

MUDSLINGING: Incivility in the Civil Arena

Whatever happened to the
marketplace of ideas?

Jerry Zimmerman

and

Michael Strayer

- **Marshall McLuhan was right: The medium is the message. The growth of the Internet offers instantaneous information, 24 hours a day; access to a continual audience that numbers in the tens of millions, and the ability to invade the privacy of citizens from all walks of life.**
- **In this din, we can no longer hear ourselves think. Many would argue we can no longer think at all. Political and public discourse has gone beyond the partisan to a level of irrational rhetoric filled with hate, venom, suspicion and fighting words. Meanwhile the American public amuses itself to death with a steady diet of gossip, celebrity worship and other diversions. When we don't know how to think and critically analyze, our freedom and rights as citizens are in jeopardy.**

“We Vote for Those Individuals who Best Reinforce our Hopes and Dreams, While at the Same Time Minimizing our fears.”

Theodore White, Journalist

**So America,
you want change?**



... just wait

“Do we truly believe that ALL red-state residents are ignorant racist fascist knuckle-dragging NASCAR-obsessed cousin-marrying road-kill-eating tobacco-juice-dribbling gun-fondling religious fanatic rednecks; or that ALL blue state residents are godless unpatriotic pierced-nose Volvo driving France-loving left-wing Communist latte-sucking tofu-chomping holistic-wacko neurotic vegan weenie perverts?” — Dave Barry

- Political discourse that reaches citizens through television is the major means by which citizens learn the rationales for opposing perspectives.
- Incivility in televised political disagreements has been shown to decrease trust in government, politicians and in the political process.

- DIANA C. MUTZ

American Political Science Review



Fallacy: An error in logic in which the premises given for the conclusion do not provide the need of support

- **Argumentum ad hominem:** *directed against a person rather than against his/her argument.*
- **Argumentum ad populum:** *an argument where appeal is made to emotions: loyalties, patriotism, prejudices, etc.*



Let me cure that for you.



Shamunism



COME AND TAKE IT



88% of Americans believe incivility is a national problem: What do they believe is the cause?

- Celebrities
- Television and movies
- Politicians
- TV and Radio talk show hosts
- Other: cell phones, texting, blogs, anonymous internet comments and bullying



LIVE



5:05 MT

GLENN BECK

HOST, "GLENN BECK PROGRAM"

MIDDLE EAST ENVOY GEORGE MITCHELL AL DET 2 TEX 5

Why are the loudest political voices coming from the most extreme sources?

- A conviction that they speak for the majority, their political party, for most Americans.
- A sense of insecurity – when self or belief system is threatened.
- Narcissism – an overwhelming belief that “they alone can lead us out of the wilderness.”
- Loud, hateful political rhetoric strengthens extremists by discouraging moderate voices.

Journal of Experimental Social Psychology,
Dale Miller and Kimberly Morrison



- “The war is not between fundamentalists and liberals, but between those who love Jesus Christ and those who hate him.” Jerry Falwell
- “Wing nuts exist in both parties, wherever anger and absolutism drive people to believe that their political opponents are their personal enemies.”
John Avlon - author of *Independent Nation: How Centrists Can Change American Politics*
- **Cognitive Dissonance:** an uncomfortable feeling caused by holding two contradictory ideas simultaneously – we have an innate drive to reduce dissonance by changing our attitudes by justifying or rationalizing them.

When we create an enemy that is so completely, so *mythically* evil that almost anything we do to him is not only justified, but good.

Sensory Reality *Lawrence LeShan* **Mythic Reality**

Rational Propaganda

- Different ideas and opinions are legitimate
- Forces of nature – God, religion, destiny – are not involved in disputes
- When differences are resolved – life will go on as usual
- All people act from pretty much the same motives
- We are all concerned with the causes of the problems we are trying to solve

Non-Rational Propaganda

- There are only those for or against us – we are absolutely right, they are absolutely wrong
- God and history is on our side – this is a moral question of good and evil
- If we win life will be better – if we lose life will be terrible
- They act from a wish for power – we act from reason, common decency and morality.
- We don't care what the causes are – we want outcomes – now!

Sensory Reality

Rational Propaganda

- We can talk with those we disagree with – negotiation is possible
- People are fundamentally the same

Mythic Reality

Non-Rational Propaganda

- They lie – we tell the truth – communication is not possible
- We are different – so different that when we engage in the same actions – they are good when we do them – they are evil when they do them



PROPAGANDA: information usually of a biased or misleading nature, used to promote or publicize a particular political cause or point of view.

There are two kinds of propaganda - rational propaganda in favor of action that is consonant with the enlightened self-interest of those who make it and those to whom it is addressed, and non-rational propaganda that is not consonant with anybody's enlightened self-interest, but is dictated by, and appeals to, passion. passions; the world, in consequence, is a place of misery.

Propaganda in favor of action that is consonant with enlightened self-interest appeals to reason by means of logical arguments based upon the best available evidence fully and honestly set forth.

Propaganda in favor of action dictated by the impulses that are below self-interest offers false, garbled or incomplete evidence, avoids logical argument and seeks to influence its victims by the mere repetition of catchwords, by the furious denunciation of foreign or domestic scapegoats, and by cunningly associating the lowest passions with the highest ideals.

Propaganda in a Democracy, Aldous Huxley

Wilshire
7000 W



BAMA-GARE

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Our beliefs and actions are reasonable or not depending upon our capacity to critically assess them. Only through free debate can such critical skills be developed and maintained: our self-development as reasonable persons, capable of critical assessments for belief and action. And if our beliefs and actions emerge from the critical assessment such debate involves, if they survive the struggle in the “marketplace of ideas”, then, and only then, will one be entitled to accept them as justified.

While it may be the best guarantee of truth or belief or rightness of action that we have, one must also allow that it is best only so far as our fallible judgment allows. And that fallibility means, of course, that the debate must be on-going.

On Liberty-John Stewart Mill



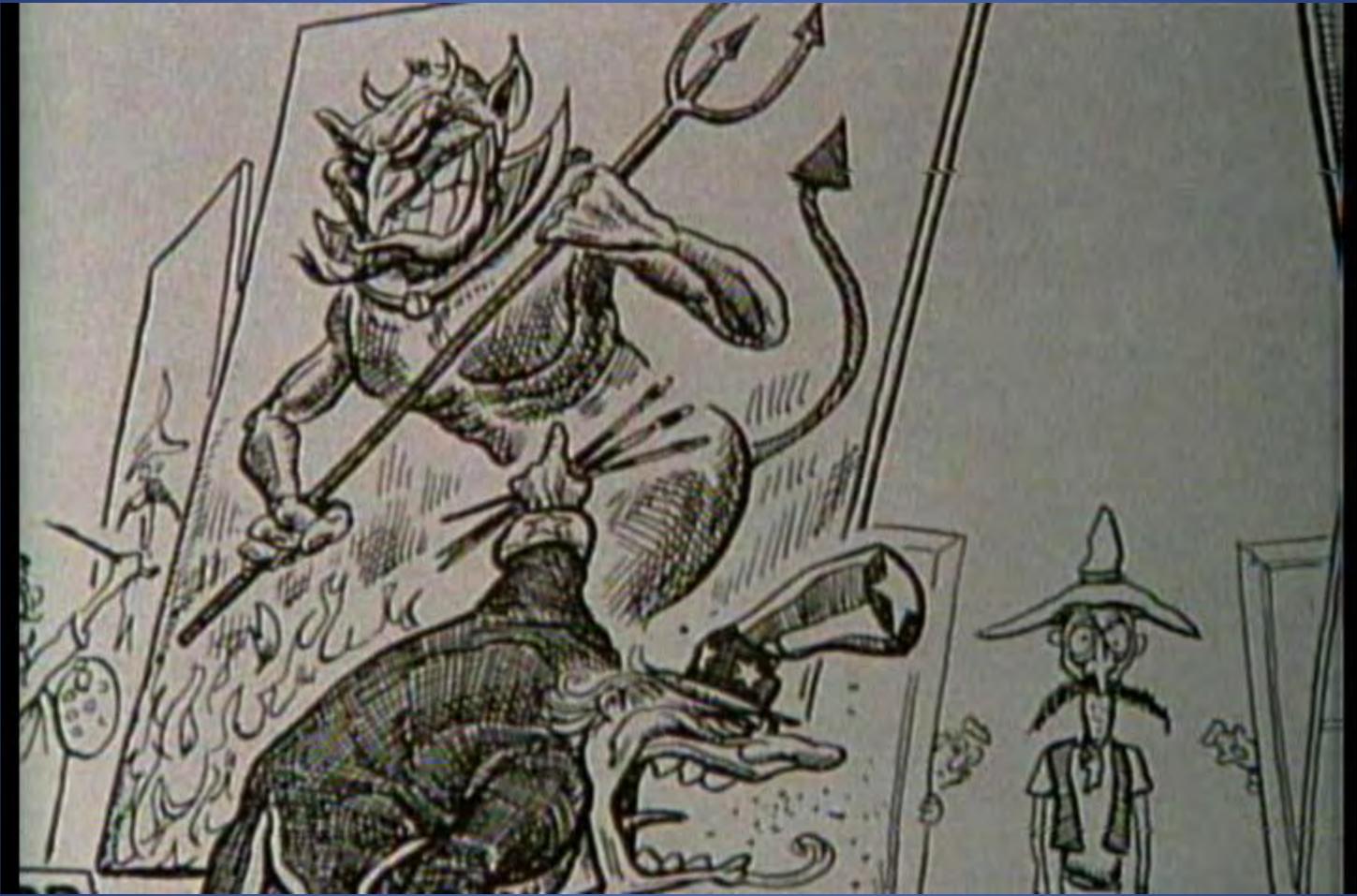
Is the Market Place of Ideas Closed ?

- The national graduation rate for the class of 1998 was 71%. For white students the rate was 78%, while it was 56% for African-American students and 54% for Latino students. (Manhattan Institute for Public Research)
- 70% of the prison inmates in the United States are illiterate. (Schlosser, Eric . 1998. The Prison Industrial Complex. *Atlantic Monthly*)
- In 2008, 39 percent of the U.S. population had read a newspaper (either print or online) the day before taking its survey. That's down from 43 percent in 2006. The Pew study also reported that the readership of print newspapers had dropped from 34 percent to 25 percent between 2006 and 2008. (The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press)
- Nationally, about 46% of people summoned for jury duty show up, according to a survey of jury improvement efforts conducted by the National Center for State Courts.
- The United States is ranked 138 in voter turnout.

Is the Market Place of Ideas Closed ?

- In the U.S., **30 million** people over age 16 — **14 percent** of the country's adult population — don't read well enough to understand a newspaper story written at the eighth grade level or fill out a job application.
- The United States ranks **fifth** on adult literacy skills when compared to other industrialized nations.
- 40 percent of 3-month-olds and 90 percent of 2-year-olds regularly watch TV

	2009	2004	1999
TV Content	4:29	3:51	3:47
Music/Audio	2:31	1:44	1:48
Computer/Internet	1:29	1:02	:27
Video Games	1:13	:49	:26
Print	:38	:43	:40
Movies	:25	:25	:18
Total Media	10:45	8:33	7:29
Multitasking	29%	26%	16%



“If you tell a lie big enough and keep repeating it,
people will eventually come to believe it.”

Joseph Goebbels

"There's nothing so absurd that if you repeat it often
enough, people will believe it."

William James

[Obama Bucks news clip](#)
[pleasegodno.com](#)



God Hates Obama





Jonesville Church of God

SUN. SCHOOL 10:00 A.M. WORSHIP 12:00 A.M. SUN. EVE. 6:00 P.M. WED. EVE. 7:00 P.M.

OBAMA OSAMA

HU M M

ARE THEY BROTHERS

PASTOR, ROGER BYRD





BARACK
"HUSSEIN"
OBAMA



EQUALS MORE

ABORTIONS

SAME SEX MARRIAGES

TAXES

GUN REGULATIONS





Chip Somodevilla, Getty Images







**GOD DAMN
AMERICA!
TESTIFY!
NOBAMA**