

Civil discourse

Recently, one Washington politician looked at another Washington politician and called him a liar. Why is that news to me? Weren't their lips moving? And doesn't it take one to know one? Yes, it was rude to interrupt the man's speech, but an apology was made and accepted. Politicians calling each other liars is hardly a phenomenon. For instance, finish this sentence: Bush lied, people _____. Remember that one?

Personally, I prefer that politicians get angry with each other. When our political heroes from the two major parties are going at each others' throats, I know that they are currently too distracted to be stealing from me. When we see them posing for pictures smiling, holding hands and slapping each other on the back, what do you think just happened? And who do you think will be paying for it?

And while we are on the subject of political parties, I don't particularly care for the animals that have been chosen to represent the major parties. Here is a brief run-down of the history of these two symbols courtesy of factmonster:

The now-famous Democratic donkey was first associated with Democrat Andrew Jackson's 1828 presidential campaign. His opponents called him a jackass (a donkey), and Jackson decided to use the image of the strong-willed animal on his campaign posters. Later, cartoonist Thomas Nast used the Democratic donkey in newspaper cartoons and made the symbol famous.

Nast invented another famous symbol—the Republican elephant. In a cartoon that appeared in *Harper's Weekly* in 1874, Nast drew a donkey clothed in lion's skin, scaring away all the animals at the zoo. One of those animals, the elephant, was labeled “The Republican Vote.” That's all it took for the elephant to become associated with the Republican Party.

Democrats today say the donkey is smart and brave, while Republicans say the elephant is strong and dignified.

A donkey and an elephant. The entire political process has been turned into a zoo. We have entered the new millennium and I think it is time for an update. The two major political parties have gone through numerous changes over the last 130 years, so perhaps their icons should be updated as well. I would much prefer to see a mongoose and a cobra replace the old world symbols. A snake and a weasel are much more appropriate, don't you think? Throw a hundred of those into the senate chamber and stand back. Now that's politics that can keep my interest.

Every living organism on the planet knows instinctively that as soon as you stop fighting for advantage, your place in the world begins to decay. If you will not fight, you cannot win.

Civility in politics? Who needs it?

Todd Lester

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