

BILLBOARD COMPARING OBAMA TO AURORA KILLER PROVOKES WRATH AND DIVISIVENESS



The controversial Billboard in Idaho that compares President Barak Obama to Aurora Shooting Suspect James Holmes had been circulating widely through social media outlets like Facebook and Twitter and is facing a barrage of criticism and outrage from all and sundry – it has touched the national conscience in a huge way. NBCNews.com says that ever since the explosive ad debuted, it is drawing a conflicting and contrasting effect, similar to the feedback that it has received online. The billboard has been called “Offensive,” “Abhorrent,” and “Pathetic” by the residents of Caldwell, Idaho, who are aghast and appalled at the distasteful comparison. Elsewhere in the country comments have ranged from “repulsive,” “bypassing tasteless,” and “disgusting.” The Billboard was put up by the Ralph Smeed Foundation who are known for exploiting that space for expressing anti-Obama sentiments. However, even their supporters feel that this time they could have crossed the line. Justifying their actions, Maurice Clements, erstwhile Idaho lawmaker and Smeed protégé said, “We’re all outraged over that killing in Aurora, Colorado, but we’re not outraged over the boys killed in Afghanistan.” Perhaps, in the face of the relentless indignation, he said that all they were trying to do was make a point but consented that maybe it was poorly done. Clements went on to say that their intention was not to connect Obama to Holmes and say that like the latter, Obama too is a lunatic. Their intention, they say, was to show how differently society reacts to situations, in which innocent people die. The giant billboard on Franklin Road and North 21st Avenue has two images, of the suspected killer Holmes on side and the President on the other. Underneath their respective pictures the following message is written. “Kills 12 in a movie theater with assault rifle, everyone freaks out.” “Kills thousands with foreign policy, wins Nobel Peace Prize.” Fabiola G. Monrroy wrote in Facebook, “This billboard is offensive to all those lives lost and affected by the shooting. Just pathetic, even if this is their expression of the 1st amendment.” Canyon County Democratic Party communications director Judy Ferro said that she was sure that even the late Ralph Smeed, the founder of the foundation who put up the billboard, would have found it offensive and would have objected to it. “There’s no factual basis to it at all ... it’s just offensive,” she clarified. However, some have argued that the comparison even though it is provocative and insensitive, has some element of truth in it. The US is a free country and those who expressed, their opinion have right to express it, they say. But even those who are not in favor of Obama have expressed their aversion for the ad. “[It’s] way over the line, and I am not an Obama supporter,” said Lynn Davis Hathaway. The comparison probably stems from the fact that the US foreign policy, and by the foundation’s extension, Obama’s policy, as a consequence of which innumerable civilians have lost their lives in Libya, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia, Yemen and Iraq. Many believe that equating President Obama’s foreign policies, which have generally been appreciated and beneficial to the country, with the wicked, shameful and contemptible acts of James Holmes is an insult to the memories of the 12 who lost their lives and to those who were wounded. To treat one of the most despicable and abhorrent acts of violence in US history with such flippancy and impertinence is unforgivable and calls for severe condemnation. Analysts believe that if it was the ad’s intention to employ scare tactics to get people to vote for Romney than it could have had the reverse effect and may have actually garnered sympathy with voters who will believe that Obama is being wrongly pilloried for even the good that he does and that there could be reasons other than quality and competence, that makes the anti-Obama campaigners behave in such a crude, insensitive and unsophisticated manner.