



The GOP's Decline, One Snub at a Time.

Description

In the long history of human gestures, the handshake stands as one of the simplest and most profound. It's a symbol of respect, a sign of mutual recognition, a way of saying, "I see you, and I acknowledge your existence." • In 1945, General Douglas MacArthur shook Emperor Hirohito's hand. Think about that for a second. This was the man who had just surrendered Japan after a devastating war, a man whose nation had bombed Pearl Harbor, waged brutal campaigns, and clung to a divine image of its ruler. And yet, MacArthur—a towering figure of American strength—extended his hand. It wasn't just a handshake; it was a statement.

Fast forward nearly eighty years, and we find ourselves in the Senate chambers, watching a moment that should've been about celebration and civic pride. Senator Katie Britt, Alabama's newest Senator, was being sworn in. Her husband, Wesley Britt, was there to support her, to cheer her on, and to, apparently, make a point. When Vice President Kamala Harris—our nation's first female vice president, no less—extended her hand in a gesture of goodwill, Wesley refused to shake it. Refused. In a move so petty it might as well have been ripped from the script of a reality show reunion special, he left her standing there, hand outstretched.

Now, let's not pretend this was anything other than what it was: an embarrassingly childish snub masquerading as a moral stand. The moment was caught on camera, of course, because that's how these things work in the age of performative politics. Within hours, the internet lit up with commentary, some calling him brave, others pointing out the obvious: it was tacky, classless, and the kind of thing you'd expect from a kid sulking after losing a game of Monopoly.

But let's not stop at tacky. Let's unpack what this really says about the current state of the Republican Party. Once upon a time, this was a party of gravitas, of big ideas and even bigger personalities. Sure, you didn't have to agree with them, but you couldn't deny their ability to command respect. Eisenhower built highways and led armies. Reagan negotiated with the Soviets and perfected the art of the dignified quip. Even George W. Bush, for all his malapropisms, knew when to rise above the fray.

Today? The GOP has become a party obsessed with the optics of defiance. It's not about policy or principles anymore; it's about sticking it to the libs, no matter how small or stupid the act might be. Wesley Britt didn't shake Kamala Harris's hand because! why? Because she's a Democrat? Because Fox News might've run a segment criticizing him if he had? Because he thought refusing to engage in the simplest form of human interaction made him look strong? If that's what strength looks like, then I'd hate to see their definition of leadership.

And let's not ignore the irony here. Republicans like to talk about the importance of respect—respect for tradition, respect for authority, respect for the institutions that make America great. But when given the opportunity to show a little of that respect themselves, they fold like a cheap card table. Refusing to shake the hand of the Vice President of the United States isn't a brave act of protest. It's petulant. It's small. It's the kind of move that screams, "I'm mad, but I can't articulate why, so here's a pointless gesture instead."•

When did the Republican Party become so pathetic that, when your defeated opponent offers their hand in a sign of respect and acknowledgment of your victory, you refuse to shake it? Not because it means anything, but because you think it makes you look strong. Spoiler alert: it doesn't. It makes you look fragile, like someone too consumed by bitterness to perform the smallest act of grace.

We're a long way from Tokyo in 1945. But maybe it's time we revisit that moment, that photograph of MacArthur and Hirohito standing side by side. Because it's not just a reminder of what America once was. It's a challenge. A challenge to all of us—Republican, Democrat, or otherwise—to rise above the petty and the performative. To reach out a hand, even when it's hard, especially when it's hard. And to remember that true strength isn't about who you refuse to touch. It's about who you're willing to embrace.

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