



Written by [Steve Byas](#) on January 24, 2015

Accusations of Ben Carson Plagiarism Obscure Real Issues

"I apologize, and I am working with my editors to rectify the situation," said expected GOP presidential candidate Dr. Ben Carson in a January 8 Facebook post reported by various media outlets. Carson evidently failed to give a proper source citation in his recent book, *America the Beautiful: Rediscovering What Made This Nation Great*.



Carson's publisher, Zondervan, a Christian book company owned by HarperCollins, said, "It has become apparent that further source citation is appropriate in Dr. Carson's *America the Beautiful*."

Plagiarism is usually defined as taking someone else's words and presenting them as one's own words. It is not surprising that Carson, a retired surgeon, is now being looked at critically, considering that he is now running fourth in a Huff Post Pollster survey, behind 2012 Republican nominee Mitt Romney (18.8 percent), former Florida Governor Jeb Bush (10.5 percent), and New Jersey Governor Chris Christie (8.5 percent). With 7 percent, Carson edged out former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee and Senator Rand Paul. Several other possible candidates, including Senators Ted Cruz and Marco Rubio, were close behind.

Allegations of plagiarism pushed then-Senator Joe Biden out of a presidential bid in 1987. Biden had taken a speech by British Labor Party politician Neil Kinnock, in which Kinnock claimed he was the first in a "thousand generations" of his family to go to college, and basically substituted himself as the first of his family in a "thousand generations" to enter an institution of higher education. Biden's problem was compounded when it was alleged that he had committed plagiarism while in law school. Still, Biden remained in the Senate, and even made another presidential effort in 2008, losing the Democratic Party nod to fellow Senator Barack Obama. But, Obama apparently considered Biden's plagiarism problems as unimportant, making him his running-mate.

In comparing the two accusations of plagiarism, Biden's are clearly much more egregious. Would Carson be given a pass by the media, considering that Biden's past was not an issue in 2008? Since Carson is a Republican, and is promoted as a conservative, that is not sure.

But Dr. Carson's views on government are much more important than whether he missed a citation in his book. Just what are his qualifications to serve as president, and what is his political philosophy? At this point, the answers are not entirely clear.

Carson retired in 2013 after a highly successful career as a neurosurgeon. In 1987 he became the first surgeon to successfully separate twins joined at the head. President George W. Bush awarded him a Medal of Freedom in 2008. Carson's name identification increased dramatically in 2013, after his 25-minute speech at the National Prayer Breakfast, when it appeared he was lecturing President Obama (seated a few feet away at the time) about government-run health care and the national debt. In his



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speech, which made him an overnight sensation among some conservatives, he decried political correctness, which he called “dangerous,” arguing that it is in opposition to the “founding principles” of the nation, especially “freedom of thought.”

Following the speech, many touted him as presidential timber for 2016. No doubt, Carson’s reputation as a renowned surgeon gave him credibility to discuss the healthcare law. In his speech, he offered his solution. He suggested that when a person is born, he or she should be given “a birth certificate, an electronic medical record, and a health saving account, to which money can be contributed, pretax from the time you are born, to the time you die. When you die, you can pass it on to your family members.”

It is also clear that Carson was seen as a potential candidate because of his race. Many Republicans are understandably desirous of making inroads with African-American voters, who overwhelmingly vote for Democrats. David Graham of *The Atlantic* said Carson compared to Herman Cain, but without the “personal skeletons.” Were the African-American vote to drop from its excess of 90 percent to somewhere around 70 percent in support of Democratic Party candidates, the Democrats would simply be unable to win a national race. Because of this known political fact, black political personalities who stray from a strict liberal, Democratic Party line face savage attacks from the Left. This has been demonstrated repeatedly, with Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas as a prime example. So often, Thomas and other conservative black Americans are considered “traitors” to their race for daring to be a conservative in politics.

Is Carson a conservative?

Some of his public statements can certainly lead one to conclude so; however, others have caused conservatives some concern. For example, Carson said in 1999 that he favored continuation of “affirmative action” (although he did want to rename it “compassionate action”), contending that he himself had benefitted from the policy.

Carson has written six best-selling books, and was sixth by Gallup on the list of the world’s most admired men. The son of a Seventh-day Adventist minister, he received a degree from Yale, and then his medical degree from Michigan Medical School. While his Seventh-day Adventist views are somewhat outside of what is considered mainstream evangelical Christianity, it is unlikely that Carson would have to contend with the difficult challenges among evangelicals faced by Mitt Romney with his Mormon religion.

Carson’s comment that semi-automatic guns are not appropriate in large cities raised concern among supporters of the Second Amendment. Despite this, Carson insists that he supports the right to keep and bear arms: “There’s a reason for the Second Amendment,” he has declared.

Perhaps even more troubling are Carson’s comments in the health care field, where he would have credibility to influence the public. In an 1996 interview with the web magazine *Mega Diversities*, Carson expressed opposition to the “entire concept of for profits for the insurance companies,” which he argued “makes absolutely no sense.” Instead, he contended, “The first thing we need to do is get rid of for-profit insurance companies.... We need to make the government responsible for catastrophic health care.” To pay for this, Carson suggested in 1992 that the program could be paid for by taking 10 to 15 percent of the profits from each health insurance company.

In 1992, Carson called for “national guidelines” to determine who did and did not receive certain medical treatments. “As our general population continues to age,” he explained, “we will find ourselves



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in a position of being able to keep most people alive” beyond their 100th birthday. But he was not so sure this should be done. Rather than putting these elderly patients in an intensive care unit, “poking and prodding them, operating and testing them,” Carson advocated allowing them “the dignity of dying in comfort, at home.” He conceded that such “decisions on who should be treated and who should not be treated would clearly require some national guidelines.”

But what is the constitutional basis for requiring “national guidelines”? What guidelines, specifically, would Dr. Carson advocate? And how would such guidelines — involving “who should be treated and who should not be treated,” and therefore ultimately who should live and who should die — be any different from the “death panels” that Sarah Palin and others warned were part of ObamaCare? Obviously conservatives, constitutionalists, and pro-lifers against the very concept of government interjecting itself into life-and-death healthcare decisions should ask Carson these very questions. And in general, all of us who support limited, constitutional government should diligently examine the record of Dr. Carson and all other potential presidential candidates as measured against the Constitution.

Photo of Dr. Ben Carson: AP Images



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