



OPINION: THE MAKING OF A BANANA REPUBLIC - JOSH HAMMER

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It is a presidential election year and a leading candidate for president of the United States, who also happens to be a former president of the United States, is currently a criminal defendant chained to a dingy courtroom four days of the week -- time that he should be spending interacting with voters out on the campaign trail.

That's terrible. But it's only the beginning.

The daughter of the presiding judge is a professional political operative for the presidential candidate's opposition party, and the candidate himself is subject to an over-inclusive and unconstitutional gag order. The George Soros-funded district attorney, who campaigned on a platform of prosecuting that candidate, only pressed charges after his own left-wing predecessor opted not to do so due to the frivolous nature of the charges. One of the Soros-funded DA's subordinates curiously joined his team, just in time to prosecute the candidate, from a high-ranking perch in the Department of Justice that is headed by the candidate's chief political rival.

And this week, the candidate was subjected to tawdry and salacious testimony from a discredited former porn star, who spoke openly in court about how she "blacked out" during their alleged 2006 sexual encounter. Due to the sprawling gag order, the candidate was not -- and is not -- legally permitted to defend his honor and contest her lurid, legally irrelevant claims.

Welcome to our American banana republic.

America has many real, glaring problems on its hands. Inflation remains stubborn, and Americans widely report feeling pessimistic about the economy despite nominal low unemployment metrics. Our wide-open southern border is disastrous, leading to artificially suppressed working-class wages and the most rampant illegal alien crime in the nation's history. Violent and property crime rates remain too high, especially in large urban corridors. Energy prices *should* be considerably lower, and they *would* be if our moronic leaders allowed producers to tap into America's great natural wellspring of hydrocarbons. Around the world, hostile regimes act against our interests in unrestrained and revanchist fashion. At home, childlessness, godlessness, anxiety and depression are all rising, symptomatic of a broader civilizational rot and a society that has lost confidence in what it claims to stand for.

Amidst all this, it would be ideal to have a normal, competitive presidential race, in which the flailing incumbent is directly confronted and his record is challenged for all to see. But Americans are now being deprived of anything remotely resembling a normal presidential race. Donald Trump is physically chained down to Judge Juan Merchan's New York courtroom, unable to get out on the campaign trail and deliver his signature rallies to adoring fans across the heartland. Those fans are the very Americans who have been pummeled by President Joe Biden's decades-high inflation, his ideological crusade against domestic energy production, and his reckless, crime-abetting

border crisis.



These often-forgotten Americans are, in a quite literal sense, denied the opportunity to hear the full argument against the Biden Regime due to these insidious workings of the Democrat-lawfare complex. Instead of permitting the Regime's challenger, Trump, to campaign for votes in Wisconsin, he is forced to silently endure the unhinged courtroom musings of a literal porn star and a convicted felon (Michael Cohen) -- all in furtherance of a case that suffers from insuperable statute of limitations problems, in addition to the structural absurdity of a *local* district attorney (the Soros-funded Alvin Bragg) prosecuting and attempting to prove a *federal* crime (campaign finance violation). Oh, and if Trump doesn't shut up and keep quiet, Merchan might throw him in jail -- as he has repeatedly threatened to do, if Trump keeps violating his unconstitutional gag order.

What a sick, cruel joke it all is.

Democrats seem not to have given any thought to what happens if they lose -- an entirely distinct possibility, given the incumbent's poor swing-state polling and widespread malaise among the electorate. If Trump wins, do Democrats seriously not expect him to respond in kind? Now that the Rubicon has been crossed and we have entered a world in which politicians attempt to not merely defeat their opposition at the ballot box but also prosecute and incarcerate them, there is no going back. Just as Senate Democrats' November 2013 invocation of the "nuclear option" to end the filibuster for lower-court nominees directly led to Republicans doing the same for Supreme Court nominees just a few years later, so too is it impossible to know what may ultimately come from the lawfare precedent Democrats are setting today.

The new rules have been established. Many of us didn't want these rules, but here we are anyway. So game on.

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