

CNN NewsNight with Abby Phillip

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10:06:42 p.m.

12 minutes and 47 seconds

MONTEL WILLIAMS: There are people who are trying to pigeonhole this as a leftist thing and a right thing and what we're really talking about — hear me, because I'm going to throw you when I say this, we're talking about a love torn child, a kid. This is probably his first real relationship. And somebody was disparaging the person that he loved. He sat on that building for 30 minutes before he took the shot. Why do you wait until the first word trans came up? Then he took the shot.

ABBY PHILLIP: You think he heard it? You could — he could hear it?

WILLIAMS: I think he could hear it. I think he also — I don't believe he was motivated politically. I think this was motivated emotionally. I think this was a emotionally stunted person who literally, when I say it this way, just hear me, tried to defend his significant other, not trying to defend some ideology.

PHILLIP: But although I do think there — I mean, there's clearly an ideological difference. That's why I played about what they said about the family. I mean, the ideological difference that he was reacting to wasn't just Charlie Kirk. It was also maybe his dad. I mean, his father was, according to him, MAGA. So, that conflict was there, clearly.

WILLIAMS: But this is a young man who's dating a person in transition. And I'm a conservative father and I question — let's say my daughter brought home the first guy that she brought home. I question the guy that he brought home — she brought home. Was the dad questioning him politically? Is this a political motivation or was this a psychological kind of thing?

NEERA TANDEN: I guess. I don't know that we'll ever get into fully the minds of what happened here, but it is really horrible that Charlie Kirk was murdered by this person.

WILLIAMS: Absolutely.

TANDEN: Like full stop, end of sentence, horrifying, and whether he had, there are plenty of people who have conflicts with their parents who don't murder people. And, you know, I just think like we should all just acknowledge that it was a horrifying, terrible thing and he deserves punishment for what he did because he took the life of a person and, you know, I just think it's a little complicated to look back and, you know, say he has a conflict with his father, lots of these things happen and they don't result in just the end of a life of a father who had children.

SCOTT JENNINGS: Guys, guys, the evidence here is overwhelming. He said, Charlie Kirk, I can't stand this hate anymore, I'm going to take him out. He — the testimony from and the statements of his family, he had become more left-wing. He etched the statements that are made by the left about Republicans and conservatives and Charlie Kirk fascist on the bullet casings.

WILLIAMS: He made a joke about it in his last text.

JENNINGS: Well, it doesn't sound like a joke to me because someone's dead and about to be buried.

WILLIAMS: Those are two different things. Those are two different things.

TANDEN: Well —

JENNINGS: So, it doesn't sound like a joke to me. So, I'm just telling you. There is an effort — there was an effort all weekend long on the left to try to make this guy sound like he was a conservative that failed. That was passed around all over the weekend. That has now failed. The evidence has now come out. He was motivated by hate. He was motivated by left-wing radicalism. He got mixed up with some trans ideology in his life. We'll learn more about that, I'm sure, when more evidence and testimony comes out. We are looking around the edges of this for something other than what's staring us in the face, left-wing radicalism got this kid, he went up to a roof and he murdered our friend, and that's what happened.

PHILLIP: Let me just say, I don't think that anybody is disputing — I mean, I'm certainly not disputing. It's written there that he had — Montel, I think it's clearly political. You can't take politics out of it. But I think the question is, you know, when you take that and then you extrapolate from that and you say, as Pam Bondi said, left-wing radicals killed Charlie Kirk, and then she says they will be held accountable, doesn't she have to actually produce evidence that there were other co-conspirators, that there was something organized rather than, first of all, saying that this is representative of all of the left-wing, which it is not, and then suggesting that there's going to be DOJ action against unsaid individuals?

BRIANNA LYMAN: Well, I think it's representative of a large part of the left and I say that because look at the reaction we have seen from the left. They are cheering, they are celebrating his death. You have outlets saying, Charlie Kirk shouldn't have died, but he said some pretty hateful things as if they're on some moral high ground to say that. That —

PHILLIP: But I wonder, have you seen any evidence of any prominent, mainstream Democrats doing what you just described, celebrating Charlie Kirk's death?

LYMAN: There's a Democratic state senator in Connecticut.

PHILLIP: Did anybody actually celebrating —

TANDEN: What was his name?

LYMAN: I probably can't think of the name. I saw it on Twitter yesterday.

PHILLIP: Okay. I know what you're talking, hold on. I know what you're talking about because I've seen it too. He did not. In fact, he started that tweet saying that Charlie Kirk should not have

been killed. So, have you have any evidence —

LYMAN: And then gave the caveat.

PHILLIP: — mainstream Democrat celebrating Charlie Kirk's murder?

LYMAN: It does not need to be a mainstream top dog Democrat when the majority of the comments online from the left have been celebratory or cheering on political murder

PHILLIP: The majority of the comments?

TANDEN : How do you know it's a majority?

LYMAN: A million likes on its tweet is a lot of people. That is not a fringe or outskirts.

TANDEN : There's, like, 7 billion people on social media today.

LYMAN: Yeah?

TANDEN: Half a million people —

PHILLIP: And about half the people — about half the people on social media.

LYMAN: That's a lot of people.

PHILLIP: About half the people on social media, by the way, are not even real people. So, I do think we have to kind of — the internet is not —

JENNINGS: But can I ask though? Everybody here acknowledges that there have been thousands upon thousands of people, ordinary people who have taken to social media to celebrate this, yes or no?

PHILLIP: I don't know about that.

TANDEN: You know, I —

JENNINGS: Abby!

LYMAN: I have high school friends who are.

PHILLIP: Hold on a second. Hold on.

TANDEN: I think it is horrible.

PHILLIP: I just think we should just — there's — we got to be factual about this, right?

JENNINGS: Yeah?

PHILLIP: I don't think you know the scope. I don't know the scope. But I do think that we have to distinguish between random people in the world and something that is a dominant issue.

JENNINGS: Why? Because —

PHILLIP: Because, well —

JENNINGS: — the person who shot Charlie Kirk was a random person in the world, was he not?

PHILLIP: Well, here's the thing. Here's the thing.

JENNINGS: That's the danger there.

PHILLIP: There have been — there have been —

JENNINGS: You dismissed the random people of the world. They have access to weapons

PHILLIP: — there have been —

JENNINGS: — and hateful motivations.

PHILLIP: — political assassinations in this country. There have been political assassinations in this country before, Scott. Wouldn't you agree?

JENNINGS: Of course.

PHILLIP: And they're all reprehensible. And in this country, do you believe that in those political assassinations in the 60s and the 70s and the 80s, assassination attempts, that there were no Americans who cheered that on? I think the question —

JENNINGS: I'm not asserting anything of the sort.

PHILLIP: — is whether or not — it's not whether or not it happens. The question is whether or not we need to place that at the very center of our political world right now and categorize half the people in the country according to those random people that we now just happen to see because of the internet.

(....)

10:17:49 p.m.

3 minutes and 3 seconds

WILLIAMS: Can we, for one second, understand that as we continue — Scott just got all angry,

got real mad, it's got to be this, got to be this, it's got to be this. Why can't we have a discussion about how long is it going to take for us to figure out a way to come back together?

JENNINGS: Yes. And, by the way, I am angry. Just to be clear —

PHILLIP: Can we just let him finish, Scott?

JENNINGS: — I am angry because I knew him.

PHILLIP: Scott, I'll let you talk in just a second. Go ahead.

WILLIAMS: Could we spend as much time figuring out how we bridge this and come back together again? You know, I used to have a note on my producer's desk when I did my show, I said, we don't belabor what happens. We try to figure out why it happens and come up with solutions. Right now, all we're doing is belaboring what happened over and over and over again. We're not going to sit down and try to figure out how do we stop it.

LYMAN: You got to go after left-wing terrorist. That's actually exactly the conversation we're having, is we're acknowledging there's a problem.

WILLIAMS: So, anybody who disagrees with you is a left-wing terrorist?

LYMAN: Absolutely not. But if they target a conservative and murder him in brutal fashion, he's probably a left wing terrorist.

TANDEN: [INAUDIBLE]

JENNINGS: Let me answer your question.

TANDEN: Yes, that person is a murderer. We can all acknowledge that.

JENNINGS: You said I'm — I'm angry. And I'm just telling — I am channeling the emotions of millions of conservatives who are angry. They knew Charlie. They loved Charlie. They viewed Charlie as a mainstream, conservative, Republican voice who talked about issues that millions of Americans believe. He also talked about his faith and he did it by going to college campuses, which are not normally hospitable to conservatives and offering his opponents a microphone to have what we always say —

WILLIAMS: In support of what? In support of what?

JENNINGS: Civil discourse.

WILLIAMS: Not only that, but support of the First Amendment.

JENNINGS: And guess what?

WILLIAMS: He made sure that people had an opportunity and to stand in a room and talk.

JENNINGS: And guess what? He was murdered trying to do what we always say, why don't we talk to each other? So, yes, there is — it's not even been a week. So, you're going to have to give us a little grace on being angry about somebody who did what you always say that we should do, let's talk, and he got killed.

WILLIAMS: And he got killed more than a week's grace over. So, two Michigan [sic] elected officials who were murdered, did we give — was it three weeks before we decided to say that there was something wrong with Speaker Pelosi's husband's being hit in the head with a hammer?

JENNINGS: By a homeless drug addict? I mean, it was terrible that that happened. This is not the same kind of case. This is, according to the local officials, as Elie just told us, a clear political motivation of a guy that a lot of us held dear, that a lot of us consider to be somebody who —

PHILLIP: First of all, hold on —

JENNINGS: — he was not an extremist. He was a mainstream voice.

PHILLIP: Pelosi's attacker may have been mentally ill, but he was also politically motivated. I also think — hold on.

TANDEN: And people made jokes —

PHILLIP: But also —

TANDEN: — all over the internet, including the President, including political leaders.

PHILLIP: But here's the thing, Scott and I think it's important to say this. I don't think anybody wants to take away the anger that people feel about Charlie Kirk's murder because I, that is completely justified. He was gunned down in a public sphere, literally a public sphere. He had two children. His family was there.

JENNINGS: It's awful.

PHILLIP: It's awful. And so, nobody is taking that away. But the question is, where do we go next?