

Degrees of Victimhood



In a Hollywood script, the New Orleans Saints would have stayed undefeated for the season, playing away from home every game and winning

each one in overtime. As their coach, Jim Haslett, recently said, almost wiping away a tear, “In the situation we’re in right now, we’re living day to day.”

The Saints are victims, no doubt, but as far as living day to day is concerned, things could be worse. The Banda Aceh Scorpions are no longer living at all. For any of you unfamiliar with the Scorpions, or Banda Aceh for that matter, the former was a soccer team, the latter is a province in the Indonesian Archipelago. The Scorpions’ schedule has been cancelled as both their stadium and most of their players disappeared in the tsunami of last Christmas.

Banda Aceh is still there, but no thanks to the UN or other do-gooders. Almost 100,000 victims of the tsunami are still living in tents, while 300,000 live with host families. 170,000 people are dead or missing and presumed dead nine months after the disaster, but from the \$7 billion in aid promised and the \$4.4 billion received, only 1,500 flimsy houses have been constructed by the Indonesian government. Projects needing central government (read “bureaucratic”) approval have been put off indefinitely.

So before Bill and Hillary Clinton shoot off their big mouths about how they would have saved New Orleans had they been in power—they were warned for eight years and did nothing about the weakened levees—there are tragedies and then there are tragedies. America is not Indonesia, but reading the European press the former is worse off. (I wonder what the poor Scorpions’ coach would say if someone bothered to ask him.) Mind you, tragedy breeds political opportunity, and victimhood provides

the surest meal ticket of all. Just think what Jesse Jackson could do with the Scorpions, let alone Indonesia and the tsunami.

However sad, the cult of suffering is here to stay. My Holocaust is bigger than your Holocaust. Or my genocide is larger than your genocide. Taken alphabetically, here are groups who rightly claim genocide has been committed against them: Armenians, Bosnian Muslims, Chechens, Cambodians, Darfur Christians, East Timorese, Falun Gong followers, Iraqis, Irish, Jews, Kosovars, Laotians, Maoris, Native Americans, Palestinians, Roma, Tutsis, Tibetans, Yugoslavs, and Zulus.

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Alas, all these have experienced genocide, but in the haste for a catchy headline, we now see television networks repeating the words of a New Orleans evacuee branding his plight “genocide.”

My friend and *American Conservative* cover boy Norman Mailer thinks that there is a kind of moral superiority in killing what you can see. I agree. Bombing a bunch of Serbians and inadvertently killing women and children from 15,000 feet was not our finest hour but par for the course for cowards like Clinton and Albright. On the other hand, however, a machine-gun squad of Einsatzgruppen executing Poles and Jews are not exactly superior to pilots dropping bombs on civilians.

What the do-gooders in the West do is confuse the issues with false equiva-

lence. The Marine who shoots a car full of innocent Iraqi civilians who fail to stop is not a criminal, just a soldier sent to do the wrong job by some jerk back in Washington. No matter what the antiwar side says—and I take a backseat to no one as far as opposition to this war is concerned—there has been no instance of a town or hamlet or even a crowd where American soldiers have herded people together and shot them dead. It could happen, of course, such being the joys of trying to put down an insurgency without enough troops and without soldiers trained to put down insurgencies.

I read a very good column by Charley Reese recently in which he writes of how we had said that Hiroshima and Nagasaki were military targets, but in fact there were only 43,000 soldiers in those cities and more than 500,000 civilians. The civilians were nearly all women,

children, and old men. He finished by saying that all men who start wars should be put in the dock. And it gets worse, where Japan is concerned. In July 1945, leading military figures in the U.S. had concluded that Japan was beaten anyway and would soon sue for peace. Emperor Hirohito had sent out feelers to those nice guys, the Soviet leaders, that he was ready to talk. Stalin, being Stalin, ignored them. He wanted to grab some Japanese real estate, so off went the two A-bombs. Eisenhower, MacArthur, and Admiral Leahy were against it. But Truman and Burns had their way. Winners do not have to sit in the dock.

Victimhood is relative. Keep that in mind the next time a hurricane hits the good old U.S. of A. ■

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