

A BIBLICAL VIEW ON
**POLITICS OF
HATE**



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POLITICS OF HATE



Not only are we a polarized nation, but we appear to also be a hateful one. Thomas Edsall, writing in the *New York Times*, cites a number of academic studies that demonstrate what most of us have already seen. Partisan hate is on the increase.

One academic paper with the title “Lethal Mass Partisanship” found that just over 42 percent of the people in each political party views the opposition as “downright evil.” He then concludes that

48.8 million voters “who cast ballots in 2016 believe that members of the opposition party are in league with the devil.”

He also cites another arresting statistic. “What if the opposing party wins the 2020 election? How much do you feel violence would be justified then?” The study found that 18.3 percent of Democrats and 13.8 percent of Republicans said violence would be justified on a scale ranging from “a little” to “a lot.”

Later in his commentary, he cites another academic study that concludes that on both sides of the political aisle, the best-informed voters are by far the most partisan. We would expect that well-educated, well-informed people might be able to pull the electorate out of this morass.

David French, writing in *National Review*, repeats this idea. He says, “In a time of crisis, American citizens often look for guidance and take their cues from the subset of American citizens who are most engaged and informed. Yet study after

study is now showing that this cohort of Americans is driving the engine of American division.”

Culture of Contempt

Actually the problem may be even worse than we imagined. An article in *The Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* discussed what is called “motive attribution asymmetry.” That is a technical term for the assumption that your ideology is based in love and your opponents is based on hate. Put another way: we are the good guys, and they are the bad guys.

They discovered that the average Republican and the average Democrat today are as divided as the Palestinians and Israelis. In his op-ed in the *New York Times*, Arthur Brooks says we see the other side as “an enemy with whom one cannot negotiate or compromise.”

He comes to this startling conclusion: “People often say that our problem in America is incivility or intolerance.

That is incorrect. Motive attribution asymmetry leads to something far worse: contempt, which is a noxious brew of anger and disgust." And it is made worse by what he calls the "outrage industrial complex" that caters to one side and criticizes the other.

When people hear about political conflicts, they often prescribe the wrong solutions. Just because we disagree doesn't mean we should put aside our disagreements. Arthur Brooks says we need not disagree less. Instead, we need to disagree better. Whether we are discussing politics, economics, or philosophy, we should engage in a robust "competition of ideas." We can disagree without being so disagreeable.

He suggests two steps. First, turn away from what he calls the "rhetorical dope peddlers." These are powerful people on your side who are profiting from the culture of contempt. Second, make a commitment never to treat others with contempt. Christians should be civil and gracious.

Contempt Becomes Hate

A number of columnists and political thinkers have tried to explain why there is so much hate in the public arena. Shelby Steele is a senior fellow at Stanford University's Hoover Institution. He has some profound insights on "Why the Left is Consumed With Hate."

He takes us back to the 1960's when this country "finally accepted that slavery and segregation were profound moral failings." So the left put itself in charge of righting this wrong, thus giving it enormous political and cultural power. It also led to the "greatest array of government sponsored social programs in history" that have cost more than \$22 trillion. The growth of those programs increased the political power of the left even more.

He believes that this amounted to a formula for power that goes something like this; "The greater the menace to the nation's moral legitimacy, the more power redounded to the left." Soon they had compiled a laundry list of menaces. Racism was at the top of the list, but any

other bigotry ending in “ism” and “phobia” also made the list.

This has created a problem for the left. America has made significant progress in racial issues along with progress with many of these issues. And that threatens the left “whose existence is threatened by the diminishment of racial oppression.” It must find racism anywhere it can to make itself relevant.

The white-on-black shooting in Ferguson, Missouri got lots of media attention and even a comment from the president of the United States. During that same period, “thousands of black-on-black shootings took place in Chicago, hometown of the then-president, yet they inspired very little media coverage and no serious presidential commentary.”

Today the left is troubled by its possible obsolescence. There is not enough social menace to service its need for power. Also nagging them is the failure of so many government programs the

left proposed. It is easy to see why they are consumed with hate.

Campus Hate and Incivility

Over the past few years, we have seen lots of examples of incivility toward political leaders and public figures. Senator Ted Cruz and his wife were confronted in a Washington, D.C. restaurant and had to leave. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and his wife were accosted while leaving a dinner at Georgetown University. Senator Rand Paul was physically attacked. Tucker Carlson had a leftist group show up at his house and even damage his front door while his wife cowered in a closet.

Columnist Walter Williams argues, “much of today’s incivility and contempt for personal liberty has its roots on college campuses.” Charles Murray was harassed and the liberal professor walking by him was attacked and sent to the hospital with injuries. Heather MacDonald had her lectures disrupted at two universities. I have interviewed

the people I just mentioned and can tell you that they are gracious individuals who would never treat anyone else the way they were treated in public.

Walter Williams is right, this disrespectful behavior is taught to them on the college campus. A recent poll conducted by the Brookings Institution found that nearly half (44%) of all college students believe that hate speech is NOT protected by the First Amendment. And since many professors and students label just about anything they don't like as hate speech, you can see why we have this behavior.

The poll also found that more than half (51%) of college students think they have a right to shout down a speaker with whom they disagree. And a smaller percentage (19%) of students think it is acceptable to use violence to prevent a speaker from speaking on campus.

Fake Hate Crimes

Over the last few months, we have

learned how important it is for us to exercise discernment when viewing media coverage of hate crimes. Even though so many have turned out to be fake hate crimes, the pressure on media outlets to get your attention prevents them from exercising discernment. That is why you need to exercise discernment.

There were good reasons the media should have exercised some caution in the case of Jussie Smollett. Why would a black man in a fairly liberal city like Chicago be attacked in the middle of the night because of his race or sexual orientation? How would his attackers even know who he was since he was probably bundled up because of sub-zero temperatures? You can look through the transcripts of broadcasts and read stories in newspapers and Internet sites and rarely see even the slightest hesitation or disclaimer.

Over the last few years of writing commentaries, I have documented lots of fake hate crime stories. I am not the only

person who has done this. John Hawkins, for example, lists “10 Examples of Hate Crimes that Turned Out to be Scams.”

Elizabeth Nolan Brown documents in Reason that “There Is No Violent Hate-Crime Wave in Trump’s America.” Kevin Williamson, writing in *National Review*, talks about both “Fake Hate Crimes” and “Fake Hate.” There is even a fakehate-crimes.org website that documents these fake crimes in the hundreds. Here are a few examples:

Juan Thompson, a left-wing journalist who was fired from his position at *The Intercept* was in the news again for making a string of threats to Jewish community centers. Apparently, he was trying to frame his ex-girlfriend as a “racist white girl.”

Three black co-eds at the University of Albany said they were attacked on a city bus by a group of white men using racial slurs. Hundreds came to a campus rally against racism based on their false report. Surveillance videos contradicted

their account, as did statements by fellow passengers. Actually, they were the aggressors who hit a 19-year-old white woman on the bus.

Muslim women at the University of Louisiana, the University of Michigan, and the University of New Mexico made false claims they were attacked and had their head coverings pulled off. In a number of cases, we don't know the names of some of these hijab hoaxers. Frankly, I don't think we should be protecting the identities of people who file false police reports.

A student at Beloit College reported anti-Muslim graffiti on his door and outside his dorm room. After police investigated, they found he perpetrated the fraud himself.

These are merely a small sample of people who used fake hate crimes to call attention to themselves or their cause. Although hate crimes do exist, these counter examples remind us to exercise some discernment when a new media report surfaces.

Additional Resources

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