

## Testing the Applause-O-Meter

Written by Alex Baer  
Thursday, 19 July 2012 16:00

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Closely watching the news can become a bleak deal, trying to follow and figure what's behind headlines, trying to see what may be written between the lines. Nature of the evolved beast called news: We want to know what went sideways, and how bad it got. Not what went right.

Still, for good mental hygiene, balance is recommended -- not that we're about to burst into song and dance here. Goodness knows those "happy news" attempts made decades ago crashed and burned, but, we can *try* to be a bit less dismal.

(Meanwhile, Perky and Sun-Shiney live on only, I imagine, in Disneyland, where it's instilled in service workers under threat of immediate dismissal. Perky also shows up quite a lot in those morning network shows mislabeled as news -- the ones giving 12-minute segments to fashion, 8 minutes for movie box-office updates, and 2 minutes for a 14-member panel discussion on the possibility of life on other planets, with an update on nuclear power throughout the world tossed in for good measure.)

When it comes to the *reality leakage events* we call news, there may be some inverse, perverse application of one of Murphy's famous Laws here: Things can always get worse, so, quick -- *tell me how, what on Earth happened now, how bad did it get, is it still headed this way...*

(How it is that things cannot always become better -- as easily and automatically as they can always get worse -- is a question and wager for the ages, something for the Muses to muse and mull over. Maybe it's related to gravity, that force demanding us to reel in, to return, come down, come back in...)

On the principle of good mental hygiene, then, we'll take some time out to look around and see what is worthy of a smattering of scattered applause -- to acknowledge what has gone right, even when it had no right to do so.

You may need to squint hard these days when peering about, searching, but it's supposed to be worth it, experts say. That's the hope, anyway. Without further ado, it's adieu to bad news, and take off our pointy -- and pointed -- amateur misanthrope's cynical-wizard hat, and get on with the task!

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First: Hats off to Mia (age 10) and Sara (her mom) in Carlsbad, California. They have decided enough is enough, and are trying to get Jamba Juice to stop serving everything in styrofoam cups. As nice as it would be to have this be a planet-wide referendum, getting rid of this toxic product once and for all, here's a snappy, official salute for their good efforts: *Hoo-Ahh!*

Next, it's hats-off to the Girl Scouts for remaining an equal opportunity haven for all girls, while the Boy Scouts are busy firming up their continued, hard-line stance against gay scouts and leaders.

Hats off as well, for Senator John McCain, who stood up for decency, sanity, and fair play. He defended one of Hilary Clinton's aides from an unfair and empty attack made by his fellow Republican, Michele Bachmann, who tried to link a fear response from the aide to the Muslim Brotherhood.

McCain said, "When anyone, not least a member of Congress, launches specious and degrading attacks against fellow Americans on the basis of nothing more than fear of who they are and ignorance of what they stand for, it defames the spirit of our nation, and we all grow poorer because of it."

Well said, sir, and we thank you. May everyone in your party please -- for the love of God! -- take a *deeeeeep* breath and inhale the fresh air, sunshine, and sanity contained in your statement!

Hats off, also, to U.S. District Court Judge Todd Campbell, who decided Muslim worshippers in Rutherford County, Tennessee, could go into a new mosque they had built. That order overruled a county judge who had been keeping worshippers out of their own building.

The U.S. Justice Department got involved, filing a lawsuit to allow occupancy of the new mosque. Opponents had charged, among other hallucinations, that Islam may not be a religion.

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Now, setting to one side what you or I may think of religion, one thing is certain, says Wiki: there are 1.6 billion people -- about 23% of the world's population -- who think Islam *is* a religion. Making matters more urgent and timely, the holiest month for Muslims is Ramadan, which features fasting by the faithful from sunrise to sunset, and starts at sundown *today*.

With luck, the Murfreesboro group will be able to occupy their own property and building when they like, in time to celebrate their holiest holiday -- quaint notions we say we like to believe in on our shores. Usually. Normally. After the dust settles and the fear subsides.

So, kudos to the DOJ and Judge Campbell for helping along that crazy idea of *freedom and justice for all* that is so often said to exist here. Bravo!

Well, looks like we're out of space, so that's it for this round of applause -- but, let's do this again real soon.

Meanwhile, finding myself stretched and brain-cramped, channelling all this positive energy, there is a dire need for a quick, counter-balancing, snarky comment before we go: Michele Bachmann is a member of the House Intelligence Committee -- talk one about one *helluva* scary oxymoron!

*Ah, that's better. ☐ And I thank you.*

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<http://www.change.org/petitions/jamba-juice-stop-using-styrofoam-cups-that-kill-animals>

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