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Giuliani Is No 9/11 Hero

Posted August 13, 2007 | 02:42 PM (EST)

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I have to say that I was absolutely shocked and quite disgusted when I read Giuliani's statement comparing the time he spent for photo opportunities during 9/11 to the work of the firefighters. He was quoted as saying, "I was there working with them. I was exposed to exactly the same things they were exposed to. So in that sense, I'm one of them." "This is not a mayor or a governor or a president who's sitting in an ivory tower. I was at ground zero as often, if not more, than most of the workers..."

He later apologized, making a claim that the way he came across was not his intention, but in my opinion, this doesn't sound like he simply misspoke. How could a former mayor of NYC say he was there as much as the workers? How is that even possible? Furthermore, in his back-peddling, backtracking statement on Friday, Giuliani said he was trying to show his concern for the workers' health?

"What I was trying to say yesterday is that I empathize with them, because I feel like I have that same risk," he said.

He didn't say that he empathized with the firefighters and workers, anybody with half a heart can do that. He said he was there *more* than them. This is clearly not the same and it's beyond a misspoken statement.

Being there in the forefront, in the area, has no comparison whatsoever to being in the trenches as the firefighters were! The absolute audacity and nerve of him to even think of comparing his "BEING THERE" with what our real heroes went through during that horrific period is beyond belief. He can't compare himself with the firefighters hours, days of digging through the trenches, under, and over the miles of debris in an effort to find a single survivor. He was plastered all over the TV screen, with his little white hankie over his mouth walking the PERIMETER. That is nowhere near the same.

I will say that on the surface, he brought the entire city of New York together, as they were no longer separated by boroughs, racially divided city blocks, or ethnic differences. On this day, they were all New Yorkers. His words of strength and courage were soothing and comforting to a city in utter shock, disbelief, and disarray. In his words, "Tomorrow New York is going to be here," he said. "And we're going to rebuild, and we're going to be stronger than we were before."

However, I would encourage anyone who is disillusioned by the facade of Giuliani being this big 9/11 hero to read Wayne Barrett and Dan Collins' "[Grand Illusion](#)" which successfully demolishes any perception of his claim to have helped with disaster recovery or preparedness in any way either prior or post 9/11.

While Giuliani was about to begin his nationwide tour as "the man who saved New York," thousands of cash-strapped policeman, firemen, and city workers engrossed with the burden of cleaning up at the World Trade Center were developing cancers and infectious respiratory ailments like the "WTC cough." This is the skeleton lurking in the closet of Giuliani's 9/11 hero image. While the task of cleaning up the Pentagon was turned over to federal agencies like OSHA, who immediately closed off the site and made it a requirement that every relief worker wear hazmat suits at all times, the WTC cleanup was, for whatever reason, handed to Giuliani. The mayor was more focused on keeping his promise to the city of reopening downtown in no time, and less on the well-being of the workers. According to [a memo](#) to the city's Department Of design and Construction (DDC), "Project management appears to only address safety issues when convenient for the schedule of the project." Meaning that he was so concerned with impressing the entire country with how fast he could turn things around that he sacrificed the overall protection and health of the workers who deserved it most.

Respiratory masks were mandatory, but instead of making it a requirement, this macho attitude began to spread across the site. Even Giuliani was seen at times walking around without a mask. By that October, it was estimated that masks were only being worn 29% of the time by the workers. Giuliani proclaimed that there were "no significant problems" with the air at the World Trade Center, but unfortunately, this was far from the truth. The site was an extremely contaminated, deadly toxic area that should have been sealed off and proper precautions should have been enforced. This space was full of everything from benzene, to asbestos and PCBs to dioxin (which is the active ingredient in agent orange). In the aftermath of the cleanup, police and firefighters have reported an abundance of serious illnesses. They ranged from respiratory ailments such as sarcoidosis, leukemia, and lymphoma, other cancers and immune system problems.

According to David Worby, an attorney representing thousands of cleanup workers in a class-action lawsuit against the city, "Giuliani wears 9/11 like a badge of honor, but he screwed up badly." In a surprising move, Giuliani actually wrote a letter to Congress to pass a law capping the city's liability at 350 million dollars. I don't know what his rationale could possibly be in doing this, but I do think that he has a lot of explaining to do, most of all to the people of New York.

I am in no way saying that this was done on purpose. I'm sure he didn't know that the air at the World Trade Center was poisonous. Every gut instinct of mine tells me that this was not his intention but yet the consequence of a thick, bull-headed, limelight craving man who got a little too big for his britches. That's why we let the people who are qualified to do their particular job, actually complete their task in their area of expertise. We don't pretend to know something that we don't just because the spotlight is on us, especially not when dealing with people's lives. The fact of the matter is this, Giuliani should not have taken over the cleanup and allowed the more experienced federal agencies to run the show. He could have

still been involved, it was still his city, but he got in way over his head. Sitting on top of brick piles for the cameras and instructing everyone in a very commanding way was definitely good for morale. It showed that he had everything under control. The problem is, it should have been just a show. The actual work should have been left to the experts. They would have surely put safety before expediency, and taken the proper measures to ensure the well-being of our heroes.

It is a pointless contradiction to praise them for their heroic efforts if you do nothing to prevent them from injury and harm. Being responsible for putting our heroes in harm's way is the work of the Bush administration, and unfortunately, Giuliani has followed in line.

In describing his statements, deputy fire chief Jimmy Riches, who spent months digging for his firefighter son said, "He is such a liar, because the only time he was down there was for photo ops with celebrities, with politicians, with diplomats....On 9/11 all he did was run. He got that soot on him, and I don't think he's taken a shower since."

Harold Schaitberger, president of the International Association of Fire Fighters, said he doubted Giuliani's story. "I think he was simply showing what his true character is -- a self-absorbed, self-deluded promoter who got caught and is now just simply trying to backtrack," Schaitberger said.

John Edwards' campaign manager David Bonior said in a statement, "Evidently, Rudy Giuliani has taken a break from reality. It is outrageous for Giuliani to suggest, in any way, shape or form, that he did more at ground zero or spent more time there than the brave first responders who worked tirelessly around the clock for many months during the rescue and recovery operation."

"It seems that Giuliani is determined to take every opportunity to exploit the memory of 9/11 for political gain, rather than honor the incredible sacrifices of our first responders," John Edwards added. "Enough is enough. Mayor Giuliani should start answering the serious questions of why firefighters and other first responders didn't have proper equipment and support."

I couldn't agree more.

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