 10, the most unfortunate results.” He would later put 110,000 Japanese Americans in detention camps until 1945. His initials: FDR.

While Lincoln and FDR are today immortalized, the obituaries of George Wallace savage this Depression-era farm boy for having stood by beliefs and customs that were almost universal in the Deep South.

Why? Today, we read memoirs of New York East Side kids at City College, who gathered in Alcove A or B, depending on whether they supported Stalin or Trotsky. That was 20 years after Stalin and Trotsky began the greatest rampage of murder in the 20th century. Yet, no one damns these intellectuals for the Marxist-Leninist idiocies they embraced and parroted.

The Hollywood Ten, all Communist dupes of Stalin, are talked of as “blacklisted” martyrs of the McCarthy era, who heroically refused to “name names.” Would any segregationist who refused to recant receive the same clucking indulgence? Why is it permissible to have aped the party line of a Stalinist regime that butchered 20 million people but an ineradicable stain on one’s honor to have supported segregation? Was segregation worse than Stalinism?

I write as a friend of George Wallace, a man of courtesy and courage who spent the last quarter century of his life in great pain and who showed a rare fortitude in four presidential campaigns.

What were Wallace’s two unforgivable sins? In his 1962 inaugural address as governor, he declared, “Segregation forever!” And in 1963, he stood in the schoolhouse door of the University of Alabama to defy a federal court that had mandated integration.

Yet, the stand in the schoolhouse door was theater, a peaceful act of civil disobedience to make the point that federal court orders did not trump states’ rights. Wallace stepped aside as soon as the Alabama Guard was federalized. Such rehearsed defiance of laws, followed by peaceful arrest, was a common tactic of civil rights champions. Why is Wallace’s peaceful defiance unforgivable?

In an obituary graciously titled "George Wallace, Enduring Symbol of an Era of Hate," a Washington Post writer notes: "To national politicians and journalists peering nervously from above the Mason-Dixon Line 30 years ago, Wallace was the Dracula of racial animosity -- a dark knight of the Southern soul ever threatening to harness the power of evil to enslave the land."

Oh, come off it. As one who traveled the South in the summer of 1964, I call this media hype. By the time Wallace came to power, the handwriting was on the wall for segregation. Southern resistance was crumbling. The demonstrators from the North had the entire national establishment loving and lionizing them.

The truth: The eternal diabolization of Wallace, like that of Joe McCarthy and Spiro Agnew, is essential if the liberal establishment is to convince this generation it played a heroic role in that era. The left needs Wallace as a far more menacing figure than he was to justify its fake battle ribbons. Liberals may tell tales of how dark and dangerous Mississippi was, but by the murder rate, Washington, D.C., in the early '90s was 10 times as violent.

Harry Truman is forgiven for dropping two atomic bombs on defenseless cities, burning to death 120,000 people. But forgiveness is denied McCarthy, Wallace and Agnew, who killed no one. Their great unforgivable sin -- they raucously mocked and ridiculed our ruling elite. McCarthy challenged its patriotism, Wallace its manhood, Agnew its courage for groveling to student mobs.

Worse, for years, America cheered and laughed at the populist rhetoric of McCarthy, Wallace and Agnew. All three merit eternal damnation not for any lies they told but for the truths they spoke.

Whether one is a scoundrel in history, or a secular saint, depends not really on one's deeds or misdeeds but on whether one has paid due deference to the idols of modernity. These three refused, but when people call that time an "Era of Hate," they tell us more about their own souls than that of George Corley Wallace.