

JWR 4.13

The Devil
You
Know

Don't want to talk about politics
Don't preach or talk about politics
Don't make me talk about politics
Don't give a shit about politics
-Korn

I get calls every day, and pieces of mail every day. I just throw the mail out without looking at it. When I answer the phone and they ask for me I say, "Hang on a second; I'll get him." Then I put the phone down and go about my business – which usually involves touching something in an inappropriate manner. But I have a new one now: I tell them I can't vote because I'm a felon.

I understand that me essaying about politics is about as natural as Joss Whedon telling a masculine story, but bear with me. I'm certainly not opposed to the democratic process. I do think democracy is a good idea, in spite of its flaws. It's everything else that is no good.

So, who are you going to vote for: the old maverick and the maverick milf, or the black guy and the old white guy?

Have you ever noticed that the people who won't tell you who they're voting for really want to know who you're voting for?

I'm not voting this time. I'm serious. I know I said I wasn't voting last time and then I did, but there were extenuating circumstances, and bribes involved. This time I'm staying true to myself.

I'm in no way trying to gain support for my belief or trying to convince other people not to vote in the way that I'm trying to get people to join me in boycotting going to the movies. Point of fact, I think you should vote if you want. I also think you should not vote if you don't want. Thank Christ that Sean Combs isn't doing his Vote or Die bullshit this year. I'll give you that voting is important, but it's not *that* important. Reactionaries will tell you that it is important to vote or you could lose that right. They also tell you who to vote for.

And I think that's my biggest problem.

I can handle the commercials and I can handle the debates and I can even handle campaign signs in yards, although I noticed a few yards that have one really big sign also have a couple small, standard-sized campaign signs gathered around the larger sign like a momma elephant and her babies. What's the point of the smaller ones? They all say the same thing. Wouldn't it make more sense to have a single sign so the message that you support a particular candidate is unified and clearer? Am I the only one that thinks about this stuff?

Also, you've seen the people who have campaign signs in their yards for the presidential candidate of their choice as well as signs for the local assembly and controller, yes? That's even more confusing. First, who gives a shit about the controller? The only time you hear about those bitches is when they get caught defrauding the city. Second, you can't ask people who drive past your house to look

at so many signs. Most people can't remember the president before the current one. If you're going to support so many people, your best choice is to put a sign in your yard that reads "Vote Democrat" or "Vote Republican." Chances are if you are that politically active, you lean one way or the other.

What I can't handle is the fact that they don't give away those campaign signs anymore... I heard... might be untrue. You need to donate to the campaign in order to get those signs. So, wait, I give money to support the candidate of my choice in order to get them elected to an office that I already pay for with my taxes in order to get a sign to place in my yard to show my support for a name to the people who drive and walk by, and then when they get elected, my reward is to be lied to by the person I elected and then I still have to pay the same in taxes as everyone else?

How come there are no yard signs that just say, "Vote"?

I think if you vote and your candidate wins, you should get a discount on taxes. I think there would be record voter turnouts each time. The way it is now, I mean, what do you get out of it?

News stories are run during every election about campaign signs that go missing, get destroyed or defaced. And every election the news reports it like it's the first time it's happened. This year I saw a news story that blamed supporters of one political party for destroying the signs of the other. Really? I won't deny that the potential for some signs being destroyed by political rivals exists, but dumb ass kids are responsible for ninety-nine out of one hundred ripped up signs.

I think you've got to admit that this rivalry that crops up every election between the supporters of Democrats and Republicans keeps getting worse. I really don't know who to blame, but I think it's safest to blame Rome... you know, the mob... everyday people who either buy into the hype or exacerbate the hype that This Is The Most Important Election In History And If We Don't Win, And That Other Fuck Gets Elected, America Will Be Raped And We Will All Die.

One thing we're finding out this election is how racist and ignorant people can be. I was talking to a neighbor a few days ago and we got on the subject of the election because we were hiding from door to door campaigners in her garage. She said she wasn't voting. I asked her why because when someone tells me they're not voting, I want to know why they shirk their responsibility, their fucking duty to vote. She didn't like either candidate. I asked her what her problem with McCain was and she hated him so much she couldn't come up with a reason. I asked her about Obama and she said, "That nigger?" Wow. Really? Then she told me to look at his name, that he's a Muslim. I told her he is not a Muslim. She did not believe me. She asked me why I'm not voting. I told her I'm a felon.

It's okay to be a McCain supporter. That's perfectly legitimate. But to be an Obama detractor because he's black, or because you incorrectly think he's Muslim, or because his last name is one letter away from being spelled the same as one of the ways that you can spell the first name of a terrorist are ignorant and bigoted reasons.

Let's consider if Obama was actually a Muslim. Would that be so bad? Do you really think Muslims are all bad? Dave Chappelle is a Muslim and I like him a lot more than most of the people I know. Are you sure it's not because it's a different religion than the more familiar Christian faiths that every other candidate – and the majority of people you know – follows? What if Obama was Jewish? What if he was Buddhist? Kennedy was a Roman Catholic and that caused issue with some voters. Mitt Romney is a Mormon and that was big news until he was out of the running. Every president has been a Christian except for Rutherford B. Hayes who had no religious affiliation. (Lincoln's religious beliefs are debated, but he's generally regarded as a Christian.) No matter the outcome, this election will not change that, but in the minds of those who believe Obama is a Muslim, the potential for that kind of change is frightening. Change is difficult and most people shy away from it in fear.

Like Pappy O'Daniel says, "I'll reform you, you soft-headed son of a bitch. How we gonna run reform when we're the damn incumbent?"

I saw a bumper sticker that said "Barack Obama is a FIB." Now that's the kind of politician I can get behind.

One thing is for sure: you're not going to have Obama telling people God willed his presidency and told him to invade a country. I know that there are people that support and revel in those kinds of comments, but I'm not one of them.

Obama's in a tough spot: he's too black for a lot of white people and not black enough for some black people. Obama's mother was white and spiritual but not religious (like Scott), his father was a Kenyan raised Muslim before becoming an atheist, his step-father was Indonesian from a Muslim family but not religious himself, and Obama was baptized Protestant twenty years ago. People think he's a Muslim because he has a Muslim-sounding name. People think I'm French because my last name sounds French. Them bitches is mistaken.

The thing about misinformation is if it's convenient for you to believe it, you will despite evidence to the contrary.

Let me tell you a story. When I was in my early twenties I used to go out drinking with a buddy and a couple times we hung out with this one guy whose name escapes me. What does not escape me is his nickname. My friend told me, "You know why they call him 'Sandman'? Because he puts people to sleep." Supposedly this guy was a hit man. Today, if I ran for office, they would say that I pal around with assassins. What if I told you that I never met Sandman, but my friend knew him and had been to his house? Then they'd say I knowingly associate with persons with connections to assassins or, if Sandman did hits for the mob, persons with connections to organized crime. What if I told you none of that was true? Would you believe that none of that happened, or would you believe I knew the guy that knew the guy, or would you believe that I knew the guy? Once the bullshit is out there, you're

going to believe what you want regardless of what the truth is. In my case there are only four people in the world that know what the truth is. There are no papers or pictures proving or disproving my connection to Sandman. You're going to believe what you want.

I'm not telling you anything you don't already know, but McCain is an old man. If he dies in office, Sarah Palin becomes president. I guess it's a question of experience, but if you use the argument of inexperience against Palin, don't you have to use the same argument against Obama? Or is it more a question of whether you are more willing to have a black man as president or a woman? Never mind that she was less than half way into her first term as governor of Alaska, one of the freak states with the third smallest population and the lowest population density in the nation, when she abandoned all that to campaign. Never mind that she named her kids Track CJ, Bristol, Willow, Piper Indy, and Trig Paxson Van, or that her husband looks like a douche bag who starts fights in bars. And never mind that you never heard of her until she was nominated as a vice presidential candidate.

Maybe it's just because I live near Illinois and get some stations out of Chicago, but I've seen news coverage about Obama since before the 2004 election. He's not a stranger to me and since I work with a lady who believes anything she hears as long as it comes from a conservative or Christian source (or better yet, a conservative-Christian source), I've become far more acquainted with Obama than I would otherwise have liked because I look for rebuttals to these outrageous claims she hears. Thing is, she *wants* me to look for the other side of the story and, for whatever reason, I do. It started with a couple of those chain emails that made outlandish claims like Bill Cosby is running for president and here's his platform, or the ACLU is suing so the Marines couldn't pray while in uniform. It annoyed me that these emails were being passed around by people who typically didn't forward that kind of stuff and, I assumed, that those people believed it. The ACLU email was tucked away at

the bottom of a bunch of sentimental Remember 9/11 stuff, which is a manipulative way of trying to get a message across. So maybe I'd send an email back to the person who sent the email to me about how the email they forwarded was not true, but I put a little acerbic/humorous slant on it. Now she has me running her Obama's-a-terrorist stories through my fact checker, but it doesn't seem to matter what I uncover, she believes what she wants. I used to look for porn on the internet.

Who am I kidding? I still do.

And that's where my biggest problem lies. It's okay if you don't want Barack Obama to be president. But if you vilify Obama with untrue statements that you maintain are true just because you heard them from someone who shares your political views, that's not cool. It's irresponsible and, in my humble opinion, no different than distrusting him for being black.

And it's okay if you don't want John McCain to be president. Sure he may come off as an out-of-touch, insincere old man who talks down to you, but he was a prisoner of war for more than five years, endured horrors you couldn't dream about unless you experienced the same, and made heroic stands while a prisoner. McCain is unable to lift his arms over his head as a result of the mistreatment he was subjected to while a prisoner of war. No, you don't have to vote for him or even like him, but you had better have respect for him.

I don't have an agenda. I don't care about the issues enough to motivate me to vote. Maybe that's not accurate. Maybe I don't think enough of the candidates or the system to motivate me to vote. Maybe I feel not voting sends a message as strong as casting a ballot. Maybe I'm just lazy. Maybe I haven't put in the time to learn about the candidates and their platforms to make an informed choice and I feel that someone who makes an uninformed choice or a choice based solely on one factor (abortion alone, for example) is making a mistake. Maybe I feel that a non-voter has more of a right to complain about the state of the nation because they didn't

contribute to the mess since they knew that no matter who was elected, the shit would only get deeper.

Vote or don't. Keep your attacks on the other guy (or gal) to yourself, because if your guy isn't worth voting for without smearing the opposition, you should have gotten yourself a better candidate. Ever see that South Park episode where they were voting on a new school mascot and it was a choice between a Giant Douche and a Turd Sandwich? Yeah, it's kinda like that; they're all douches and turds. You're just choosing between the lesser of two evils, everybody uses that analogy. What that fuck kind of choice is that? The people who end up running for president are never the ideal choice. The best choices for president are people too smart to ever run, and you're left with the only choice you've ever known: a douche or a turd. And given that choice, in the end, you stick with the devil you know.

We're getting a new president regardless, and that's got to be a step in the right direction.

-John