

September 25, 2007

An Open Letter to Lee Bollinger, President of Columbia University

A Barbarous and Ignorant Speech

By CLIFTON ROSS

To Mr. Lee Bollinger,

I'm writing you to express my outrage over your vulgar treatment of President Ahmadinejad yesterday when you invited him to speak at your university. Simple human etiquette of the most primitive and elemental sort, was required in the situation, but you failed to deliver even that. You were obnoxious, insulting and displayed an appalling ignorance of President Ahmadinejad, Iran and politics, not to mention the rules that govern "civilized" human conduct (arguably "primitive" conduct is even more governed by politeness and elevated rules of conduct).

Moreover, in a context that calls for objectivity, investigation, open mindedness and a willingness to learn and exchange ideas, you displayed a remarkable absence of any of those qualities. Instead, you showed yourself to be one with the bullying, abusive, ignorant and arrogant people who unfortunately govern our country at the moment and who are attempting to induce a phobic and neurotic xenophobia comparable only to what Hitler and Mussolini and Stalin inculcated in their countries during those moments of greatest darkness in human history. The irony of the situation is that you displayed all those qualities of which you accused President Ahmadinejad. Where was that display of that "great tradition of openness" in your callous, close minded speech? Your speech shows you to "exhibit all the signs of a petty and cruel dictator" and worse: a bully, a man who invites a guest into his house, then abuses him before a cheering crowd.

You accuse President Ahmadinejad of "a brutal crackdown on scholars, journalists and human rights advocates" but you fail to mention the scores of scholars, journalists and human rights advocates, imprisoned, tortured and murdered by U.S. forces in Iraq. Is that cowardice or a double standard or merely "oversight" on your part? And when you accuse President Ahmadinejad of denying the Holocaust and calling for the destruction of the state of Israel, that is, when you pander to your Zionist supporters, you merely display an ignorance of the actual words of Ahmadinejad (words that were twisted in the translation to English, predictably; see this piece by [Virginia Tilley](#)), which he corrected yesterday in his comments and clarifications.

However, when you say "your [Iran's] government is now undermining American troops in Iraq by funding, arming, and providing safe transit to insurgent leaders like Muqtada al-Sadr and his forces" you show yourself to be as biased, and blinded by nationalism and an imperial arrogance as the architects of the genocide we're currently seeing in Iraq. You don't ask what "American troops in Iraq" are doing there as invaders, occupiers, who are, de facto, now made war criminals by being the willing instruments of the "war of aggression," considered the supreme international crime, one committed by Mr. George Bush through fabrications of evidence, lies, and manipulation; you don't ask what role those resistance fighters like Muqtada Al Sadr are playing, but those less blinded by nationalism than you would compare him to

our own patriotic forefathers who fought the British for our own nationhood; and now you don't bother to ask what your ignorant, uninformed criticisms of President Ahmadinejad will do to help the same war criminals who destroyed Iraq to now go on and destroy Iran.

If you knew anything of history, the history of your own lifetime, you might understand the situation that currently confronts Iran. You probably know that the U.S. overthrew Iran's democracy in 1953 and set up a brutal, decadent Shah who was our man in the Middle East for the following two and a half decades. You may even know that the CIA helped organize the imprisonment, torture and killings of dissidents under that Shah, which is why the students took over the U.S. embassy when they finally got rid of the filth the U.S. had imposed upon them for all those dark years.

We don't need to agree with the elected President of Iran, Ahmadinejad, to show him the simple respect due an elected head of state. But you seem incapable of that simple act required of someone in your position. To call an elected president a "dictator," however, is not only insulting but inaccurate. Such epithets are reserved for those who impose themselves by force and by fraud, such as Mr. Bush, who has stolen two elections. But I'm sure you wouldn't use terms to describe your own head of state so, now would you?

The Chinese have a saying, roughly translated, that goes, "the one pointing his finger at another, has three fingers pointing at himself." But you are so blind to who you are, up there in your position of power as President of the prestigious Columbia University of New York in the great empire of the United States of America, that you don't see the man being accused by his three fingers. So, to close, I invite you to take a look at yourself, and our people, as another sees us. Her name is Layla Anwar and she writes a blog called Arab Woman Blues which you can [find here](#).

I warn you. A man of your highly sensitive sensibilities may find some of her language harsh, painful, distasteful. But I assure you, she has far more justification for saying what she does than you did in your pronouncements against the President of Iran yesterday. And it is long, but I plead for you to have patience because you are a man in need of an education, and sometimes education is a very painful process.

She writes:

Is there anything in Iraq that the Americans have not destroyed?

Anything at all? ... The past - you have looted and destroyed. Trying to erase our collective historical memory ... Our roots, where we came from, what our ancestors did, their achievements, their trials, their statues, their writings ...

You do not know history, you are rejects of history. You have no history. You have no past, you have nothing ... you are nothing.

You are nothing but ogres of consumerism. Not just material stuff, but anything you can swallow whole you will. You even swallow other people's history whole.

You are a greedy, covetous, gluttonous, voracious, jealous, envious people ...

Since you are nothing, your nihilism contaminates everything else ...

You destroy and self destruct ...

No Future - You have no future, because inside of yourselves, your future is limited to your own little egos. Little egos have no future. Little egos are amoebas, parasites, feeding off others ... You think you have a vision but your vision is only about your stomach, your pockets and what you have in between your legs ... That is it.

This is where it stops. Surely this does not make you seers ...

What have you contributed to the world ? Anything of real substance? Nothing. Apart from brutal might and power ... and your sickening culture that is as hollow and as empty as you are.

And just as you have no real future, you robbed us of our own. You are collectively a bunch of criminals, thieves, thugs and perverts of the worst kind.

Since your fucking 9/11, you have totally destroyed two countries. Afghanistan and Iraq. And you have not stopped. Not one day, not one hour ...

You wanted regime change in Iraq - you got it. You also changed us, me, beyond anything I can recognize ... I never hated you before. Today I do. I really hate you.

You collectively disgust me. Even our ancient Mesopotamian deities and spirits are disgusted with you. Every single letter of the Alphabet is disgusted with you.

The earth, the rivers, the sky, the mountains, the trees, the birds of Iraq are disgusted with you ... The cosmos is disgusted with you ...

Everytime I spot one of you anywhere in close proximity and hear that ugly accent of yours I run away ... I avoid you like the plague. I can't bear to hear you or see you.

You represent nothing but Death and Destruction to me. Your ugliness is all pervading ...

Everytime I switch on the TV or the Radio and see or hear one of you, I zap. I wish I can zap you out of my life once and for all ...

I know, I keep repeating myself, but then you keep repeating the same acts.

Iraq is going down, with its past and its future ...

I can only promise you one thing, however long it may take, we are going to take you down with us."

As a North American I can add nothing more except to apologize to Iraq for what my government has done and continues to do to them and to Iran for what you, and your government have done, and are preparing to do, to them. And to President Ahmadinejad, I apologize for Mr. Bollinger's barbarous and inexcusable words. Not all U.S. citizens are as ignorant and lacking in basic manners as the presidents of our universities.

Clifton Ross