

[http://onfaith.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/panelists/willis\\_e\\_elliott/2008/05/begin\\_low\\_start\\_slow\\_rise.html](http://onfaith.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/panelists/willis_e_elliott/2008/05/begin_low_start_slow_rise.html)

## The Hopeful Hypocrisy of the American Voter

“Begin low, start slow, rise higher, catch fire!” From my 1935 course in public speaking, I remember that formula for oratory. No fire, no conflagration, no *change*. Lectures may inform the mind, but it takes oratory to move the heart, motivating to *action*.

In the history of American rhetoric, the Lincoln-Douglas debates stand out for massive public attention and for consequences, including Lincoln’s presidency. People got to hear each oration only once as the opponents traveled from place to place. The power was more in print than in presence: many hundreds of newspapers carried every word.

Poor Hillary and Barack! Millions hear their rubber speeches (slightly stretched for each occasion) many times, *boringly* many times; and few read and ponder their words. That is the setting for this “On Faith” question:

“The percentage of voters who find Hillary Clinton or Barack Obama ‘honest and trustworthy’ is declining as the campaign wears on. Why? From a moral standpoint, how important is this quality in a president?”

1.....The candidates are worn down if not out, and from week to week it’s taking greater effort to “catch fire.” The effort shows: the public has become aware of the strain on the candidates, who consequently seem insincere, dishonest, untrustworthy. In the theater, actors must work themselves up night after night. But there’s the problem:

*play-acting* is expected in the theater, but is suspected on politicians’ campaign trails.

2.....While all responsible orators (including preachers) give some attention to the anticipated effects of their oratory, candidates for political office must design their speeches not only to communicate their vision but also to *accumulate votes*. While massaging their base, they must attract other constituencies and distract attention from their rivals. Simply speaking one’s mind, without arithmetic calculation of support, would cancel the enterprise, rendering one “unelectable.”

But not simply speaking one’s mind—while trying to appear to be doing so—opens one to the charge of disingenuousness, dishonesty, and therefore untrustworthiness.

3.....If the public is going to “catch fire” enough to vote, the candidates must address themes already hot in the public’s jumble of fears and hopes. Obama and Clinton must deal with these themes even though they may believe that certain other themes are of greater importance and urgency. Working up enthusiasm for the less important themes is an *artifice* the public can see through or at least feel. Is a person who makes this adjustment “honest and trustworthy”?

4.....We need a president we don’t deserve, a president *morally superior* to the American people, more “honest and trustworthy” than the voters. Here is a hopeful hypocrisy: while the virtue of truthfulness-honesty-trustworthiness has declined in the American populace, we the people judge candidates for office by this standard.

Democracy is unworkable without it. It’s central in the American heritage of Bible and Enlightenment, and essential to the American hope for all people.

BY WILLIS E. ELLIOTT | MAY 12, 2008; 6:42 AM ETSAVE & SHARE:        

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POSTED BY: PAGANPLACE | MAY 13, 2008 9:56 PM  
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i have carefully read your article and you have placed out as facts some things which when subjected to scrutiny may not hold up in the real world. you talk about the candidates in effect having to play the game and hedge thier speech and obscure thier true opinions to get votes.. the logical question i would ask you is what are they having to hide and why.. the second question i would ask you and them is if this formula is so successful and needed to succed what other factors other than policy do think is effecting the dismal approval ratings of the president and the congres of both parties and one could argue elected officials nationwide. does the words bait and switch ring any bells here? i suspect we would run into the real power people behind the scences and the prostitution of our some of our elected officials to lobyiest which is th fundamental flaw in our system as agreed by every one exceptt the people paying the bills for the bribery and i think we need to call it what it is it is... bribery when you accept money trips and campaign donations just to get contactyou are selling it and it is not yours to sell i would argue. if it was about free speech all one would have to do to lobby is write down ones thoughts or qickly convey them face to face with the representative. we have cameras on all cash registers in business it is these same people who do not want camerera on the citizens of the united states cash registers and cashiers which are out representative. if you apply for the job and it is ok to have us under cameraera at every intersection and store and parkinglot they if its our money and we are actually paying to buy cameras to look at ourselves why not also watch the watchers... also let the truth be said if you are borowoing money at high interest to give tax breaks you are stealing from the cash register and putting in iou there is no difference no matter how much you lie and call it stimulis. debt does not stimulate economy in the real world too many of these people have been running Daddys bussiness and are like the children you see with the toy steering wheels attached to thier carseats.. they might look like a driver somewhat they mite even think they know how to drive but the truth in carseaats is the same as in inbusiness there are no voodoo economics daddy actually got that part intirely correct. why dont we have cameras to see just what our representatives are doing of coarse they should have personal and free time they just should not be doing the peoples business on playtime.. my parents taught me most secrets are things people would be ashamed for other people to see. if ts shamefull lets get a party caled we the people of the united states party if the demacrats and the republicans are to dihonest to actually do thier jobs. i think that is what we are actually talking about. lets stop the fake smokescreens and helplessness the problem will. be fix promptly by the people i suspect i can smellthe tar and feathers if people stay to long on thier fake stages but please check 4 truth i'm just a dyslexic artist not a political guru or power broker but i do watch what is actually going on .. they arent invisible

POSTED BY: ARTISTKVIP | MAY 12, 2008 3:38 PM  
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Garyd:

Yep, there were even "pieces of votes" with a black man getting less than a whole vote. That way they got more members in the house which represents the people on the basis of population. Only those allowed to vote were counted to determine representation.

In the final analysis there is but one truly correct thing to be said, "you're alive and there's no known cure for that." Religion picks it up from there with threats of what will happen to you after you die. Some religions, Christians varieties included aren't willing to wait to carry out the threat. Hell is everywhere to be found unlike God who is everywhere but nowhere to be found and especially if you need Him.

Two things are certain as well as death and taxes. Everyone knows what everyone else should do and no one ever gets the opportunity to force everyone to do what they say they should do. Religion tries it's best and has since the beginning. Not even ancient tyrants had that kind of power yet we assume the president does.

The best anyone even the president can do is "steer in the general direction" for where we are going is always beyond the horizon. Religion takes advantage of the fact that death certainly awaits somewhere out there and the fact that ordinary folk have a natural, normal and mentally healthy fear of death. Threatening folks with being

eaten by monsters after they are dead is the ancient beginnings of faith and still the foundation of faith. That's the one thing that's still the same no matter how much it's changed.

Politics as usual at this blog. I don't notice McCain included in the "put down" of Democrat candidates as dishonest, just the impartial polls say of course. You don't suppose evangelicals are lowering their standards? Maybe they've changed their minds about beer and Mz McCain has promised them some of her wares free or at a big discount?

Who is America's pastor now that Billy boy has retired? Who will crown the next president and proclaim that his power comes from God? Thank God his power will be more than a little limited and thank Lucifer for all the lying, cheating and stealing the next administration will do just like all before it. Their souls are awash in a gummy black liquid, oil. Whitening them up is probably impossible.

All those reverends who's goal is character and morality are trying as hard as they can by threatening them with the fire that burns but does not consume. That would be the fire of hell of course and you know the rest of that story. Hasn't given them any character or boosted their morality measurably yet but one never knows. Willis has no intention of stopping for sure. Isn't that right reverend?

POSTED BY: BGONE | MAY 9, 2008 5:54 PM  
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Bgone in case your interested more than half the white folks couldn't vote either. If you didn't own property (i.e. land) you couldn't vote. There were by the way African-Americans voting in the South prior to the Civil War. Studies indicate that about 10% of Southern slaveholders were themselves of African origins at least a few of them undoubtedly from Washington's plantation as he Freed all his slaves and settle a good bit of money for that time and place upon each family.

Of course the world has moved on since those days and in most respects that is a good thing. The problem now is that the left wants to put us all back on the plantation only this the Master will be the government and while a man might hope to escape slavery to an individual if he can put sufficient space between that man and himself fleeing a government is much more difficult proposition.

POSTED BY: GARYD | MAY 8, 2008 10:35 PM  
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Garyd:

You suffer from a common ailment, the subconscious knowledge that things have drifted way astray from what the founders had in mind.

The founders set out to eliminate government not canonize it. By having a government capable of protecting itself from foreign "kingdoms" and one that did nothing significant otherwise the goal could be achieved. For that reason they did not franchise all residents to vote.

That was not done by accident. I'm sure you have noticed that's been changed. Women and black folks were not included in the original plan. Small wonder you are so disillusioned what with the near certainty that one or the other will be the next president.

Faith steps forward to claim bragging rights over everything as it has been changed contrary to the original plan. That includes the Civil War, (Jeff Davis warned us), women allowed to vote, the civil rights movement and any of the many other unconstitutional by the original constitution things you can think of. Maybe America's pope Billy Graham, (separation of church and state) and abortion rights? Next thing you know there'll be a women's rights movement. Huh? There's already is a women's rights movement?

Just as soon as gay marriage becomes fashionable faith will claim it was behind that too. Right now they're acting like Baptist during all the other unconstitutional changes. These are the times that try Baptist souls as they

head for the polls with nobody to vote for. Keep the faith for love of a Jew named Jesus. He has won the biggest election of them all to the office of God. Were Jews allowed to vote in the first election?

Things were different before they all changed you know.

POSTED BY: BGONE | MAY 8, 2008 1:17 PM  
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The level of idiocy thus far in this thread is quite profound.

I don't care for any of the leading candidates for president. It has nothing strangely enough to do with their perceived level of honesty. I believe that they will indeed attempt to do what they have said they will do. That's why I don't care for them.

POSTED BY: GARYD | MAY 6, 2008 9:59 PM  
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Concerned The Christian Now Liberated:

Didn't Jesus also say, "let he who is with McCain cast the first three stones" or was that seven stones you cast? Have you reformed, working for Jesus now?

You don't suppose Hillary Clinton is a womanizer too? Happens. Always be thorough. Leave no stone un-cast.

Have you noticed how far Barak's ears stick out and how Hillary hides hers under her hair. Ears are important you know. That's why gas is 4 going to 5 dollars a gallon and the polar ice caps are melting. Bush's ears stick out so far he hears wrong. That's a problem for the GOP in general. About time they got their ears pinned back. Know what I mean?

POSTED BY: BGONE | MAY 6, 2008 4:04 PM  
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Although there is significant doubt that Jesus' actually said,

"If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were hung around your neck and you were thrown into the sea", Mark 9:42,

[wiki.faihtfutures.org/index.php/198\\_Millstone\\_for\\_Temptation](http://wiki.faihtfutures.org/index.php/198_Millstone_for_Temptation),

it is, however, a great passage for judging leadership qualities.

Clinton's millstones:

major # 1, Her dishonest, lying, cheating husband whom she should have dumped years ago. Having him in the Whitehouse again would percolate the stench of adultery and womanizing on a 24/7 basis for four more years.

major #2, Her disrespect for unborn children.

major #3, Not recognizing the flaws and errors of contemporary religions.

minor #1, "forgetting" the details of her trip to Bosnia.

Obama's millstones:

major #1, The "Reverend" Jeremiah Wright.

major #2, His failure to immediately condemn Wright's recent speech.

major #3, His disrespect for unborn children.

major #4, Not recognizing the flaws and errors of contemporary religions.

POSTED BY: CONCERNED THE CHRISTIAN NOW LIBERATED | MAY 6, 2008 3:09 PM  
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Reverend, what cave have you spent the last 30 years in? Except for Clinton all the other presidents were certified by God's representatives. You are one of them?

I know it. You know it. We know it. God has no representatives. God is a big kid that can take care of self needing no help whatsoever from people.

The more moral those who represent that which cannot be represented getting their license to steal from a literary hoax claim to be the less moral those they lead become. There, I said it in one sentence.

POSTED BY: BGONE | MAY 6, 2008 1:13 PM  
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hypocrisy of the creed.

survival of the species never based only on food and water ,survival of the species need solid honest un hole-y creed .

for so god love the world he sent an honest honorable messengers to mankind from among mankind to convey and deliver the messeage of god to every mankind.

every messenger of god is supported by divine book or divine inspiration from god ,from god to the chosen messenger of god (by god)to the mass mankind.

the messenger of god suppose to deliver the messeage of god to mankind as is where is no adding no subtaking.

jesus is a mankind messenger of god to mankind from the chain of messengership of god to mankind .

to claim that jesus is the son of god the lord the savior of mankind is serious dishonest contradictory to the perfect creed that god ever sent to mankind .

the right creed is for the people by the god and for the god,the right of the people by the people for the people.

the ink is allready dryied up long time ago ,

search the creed befor you search the people.

there is only one god and there is only one creed.

POSTED BY: MO | MAY 6, 2008 12:26 PM  
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Please, save me from anything, anywhere ""morally superior"" to my neighbor.

POSTED BY: DUNNAGE | MAY 6, 2008 11:47 AM  
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I think the American public is so "conditioned" to being herded, that the issues we make our own, are so far from us, that it proves over and over we simply don't need intelligent presidents.

When the majority of us give our vote to a politician, because he is the kind of man we would like to have a beer with, load up the pickup, and head for a trip to WalMart (to buy bullets and more beer), as opposed to a candidate that cares about global warming, keeping our nose in our own business...but he is too boring, that says a lot about voters in this country, and why this country is headed in the wrong direction. It has nothing to do with the leadership, it has everything to do with the "lemmings" that vote them in.

Since religion has hijacked politics, we have had a steady decline in the amount of talent we have vying for these offices. Offices of public trust are not the same as a person giving you biblical comfort. These people represent a country filled with different races, cultures, religions, and non-religions. We have somehow hijacked the process, and determined that the only qualified politician "must" be a Christian, and somehow, Christians have a lockhold on morality...Forget humanism or humanity...

We have done it to ourselves. As I look at how the media is trying to constantly pull our attention from the real issues (people are losing their homes; Senior citizens can't eat and buy medicine; Our educational system is producing the worlds next "service" workers...not scientists and mathematicians!) and we are being distracted by an insane preacher! People are judging a candidate because of a candidate he knows...This is insane to me. It is no wonder some of the most qualified potential American leaders, will never materialize. The double standard is glaring. The ignorance is mystifying...This process is shameful of what Democracy has amounted to. No wonder so many other countries, don't want our brand of Democracy to model theirs off of. It is simply a hybrid of Christian Theocracy. I think that the original framers of this great Democracy, would be ashamed to see what it has become...

POSTED BY: WALLACE | MAY 6, 2008 11:39 AM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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