Eulogies Remind Us of Our Nation’s Resilience

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Frank Bruni of the New York Times offers a poignant observation about responses to the passing of President George H. W. Bush: “We like our villains without redemption and our heroes without blemish. What happened to shades of gray?”

I agree with Bruni and admit to being moved deeply listening to the eulogies of President George H. W. Bush on Monday at the capitol rotunda. That those eulogies were delivered by people with whom I have significant political disagreements matters not one whit. Nor is it noteworthy or relevant that H. W. Bush was not a flawless leader. What I heard were words such as these describing Bush's life and service to the country: kind, humble, gracious, modest, civil, gentle, loving, graceful, caring, and unselfish.

When our current President passes from this earth, it is hard to imagine these same words being uttered with sincerity and honesty. There is nothing Trump can do to change this. He cannot deliver his own eulogy; he cannot accuse eulogizers of lying or cast what they say as fake news.

Monday’s celebration of the 41st President, a rhetorical ritual that binds us together, places the Trump presidency in appropriate perspective. It is a reminder that our nation and democracy are far more resilient, indelible and enduring than the despicable actions of any one leader at one moment in history.

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