



Tucker Carlson's Australia Rant Highlights Weakness of American Exceptionalism

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A recent segment by Fox News host Tucker Carlson has gone viral, after he claimed that Australians have “no freedom.” The statement was made in regards to a story on gun control, in which Carlson proposed that taking guns away from law abiding citizens was “childish.”

Moments later his co-host brought up Australian gun reform as a model for the U.S., saying they have no guns (which is false – Australians can own certain types of firearms, laws are just more restrictive). Carlson then replied that, “They also have no freedom, you can go to prison for expressing unpopular views in Australia and people do. And in Western Europe by the way and in Canada. Nobody ever says that.”

Indeed, nobody ever does say that. Probably because it is factually incorrect and an incredibly myopic and distorted view of the rest of the world. Now I realize that Carlson, who is somehow employed to give people information, doesn't live his life by inconvenient facts. But just for fun let's throw some out there.

Australians have never gone to prison for expressing unpopular views (or even hateful views). They do have a law against racial discrimination. Like most laws in developed nations this includes provisions like access to equal employment, equal access to housing, freedom of movement in public spaces and freedom from harassment. The act also has clauses which exempt certain aspects of society from the law, such as the arts, academic work and reporting.

But facts are so boring when you could just make meaningless sweeping statements that are blindly patriotic.

I use the term blindly patriotic because the U.S. no longer has the moral platform in which to lecture the rest of the developed world about “freedom.” According to Reporters Without Borders 2015 Press Freedom Index, the U.S. ranked #49 out of 180 countries when it comes to press freedoms. That puts it lower than Niger, Burkina Faso and Australia – yes, that's right. In fact, Australia ranks in at #25 on the index.

Canada, which Tucker Carlson also implies has limited freedom, comes in above both nations at #8 in press freedom. It's also worth noting that all of Western Europe (with the exception of Italy) also beats out the U.S. in the same field.

But hey, the U.S. has more civic freedoms, right?

Well, not quite. In fact, The Human Freedom Index, co-authored by the Cato Institute, the Liberales Institut at the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom and the Fraser Institute, measuring personal, civic and economic freedom, shows that Carlson might want to tone down his rhetoric. That's because while Australia ranks in at #7 on the human freedom index, just behind Canada, the U.S. doesn't even make the top ten. In fact, the U.S. ranked in at #20.

But what about developmental aid? Because at the very least we're the ones charged with helping a myriad of developing nations, right? Well, according to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) the EU actually outranks the U.S. in terms of developmental aid given. And not just by a little bit, but by nearly three times as much.

Perhaps this is why Carlson's statements raise so much ire from the international press. And this is not to say that the U.S. is a terrible place to live. It still outranks most countries on Earth. However when America is compared to its global economic and developmental peers, America is no longer the shining face of liberty and freedom.

So maybe it's time to stop acting as though comparing the U.S. to other nations is an insult. The U.S. isn't the only bastion of freedom and happiness in the world. And by treating it as such, pundits and policy makers are actually limiting the options of the American public. Why shouldn't we copy other nations successful policies? Why shouldn't we consider Australia's gun control reforms?

Because when we define mass shooting in the same way as mass murder (meaning four or more shot with no cooling off period) we see that the U.S. has had 994 in 1,004 days, nearly one every single day. Australia hasn't had another mass shooting since 1996 when they reformed gun access. So is it really an insult to say we should sit up and take notice?

These days we live in a global community that no longer has room for the farce of American exceptionalism. Thoughtfully considering the policies of our worldwide peers should not be met with combative derision, but with an open mind that is set on solving some of the most serious and deadly issues facing the American public today.