

# You Go, Oprah

✘ I have long thought that whatever else the wondrous worldwide Web is it is a lunatic asylum, where mean-spirited cretins roam its dark halls and smash against padded walls spewing hate all over the place pretty much for just one reason: They disagree with you.

I speak from first-hand experience.

If you honestly believe there's a liberal bias in the so-called mainstream media, as I do, the reaction by the anonymous critics on the Web is not that I'm simply wrong, it's that I'm a freaking fill in the blank – and they're not so polite as to use the word “freaking.”

Jon Stewart is a smart guy who thinks deeply about important issues, but a lot of his most passionate fans apparently have vocabularies that consist of just two words: the first starts with F and the second is You! I discovered this one night when I (politely) noted that Jon wasn't nearly as cutting edge and courageous as his unsophisticated fans thought since he gave his liberal friends a much easier ride than his conservative foes.

I think it was the word “unsophisticated” that touched them off. Within minutes, the F bombs were flying.

Anyone who has ever written anything even vaguely controversial knows what I'm talking about and has encountered these profiles in cowardice.

“We're braver when we type. We don't have to look someone in their eyes. It's easier to be vicious, to cross the line between funny and cruel,” according to Parry Aftab, a cybersecurity lawyer who spoke to the Wall Street Journal last year for a piece entitled, “Surviving the Age of Humiliation.”

Humiliation pre-dates the Internet, of course. There has always been a dark need for some troubled souls to humiliate and embarrass others. But in the Internet age, as the Journal put it, "All of us now live under the threat of easy and instant humiliation."

In the old days we used to say nasty things about someone we didn't like over the backyard fence. Today, all we need is a modem and a computer and we can humiliate and embarrass anyone we want and our potential audience is the whole wide world. And here's the "best" part: we can do it while wearing a mask so no one knows who we are. I'm not sure if technology made us meaner. But it certainly made the dirty work of cowards easier.

I'm also not sure why the culture got so crummy. But I know it happened slowly, in tiny increments, so that we hardly noticed the change. Imagine that you slid into a coma back in 1963, right after JFK was shot, and woke up today. You would think you were on a different planet, let alone a different country; that's how much the culture has changed.

And over the years, while we were becoming tolerant of all the right things – like civil rights and women's rights and gay rights – I think we became *indiscriminately* tolerant. We started to tolerate everything, including the crap that was sliming our culture.

Enter Oprah Winfrey.

Oprah began her new cable television network – OWN – at noon on New Year's Day, a network dedicated to the total and complete absence of mean-spiritedness. "OWN is a place where cynicism takes a holiday and mockery hasn't yet been invented," as the New York Times television writer Allesandra Stanley put it.

"There is no Chelsea Handler baring her big, sharp teeth on OWN; no Kathy Griffin or Joan Rivers standing up to take a

crack at other people's appearances or ages," Ms. Stanley tells us.

But there will be Rosie O'Donnell. Hmm!

I never watched the old Oprah show. I wasn't part of Oprah's target audience. But, boy, do I wish her well. I hope her idealism, her desire for more civility in our culture, is contagious. I hope it spreads – to other cable channels, to the guy walking down the street dropping F bombs while shouting into his cell phone, and also to the dark halls of the worldwide Web.

Hey, it's a brand new year. A guy can hope, can't he? Sooner or later, I suspect, reality with smack me in the face. Until then, You go, Oprah!



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## **A Column Especially for All of You Who Hate Me**

 Some of you may remember the old Perry Como musical variety TV show – and the segment that began with a chorus singing, “Letters, we get letters, we get lots and lots of letters ....” The next line was “Dear Perry, would you be so kind ...” – and then Perry would be so kind to sing an audience favorite from his stack of letters.

Well, this past week, like Perry, I got lots and lots of letters. Except mine began with “Dear Bernie” and ended with, “You’re going to burn in Hell you stupid bastard” – or words to that effect.

Seems like a lot of people who come to this site and watch Bill O'Reilly weren't happy with my column that said we owe a debt of gratitude to rich people. Imagine an America, without rich people, I wrote. Rich people pay most of the federal income taxes in this country and therefore pick up the lion's share of the tab for all sorts of programs that help the poor. Despite the fact that I didn't write a single word demeaning poor people or lower middle-class people – or anybody else – I got lots and lots of letters calling me names I'd rather not repeat here.

Then I went on the Factor with Bill to talk about my column – which was provocatively entitled “Thank God for Rich People.”

After I gave him a brief description of the column, Bill asked me about Jesus' observation that it would be easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than it would for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.

“What about that?” Bill wanted to know.

“I don't care what the Bible says,” I responded, meaning I don't care what the Bible says *about our current tax policy*, which is what the discussion was about. Then I added, “Besides, except for a few issues, Jesus probably would be a liberal Democrat.”

More hate mail. Lots more.

Now, I readily acknowledge that reasonable people may disagree about what I said. Reasonable people may think Jesus was – and would be today – a conservative. My point was simply this: Imagine a modern-day politician – some member of Congress, for example – saying: It would be easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than it would for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Who do you think would be more likely to utter those words – a liberal Democrat or a conservative Republican?

As I say, reasonable people may disagree. Fine with me. But

not fine at all with those who have the inside track to Jesus. Even though the Bible tells us, "Judge not lest ye be judged" the pious crowd sent me sanctimonious letters judging the hell out of me, and saying that I better get right with the Lord – or I'd be sorry.

So I figured, who wants to get hundreds of nasty letters pretty much comparing me to the Devil? Not me, right? So I came up with a brilliant idea. I figured I would write a nice, warm and fuzzy column to try to build bridges with my one time friends who, in my time of need, abandoned me.

So this column is for all of you. In it, I will make no references to religion or politics or the rich or the poor. This column will not be controversial. It will be filled with nice, warm thoughts and, as I say, it is dedicated to all my former friends who are, at the moment, mad at me.

So here goes:

I like sunshine. But not when it's too hot or too cold outside. I like sunshine when the temperature is just right.

I like blue skies. I like blue skies more than I like gray skies, which are also nice.

I like flowers. I like purple and yellow ones the best.

I like trees. Especially big oak trees. I also like palm trees.

I like the color orange. Orange is nice. It reminds me of oranges.

I like people who need people, but I'm not crazy about Barbra Streisand, even though she sure can sing.

I like ponies with spots.

And most of all, I like puppies.

Ok, that's it, my old friends. I hope by generously reaching and showing you some love, perhaps I caused a change of heart among those of you who stopped liking me. If I did, you made me very happy. The end.

Oh yeah, I forgot – one last thing, my closed-minded former friends, who deserted me because I didn't agree with you about everything you hold dear: I truly hope you enjoyed this column because you will never – and I mean NEVER – get another one like it.

Before you can say, “Golly gee, what a great guy Bernie is” it will be back to business as usual. If you can't handle that, boo-freaking- hoo for you.

☒ Now go out and have a nice day. No, make that a GREAT day! ☒

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## **BernardGoldberg.com Special: 48 Hours On Crack Street– The Third and Final Segment**

This was groundbreaking TV Journalism that first aired in 1986 by CBS News

And it was my first major reporting assignment on prime time television ...

None of us who reported this story – the introduction of crack cocaine into our culture – wrote a script. There were no voice overs, also known as narration. Just real life action unfolding before our eyes, and the viewers' eyes – in some

scary places around New York City.

Hope you enjoy.

Bernie

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## **Goldberg Undercover- Segment 2: 48 Hours On Crack Street- “The Streets”**

This is the second segment in a special three part series of a groundbreaking documentary that aired in 1986.

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## **Surprise Special: Classic Goldberg- 48 Hours On Crack Street Part 1**

This was groundbreaking TV Journalism that first aired in 1986 by CBS News

And it was my first major reporting assignment on prime time television ...

None of us who reported this story – the introduction of crack cocaine into our culture – wrote a script. There were no voice overs, also known as narration. Just real life action unfolding before our eyes, and the viewers' eyes – in some scary places around New York City.

Hope you enjoy.

Bernie

Note: We will be releasing this in a 3 part series. Please check back often. Remember you can subscribe to BernardGoldberg.com updates by clicking this link.

## **48 Hours On Crack Street- The Dealers**

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**What are your thoughts? How has media and culture changed in the last 20 years? Comment below!**