

Who Are You Kidding?

The Democratic Party and the Joe Biden Fiasco

Gabriel Kuhn

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The accusations against the projected Democratic Party presidential nominee, Joe Biden, trouble and confuse U.S. liberals. As a result, they say surprising and, at times, outrageous things. I suppose this is the consequence of deeming Joe Biden to be the most likely candidate to oust Donald Trump from office, something so important that you're ready to sacrifice both reason and compassion.

We are told that this is a "messy affair." If that means that any accusation of sexual misconduct is messy without witnesses or independent evidence, it is but a truism. If it means that the Joe Biden situation in particular is messy, it is false.

I am neither a U.S. citizen nor resident. I lived in the country for several years and received some of my formal education there, but I haven't been allowed to visit since 2005. I follow the political developments in a manner that anyone with political interest is forced to do, no matter where they live, because what happens in the U.S. is highly relevant for us all. But, emotionally, I feel rather detached at this point and the ins and outs of U.S. realpolitik are of little concern to me. Maybe that is why the Biden affair doesn't look particularly messy to me at all but rather clear-cut. What follows is a short sketch of what it looks like to me from the safe distance of northern Europe.

If Joe Biden did what Tara Reade accuses him of, anyone who doesn't share the Trumpian notion of personal morals being nothing but inconvenient baggage on the way to personal success would have to consider him unfit to occupy the highest public office in the country. As, in all likelihood, no one will ever know for sure what happened between Tara Reade and Joe Biden except for Tara Reade and Joe Biden, it means that everyone endorsing him, campaigning for him, and joining his team must give him the benefit of the doubt. Sadly, the script has been all too familiar: First, you remain silent and hope that the accusation will just go away. When it doesn't, you deploy longtime allies as character witnesses: "Joe Biden? Can't be!" Then you say loud and clear, but without providing any explanation, that you didn't do it. If you're a liberal, you might have learned to add some lip service, emphasizing the accuser's right to "be heard" or to "speak her truth" – all the while missing the irony that these generous concessions are entirely meaningless when you've already called the accuser a liar. Regardless, if the accusation doesn't go away at this point, you sulk.

The fact that it is hypocritical of conservative pundits to call Joe Biden and his supporters hypocrites doesn't change the fact that they are. Given the reactions of prominent Democrats to similar accusations of political opponents, they have exactly two options in this case if they want to maintain at least some level of integrity. The first is to give the benefit of the doubt to Tara Reade, not Joe Biden. The second is to concede that matters such as these are messier than what they made them out to be under different circumstances. I have not seen much of either in Democratic Party ranks, and none in the "establishment." Instead, we are served a mixture of denial, hand-wringing, and verbiage.

Meanwhile, the public doesn't even get to hear the least it deserves. We know that something out of the ordinary must have happened during Tara Reade's spell at Biden's office, otherwise she wouldn't have disappeared at short notice. If the reason wasn't the one she claims it was, which one was it? To declare without end that no one among Biden's staff was aware of anything related to this is laughable and no better than what we are used to hearing from Trump circles. By not offering its own version of the story, the Biden camp sends one message only: "Please, *please*, let us move on to other things!" Hardly satisfying for a party that wants us to believe that it can do so much better for America than the vicious clown in office now.

In a *New York Times* piece titled "I believe Tara Reade. I'm Voting for Joe Biden Anyway", Linda Hirshman conveyed a simple message: Like it or not, Joe Biden will be the Democratic nominee, he is better than Donald Trump, and so we have no choice but vote for him, no matter what happened to Tara Reade. I think there are good reasons to disagree with this conclusion, but at least it is honest and coherent. Yet, it doesn't resolve what might be the most disturbing political aspect of this sad affair, namely the Democratic Party's apparent belief that their best shot at replacing the most ludicrous president in U.S. history is to field a 77-year old white Washington veteran with – to say the least – a dubious relationship with both women and the truth. Really? This is the best you can do? In that case, no matter the outcome of the next presidential elections, you have already lost.

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