



For the media, Bloomberg's racial insensitivity in defense of liberalism is no vice

By Noah Rothman

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“What if a Republican had said it?”

That acid test is too rarely applied by editors in the nation's newsrooms. The latest example of the insidious double standard that characterizes how the press reports on elite members of the political class emerged out of Colorado this month. There, former three-term New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg let loose a volley of unvarnished thoughts on a number of issues, including his crusade to force the nation's legislatures to pass stricter gun control laws.

Bloomberg's comments on the nature of gun violence in America were strikingly devoid of political correctness. They would have raised a thousand eyebrows if they were made in support of a cause dearer to conservative hearts.

“Bloomberg claimed that 95 percent of murders fall into a specific category: male, minority and between the ages of 15 and 25,” [The Aspen Times reported](#). “Cities need to get guns out of this group's hands and keep them alive, he said.”

“These kids think they're going to get killed anyway because all their friends are getting killed,” Bloomberg said. “They just don't have any long-term focus or anything. It's a joke to have a gun. It's a joke to pull a trigger.”

He's not wrong about the primary demographic responsible for urban gun violence, but the implication that young minority males should be kept from purchasing guns is not only constitutionally dubious but inherently racially insensitive. This is the kind of collective punishment that Bloomberg doled out as mayor, and it resulted in the ascension of a successor who is nakedly contemptuous of law enforcement.

The media is now confronted with the moral conundrum associated with being forced to frame a pro-gun control champion as both racially unenlightened and hostile toward the Bill of Rights.

Fortunately for the press, Bloomberg has relieved them of their responsibility to report on this inconvenient episode.

“...Bloomberg, who founded the massive Bloomberg L.P. media empire, has asked both the Aspen Institute and GrassRoots TV, the company that filmed the event, to refrain from broadcasting footage of the talk, according to *The Aspen Times*,” [The Daily Caller’s Chuck Ross reported](#).

The Aspen Institute, which regularly hosts movers’ and shakers’ policy talks, accommodated Bloomberg’s request.

“We basically honor the wishes of our speakers and Mayor Bloomberg preferred that we not use the video for broadcast,” Jim Spiegelman, chief external affairs officer for the Aspen Institute told *The Aspen Times*. “He did not give a reason nor did we have any reason to ask for one. We often feature speakers who prefer that their presentations not be videotaped.”

GrassRoots TV executive director Jim Masters was not necessarily pleased with the request — which he called “frustrating” — but will still comply.

This manner of self-censorship should rile reporters, particularly when the comments being shielded from public scrutiny are of self-evident news value. But nearly two weeks after this event, few outside of the conservative press have called on The Aspen Institute to release this footage. In fact, beyond conservative sites like *The Daily Caller*, [Townhall](#), and [Breitbart](#), the majority of media outlets have not even bothered to report on Bloomberg’s comments as reported by *The Aspen Times*.

Perhaps Bloomberg’s comments are most troubling for liberal proponents of stricter gun laws because they expose the fact that the racial history of gun control efforts is still with us.

“Racism created gun control in America,” [the Cato Institute’s David Rittgers wrote](#) in 2010. “Confronted with the prospect of armed freedmen who could stand up for their rights, states across the South instituted gun-control regimes that took away the ability of blacks to defend themselves against the depravity of the Klan.”

Racial anxiety is no longer a driving force for politicians who back stricter gun laws, but the broad ethnic brush with which Bloomberg tarred an entire demographic comes uncomfortably close to the logic that characterized policy making in that lamentable period of American history. At the very least, Bloomberg’s comments would inspire hours of scolding in venues like MSNBC if they had been uttered by a Republican. Fortunately for Bloomberg, his heavy hand has prevented the release of the footage of his comments and the mainstream press has conveniently thrown their arms up in impotence.

And, with that, this episode will pass and be forgotten.