

Welcome to These Out-Rage-Us Times

Written by Alex Baer

Friday, 28 March 2014 21:48 - Last Updated Saturday, 29 March 2014 22:29

We've become a nation of fleeting snits and hissy fits.

We nurse along so many hurt feelings that we all get emergency Red Cross parcels, plus the thanks from a grateful nation, for our extensive enmity-nursing skills. Our spending on pets last year was \$61 billion -- and that's not even counting what we're willing to pay to keep our pet peeves alive. We have so many kinds of hairy grudges, it's surprising none of them ever showed up in Dr. Seuss books, all raspberry and lime.

But, none of these petty issues includes the stuff that really ignites us in some way, really toasts our scalps, like we've just grabbed hold of some stripped-bare 220 cables long enough to have *Tilt* or *Free Game* show up on our foreheads, or to start spitting little lightning bolts, in a sudden show of Looney Tunes solidarity.

We've pretty much painted ourselves into the corner in this society, and now, as adults, we're going to have to sleep in it. Or on it. *Something*. **The point is:** We create constant distractions and attention-snaggers. Some are cream puffs that melt on the tongue. Others have hooks and barbs that feel like bottom dredgers scraping heavy equipment around on the floor of your skull. Inside these raging jags? Most are only single-burst fireworks, then flame out, once the phosphorous has scorched through a gross of tandem-stacked I-beams.

The oversupply of these conveyor-belted trivialities and hyperventilated escalations is likely due to the headlong, free-falling news-cycle churn -- the desire to launch alarming new tidbits every 10 seconds at your cerebral cortex in a fill-and-file blitzkrieg. Why? To attract the maximum number of ears and eyeballs, to spike ad revenue. The moolah can then change hands, in a circular feeding frenzy, allowing practitioners to line up all around the money trough and sup away. This also gives spreadsheets something to do in the off-season, until Christmas, when they can be fully revived.

Somewhere in there, we Americans became mighty thin-skinned. (This should cause us immediate alarm -- which, in turn, will trigger an adrenal response, allowing natural processes to

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kick in for *Americanus Consumerus*, which is to make us go buy 193 new products and services to handle whatever has offended our delicate constitutions. Once handled, we can resume our crucial life activities: shopping for new products and services.)

In the case of thin skin, our purchases might involve cases of special skin-toughening body lotion. This is especially true when we realize it was a skin condition, and not hydrogen, that caused the *Hindenburg* blimp fire. You can look it up: The blimp skin was coated with rocket fuel-ish materials, a very *fuelish* thing to do.

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(**And, yes, I do regret that.** An apology is required. A modern one. One where the word "sorry" or "regret" never comes up, and sounds more like a treatise in semantics neutrality, and which leaves recipients with the slightly sticky feeling that he or she was probably to blame for the incident in the first place.

In the meantime, while I work on that non-apology apology, I'd like to distract your attention, GOP-politician-style, and submit to you that *Blimp Fire Hosers* would be an OK name for an indie band, or even *Blimp Skin Fireplace.* Th
is is mostly because *Blimp Bump Blazers, or Blue Blimp Blaze-Bumpers,* would be way harder to say.)

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Then again, it's probably a good thing we're waging so many wars via web and Twitter, as it gets our electron proxies and electrical avatars some exercise -- activities we'd never actual perform in person. It's probably preferable to have multiple warring affronts to one's dignity, sanity, or vanity, than it is to have multiple wartime fronts surrounding one's land, band, or brand. It's a lot cheaper that way. Plus, without actual war, there is a lot less cleaning up to do later. Or apologizing -- modern or otherwise.

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In any case, we're putting too much energy into being miffed and peeved. (Here, I feel I must point out that Miffed & Peeved would make for a pretty good, upper-crust, law practice name, or an inordinately restrained, and polite, dockside tavern -- while also noting that my modern non-apology apology will soon be in the mail.)

However, I am concerned to see us attacking each other, and launching counter-offensives, via Twitter. This method is a sort of (allegedly) grown-up version of the game

Battleship

, where we just stutter and spout stuff, in the hopes of stumbling onto a weakness that will collapse the enemy. (Have I ever mentioned that

Stutter and Spout

would -- oh, I see I have.

Never mind.

)

It's true that we have not, like the real-life game of *Battleship, the Nuclear Armageddon on Toast*,

escalated to the point of blowing holes in the ocean, and elsewhere, with high explosives. It's just that, in the past, political articles, and the comments section of any web page, used to be plenty big enough to contain our war-bile. Not so any more.

Welcome to the New Now, where we challenge each other's static-cling tirades and bent schoolyard-style feelings, trying to *out-outrage* each other, trying to *out-shout*

one another, trying to be heard above the neon-lit, stampeding din of our marketing and propaganda industries: "No,

MY

outrage is better than

YOUR

outrage!"

Perhaps we are just a nation suffering from not being heard. And, as we all know, until and unless we are heard, and acknowledged for what we think, and have just said, not a single bit of new conversational business will be heard or moved forward: It will, in fact, stall out, sputter, and collapse. (Have I ever men-- *well, gee!* Why so *testy* today?)

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I hope it *is* just that we all are very tense from not feeling very heard, or appreciated, and so on -- otherwise, we are just a huge, coast-to-coast playpen for a bumper-crop of Terrible Twos with chips on our shoulders the size of actual battleships. Either that, or we're just gibberish-based life forms. Or plain stupid, unable to think our way out of a wet paper sack.

* * * * *

The Changing Boundary Lines of Diagnoses

Some of our reactions used to fall under the provinces of *Thin Skin*, before our received insults were perceived as planet-ending detonations, and our feelings needed reparation lawsuits and treaties brokered by Scandinavian countries. Science has stepped in, somewhere along the line here, as science often likes to do, to feel helpful around the human household, and not feel forgotten, just in case it might be needed by everyone -- religious people and Teabaggers included -- sometime or other.

So, we're now calling our high sensitivities *boundary issues*, and not looking through the kaleidoscope of introversion-extroversion or skin thickness *essesses*

. The boundary concept says that it's all about whether stimuli is let in or kept out. Put this way, some situations snap right into focus: It's not that we're as dumb as dryer lint -- we just don't have the right passwords, or whatever, to open up the yards-thick stone door to our foreheads, where we keep some of our opinions hanging around, in their rumpled loungewear.

TeeVee, society's well-deserved whipping post and our de facto town square -- at least, when *The Big Mall Where the Meadow Used to Be* allows escapees from its consumer-gravitational vortexes -- is the site of two modern horror stories. One of these is in progress, and one is about to launch. The current one is about *Cosmos*, the series reboot. The other is about Anthropogenic Global Warming, or human-caused climate change, called *Years of Living Dangerously*.

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From the titles, you can probably smell the brimstone already, especially as we're facing -- holy Moses! -- an intensive resurrection of the Bible film genre these days. In a nutshell -- or a nut hatch, or a nut farm -- we have religious folk clamoring to be given "equal time" to present a *religious*, creationist counterpoint, so called, to a *scientific* program series. That the program is aired on a secular, and not a so-called *sacred*, teevee channel, seems to not matter to these wrinkle-browed, riled-up, tense-lipped clamorers.

Nor does it seem to matter that their demand is all mush-and-gibberish for logic, akin to insisting that engineering graduates carry rabbits' feet (or rabbit's feet, or, more simply, *bunny foots*) at all times, have a one-sheet, flat-earth globe in the office, and use spell incantations when doing any drafting work. (I am too peeved about this stuff right now to tell you where *Mush & Gibberish* might be best used, but I imagine you could guess.)

This is the kind of thing that makes me want to do a few laps around the equator, just to refocus some. It is difficult to know where to begin in listing all the things utterly wrong and crazy and dim-witted, and idiotic and moronic, about these creationists' demands. I wish I could just resolve their psychoses by saying: *That these groups have asked for equal time very clearly demonstrates they have no concept of equal time provisions -- nor do they know about logic, facts, thinking, gravity, sun-centric solar systems, eclipses, or where to get the best pizza, or Asian cuisine -- the white-boxed, wire-handled bliss formerly known as Chinese food.*

- **First**, as *Cosmos* is a documentary, the equal time rule does not apply.
- **Second**, equal time is not given, it is purchased at the "most favored advertiser" rate.
- **Third**, Fox is a secular channel, even though I admit it is very easily confused as a religiously-programmed-and-sponsored house of GOP worship, under the auspices of, say, *Our Lady of Perpetual Shrugging*, and is now licensed for operation involving secular fare. (I once considered *The Simpsons*, and now *Cosmos* as well, to be peaceful emissaries from the Logic Galaxy to the impenetrable black hole that is Fox.)

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- **Fourth**, Cosmos is a privately produced science program that is, by its nature, concerned with scientific inquiry, theories, facts, and what the scientific method has so far discovered about the worlds around us. It is not a magic show or a forum for myths, superstitions, hallucinations, or fiction. Nor are there cute puppets or Gumby-style *clay-mation* shorts. (That I know of, anyway.)

- **Fifth**, creationists can go create their own program if they want to flex creation powers and spread their non-secular beliefs.

- **Sixth**, if use of the *Fairness Doctrine* is what was accidentally meant, and not *Equal Time*, then they are

still

wrong -- that provision was axed in 1987, when the right wing's hero, Ronald Reagan --

surprise!

-- was president.

- **Seventh**, religionists have their *own* outlets for radio and teevee and newspapers and books and tracts and posters and shmaltz-rock, and so on, and should rely on those outlets for their business, and not demand everyone be exposed to, and accept as true, their clan beliefs.

However, should they wish to push the issue, I would personally raise a national effort for similar and immediate "equal time" treatment for

secular

viewpoints in, on, and around

ALL

religious outlets, schools, and other religious agencies, in order to extend a 21st century hand to the less fortunate among us, only now emerging from the 12th century, and help bring The Real World to all audiences, in a last-ditch attempt to save their secular spirits, and to welcome them to The Renaissance.

I would also push for the immediate, if not retroactive, repeal of the privileged tax-free status for all buildings, lands, and property of all religious sects and cults in this country, as penalty for blatant activities in the secular world, and for political activism -- categories not allowed in any current tax-free statute.

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Stay Tuned for the Holy Roller Blame Game

So far, nothing's happened to the *Living* show, so far as I know. I can hardly wait to see in exactly what fascinating, footloose, fanciful, logic-free new ways religious communities will ignore, dismiss, blame, and attack this new effort to educate all residents of planet Earth about ***Something Very Scary Happening to Our One and Only Home***

.

The attempt to popularize thinking, awareness, observation, and share meaningful information about the world around us -- a thing we like to call **Science** -- is laudable, too.

I cannot wait to see this program blamed for *the downfall of America's youth, for the increase in cases of both acne and athlete's foot, and for the corporate and political rape of the country, oil spills, rain forest obliteration, acid rain, methane toxicity, environmental poisoning, and for humidity, timidity, torpidity, and gout.* For starters.

* * * * *

Disagreements? Fine. Twitter wars? Really? How about another chip-shot into the fray: I hear Facebook will be offering low-cost net service to the third world, and elsewhere, by using drones. This is during a time, of course, when cooking stoves in that same third world are killing millions of people. I'm sure residents of the emerging world would rather have the ability to stream western religious programming, if they had the interests or devices, than have Facebook ship them some clean air, and some solar stoves worth a darn.

Amazon, of course, is still toying around with drone deliveries. Government agencies whose very *names* are Top Secret are even now surpassing push-button, long-distance, *UltraKleen-In staDeath* drone technology, trying to outfit laser-toting, multi-lingual, miniaturized human spys with working bumble-bee wings.

OK, I lied about the bees. At least, I *think* I did. I mean, *I meant to*. That is to say, and with

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profound plausible deniability do I now

formally

add, that I do not now, nor have I

ever

had,

any knowledge whatsoever

regarding such matters.

Outrageous, I know.

I feel your rage. And mine

.

Still, ladies and gentlemen of the Exalted Supreme Most High Poobah Court and Auxiliary
Emergency Redundant *Accumulatorium* of Taxpayer Expenditures,

I anticipate a Twitter sneak-attack by our enemies, and urge you to remain strong, vigilant,
stalwart, unbowed -- and

fi

rmy

connected to your cliff-hanging downloads and streams via Google dirigible.

We here at The Officially Unnamed Agency are pretty sure hydrogen is not involved, nor that
rocket-fuel skin covering, either. We can only hope this is the case, as the national skin is
dangerously thin, and the capacity for outrage now so extreme.

I thank you for your attention.

And for your patience, Madame Chairperson, while I work on that un-apology thing.

Pets: <http://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2013/05/22/americans-spend-61-billion-on-pets-annually>

Twitter wars - sample: <http://www.bbc.com/news/blogs-echochambers-26791865>

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Stimuli boundaries: <http://psychcentral.com/blog/archives/2012/01/23/are-you-thin-or-thick-skinned-knowing-your-emotional-type/>

Hindenburg: <http://www.seas.ucla.edu/hsseas/releases/blimp.htm>

Cosmos:

http://www.upi.com/Entertainment_News/2014/03/24/Creationists-want-equal-airtime-on-Cosmos/5881395675954/

...Living Dangerously:

http://www.slate.com/blogs/bad_astronomy/2014/03/28/years_of_living_dangerously_showtime_climate_change_documentary.html

Bible flicks: <http://www.npr.org/2014/03/28/295254039/this-year-biblical-films-are-fruitful-and-multiplying>

Equal time: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Equal-time_rule

Fairness Doctrine: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fairness_Doctrine

FaceDrone: <http://www.bbc.com/news/technology-26784438>

AmaDrone: <http://www.amazon.com/b?node=8037720011>

Killer Stoves: <http://www.npr.org/blogs/health/2014/03/25/294339956/pollution-from-home-stoves-kills-millions-of-people-worldwide>

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Today's Bonuses:

The *Hindenburg's* home movies: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MHZD3yAXSNc>

Spock, the *Hindenburg*, and *In Search Of*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5T8LWv4xKo0>

D-I-Y flybys: <http://diydrones.com/>

DRONE BEER -- peace in our time! <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qmHwXf8JUOw>

FAA killjoys: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=flyQ8RerxpU>

Snack update: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8IQEokO0cro>