

H A R L A N   R I C H A R D S

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Who Deserves the Nobel Peace Prize?

When I heard that the European Union (EU) was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for 2012, I was surprised. I had to stop and think about it. Why would the committee make that decision? Their official reason was that the EU was instrumental in stopping the violence and bloodshed in Europe since its inception in the aftermath of World War II. I guess the genocide and other horrific crimes committed in Serbia and Croatia when Yugoslavia dissolved don't count.

It reminds me of when they gave the prize to Obama after he was elected president - perhaps hoping that the award would spur Mr. Obama to end the two wars the U.S. was fighting more quickly. It doesn't look like it had any impact on Obama's timetable and I don't think it's going to have much impact on what the EU does. To me, it's a waste of what once was a prestigious award. I think that making calculated, politically motivated decisions to further an agenda cheapens the award. It transforms the committee from one that recognizes efforts of individuals to one that attempts to control future actions and outcomes.

I'd like to make my own nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize: Malala Yousufzai, the 14 year-old Pakistani girl who was gunned down in the school bus on her way home. Can you imagine how much courage that young girl has to speak out in a misogynistic society that many times treats its women as little better than cattle? What kind of monster would stop a school bus, board it and attempt to execute a young girl? I'm sure he thought he succeeded when he shot her in the head and throat and it must be causing a lot of consternation in the taliban to know that she survived the assassination attempt.

I would speculate that there are lots of other people toiling in obscurity toward peace and justice for everyone. Many powerless people risk their lives every day to make the world a better place for everyone. These are the people who should get the Nobel Peace Prize. It should not be based on a blatant attempt to sway future political events by an obscure Norwegian committee that has no right to do so.