

Giuliani has descended into embarrassing buffoonery

| Opinion

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After 9/11, then New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani, was a ubiquitous presence on television, a leader who understood that candor and openness were crucial in soothing a deeply rattled America. That Giuliani has disappeared, says Carl Golden, an analyst with the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy at Stockton University. Above, Giuliani at a news conference at the Republican National Committee headquarters Thursday (AP Photo/Jacquelyn Martin) AP

By Star-Ledger Guest Columnist

By Carl Golden

On Sept. 11, 2001, New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani vaulted into the national consciousness as “America’s Mayor.”

His response to the worst terrorist attack to strike the nation since Pearl Harbor and the first mass casualty assault by a foreign power on the continental United States guaranteed his place in history.

He stood in the rubble of the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center in lower Manhattan as a calming presence reassuring a fear-stricken nation that order would be restored and maintained, law enforcement and government leaders were up to the challenge and his city would survive.

Giuliani was a ubiquitous presence on television, a leader who understood that candor and openness were crucial in soothing a deeply rattled America.

This was no time for propaganda, offering a false narrative or striving to convince Americans that the scenes playing out before them on television were exaggerated.

He racked up more television face time than most politicians (aside from presidents) receive in a lifetime. Time magazine crowned him its "Person of the Year" for 2001.

The instant consensus: This guy has a future.

Alas, in November of 2020, that future has descended into embarrassing buffoonery.

For someone who earned the public trust and admiration for his words and deeds in dealing with unimaginable devastation 19 years ago, Giuliani has become a peddler of conspiracy theories, outlandish allegations and implausible scenarios.

In the service of President Trump, "America's Mayor" has become a figure of ridicule and derision, the butt of jokes, eye-rolling and smirks in reaction to his claims that Trump was cheated out of a second term by an openly hostile media in league with Democratic Party evildoers to seize control of the U.S. government and impose a socialist dictatorship.

He described Democrat Joe Biden's victory as the result of widespread fraud in virtually all phases of the process.

Despite a blizzard of lawsuits filed by the Trump campaign seeking to invalidate the election results, only one minor one succeeded.

Trump has refused to concede and continues to steadfastly maintain that had he received a fair shuffle rather than bottom deck dealing, he'd enter his second term in January.

With each passing day, his insistence that he won the election becomes more delusional, an act of mass denial by the president and his allies.

Trump is petulant and petty, refusing to meet with Biden's transition team or share sensitive security material. Vindictiveness has taken over as he purges cabinet officers and senior officials who he believes served him poorly or were members of the so-called "deep state" committed to his destruction.

As the chief of the president's legal team, Giuliani has stoked Trump's paranoia, predicting successful litigation and humiliation of his opponents.

It is time for the return of "America's Mayor."

Giuliani should revert to his role of 9/11, be as straightforward and candid with the president as he was with the American people 19 years ago. It is time for brutal honesty, as grievous and personally painful as it may be.

He should cease feeding Trump's fantasy and douse the flames of resentment with the cold water of reality --- that the election was legitimate, allegations of massive fraud are factually flawed and in January Biden will become the leader of the Free World.

The qualities Giuliani once displayed so vividly and effectively may have been lost with the passage of time, their disappearance hastened by a dramatically altered political environment and his irresistible urge to regain and remain relevant.

It is, though, within his power and grasp to reach back in time and restore at least some of the inner strength which saw him through the darkness of 9/11.

With tens of thousands of New Jerseyans streaming into the city each day to work and tens of thousands more pumping billions of dollars into the city's economy --- shopping, dining and entertainment --- New York mayors have always been a part of the state's extended political family.

Giuliani was no different and the trauma of 9/11 strengthened those bonds even more.

Those of us on this side of the Hudson who watched in fears and tears as black smoke rose skyward from Ground Zero, memories remain graphic, etched into our lives forever.

One of those is Giuliani as the rock we looked to for solace, for hope, for comfort and for leadership.

We are saddened by what he's become and we long to see "America's Mayor" once again.

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