

The Assassination of Osama Bin Laden: Justice or Vengeance.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pgkldnOFvfE&feature=channel_video_title

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Okay...so I don't know if any one you have heard...but Osama Bin Laden is dead. Of course I'm kidding because if you haven't heard you must live on another planet. How did you hear about? When did you hear about it? I think its one of those things that will go down in history books as "Where were you when..." Right?

For me, I was washing dishes when a friend called me and told me to turn on the TV and then hung up. And this is what I heard the President say:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K8j8LpwDo7Q>

And I have to be honest, my first reaction was like most everyone: Relief. I mean how is it not a good thing that the people of this earth will never have to hear from bastard again? But as I continued with my dishes, something was bothering me. And NOT because I have a soft spot in my heart for monsters like [Osama Bin Laden](#), but because the President used the term "*Justice*."

Is that was this was? *Justice*? I mean I was with him right up until that point and then...he lost me. And to be honest, I did a slow burn on it because the way I've always defined *justice* is with a capital "J" as in righteous judgment of crimes, not assassination.

And that's what this seems to be, right? I mean, I think its fair, based on the available evidence, to conclude that this was an assassination mission. Now, is that the same thing as justice? Is it to you? I mean, did you get snagged by that? I did. And I want to tread very lightly here because I don't, in any way, want to dishonor the legacy of pain and suffering this grotesque of a man left in his wake. Because like most Americans, I still feel the pain of [911](#). This is a pain that will never go away, for any of us. And for those who lost loved ones, it is a pain that none of us who did not lose people on that day can even begin to understand. And to those people, my heart is eternally with you and my sympathies forever at your side.

But I'm still left with a question: was this justice? Or was it an assassination? Is it possible for them to be the same thing? I mean, maybe in the movie version it is. But here, in the 3-Dimensional human world, where these kinds of distinctions define our moral character, it's much more complicated. Because in my mind, justice and assassination are not the same things. And so, without thinking too much, I put out a statement on my Facebook page saying exactly that. That I want to remind everyone that vengeance and justice is not the same thing. And quite honestly, I didn't expect the reaction I got, but man, within five minutes I had 50 of the angriest comments I'd ever gotten. And while I can probably be accused of bad timing, I don't think I'm wrong here. I mean, would [Martin Luther King](#) call this justice? Would [Mahatma Gandhi](#) call this justice? I don't think so. And for very good reasons. Because they believed, as I do, that Justice, the kind moves the evolution of our species forward, cannot be accomplished with bullets. And when we confuse our appetite for revenge with our hunger for Justice, I think we lose something essential, something we need to actually build the better world we seek to live in, and that something is our own

humanity, which we lay it at the feet of our enemy who continues to attack us with our own vengeance, even in death.

But what do I mean by Justice? I mean, isn't it justice that a man who killed thousands of innocent people take a bullet to the eyeball? Does a man like Osama Bin Laden deserve a fair trial, if there even is such a thing possible for him? Does someone so seemingly inhuman deserve humane treatment?

For him, I say no. He deserves none of these things. But *here* is my point...I think we do. Those of us left to clean up the bloody mess of his inhumanity do deserve those things. Because I think Justice isn't something that we afford only to the guilty, it is something we give to ourselves.

And the process we go through to achieve it each and every time, defining it case by case by case, and insisting on the process for its own sake, imperfect as it is, is the wall of separation between us and the monsters of the world. But if we let our own blood lust, as justified as it may be, allow us to forsake our commitment to the process of achieving even an imperfect Justice, do we not foreclose on the possibility that some day we might actually perfect it?

Now I know there was no probably very little chance that [Osama Bin Laden](#) would have been taken to an international court because he would never allow himself to be taken alive. But that is exactly my point: [Osama Bin Laden](#) would rather die than face justice. Just like [Hitler](#) would rather die than face Justice. And that confirms what we already know - that these kinds of people are cowards.

That they hide behind violence and hatred and retribution because they do not possess the courage or the character to stand and be accountable to their actions. But it also confirms something else - the power of true Justice.

The power of justice to transform their violence and hatred into righteousness. For me, this, *this* is the moral high ground where we plant the flag of this country because it stands as a symbol of justice for all, for all, even our enemies... Because that's when it is hard... and that is when it really counts. And so when I see my fellow Americans dancing in the streets, wrapping themselves in the flag in the name of death, I can't help but feel they have plucked it from that higher ground and dragged it through the mud of our worst impulses.

And so, when the President of the United States calls an assassination, however justified we might think it is, when he calls that *justice*...shouldn't we be very quick to correct him? Because like I said, this is not the movie version of life on planet earth, this is the real thing, where we must measure words like *justice* very carefully. I mean, If you are satisfied with this result, then let's just be honest and call it what is: vengeance, revenge.

If that is enough for you, it's your right in this country to scream it from the rooftops. But if you want celebrate the death of another human being, any human being, no matter how vile, by waving an American flag - I cannot join you. Because it is not a celebration of justice. It is a celebration of revenge. And I think we are better than that.

[Abraham Lincoln](#) once said that America is the world's last great hope. I agree with him. That America is the world's last great hope...

Because if we don't remind the world that vengeance will never bring peace, who will? If America doesn't carry light of our highest potential into the darkness, who will?

If you and I will not stand up for the very best of what a human society can be...who will? Because I believe with all of my heart that only justice brings peace.

Only justice ends the cycle of violence and hatred. And only our moral commitment to the practical application of that justice, the process through which we define it each and every time for ourselves, for each other, and for the world. That process is the only thing that will set us free...

And on that day, we can truly celebrate because we will have made the Osama Bin Laden and his ilk of this world, the dinosaurs of a new and gentler age.

What do you think? How do you define justice?