

Cocktail Party Cred

If you can handle yourself on the avenues of urban America, the wise guys will say you have “street cred.” That means you are savvy in the ways of the hood and have credibility among the denizens thereof. “Street cred” allows you acceptance in some tough neighborhoods.

In the media salons of Manhattan and Los Angeles, there is also a hunger for social credibility. Let’s call it “cocktail party cred.” That is an acceptance among your peers at swell gatherings where expensive wine and canapés are served.

“Cocktail party cred” has a bit in common with “street cred,” in that you must have the right attitude. On the pavement, you have to be physically tough and creatively profane. In the media soirees, of course, that is not necessary—but you must think a certain way.

Let me give you an example. The CBS Evening News with Katie Couric recently began a commentary segment featuring a variety of Americans spouting off for about ninety seconds. One of the first guys invited to speak was Brian Rohrbaugh, whose 15-year-old son Daniel was murdered in the Columbine High School massacre. Ever since that terrible tragedy, Mr. Rohrbaugh has been thinking about why it happened; what drove two teenagers to murder 12 of their peers for absolutely no reason?

Brian Rohrbaugh came to the conclusion that the secularization of public schools and a permissive society led to his son’s death. So, on the Katie Couric newscast, he said this: “For over two generations, the public school system has taught in a moral vacuum, expelling God from the school and from the government, replacing him with evolution, where the strong kill the weak without consequences.

“And life has no inherent value. We teach there are no absolutes, no right or wrong. And I assure you, the murder of

innocent children is always wrong, including by abortion.”

Uh-oh.

The CBS News website was deluged with viewers indignant that Mr. Rohrbaugh was allowed to utter such heresy. Many people vowed never to watch CBS News again. How could this happen, they asked. How could that kind of opinion be allowed on CBS?

So Katie Couric replied on her blog: “We knew when we decided to put on this segment that a lot of people would disagree with it. We also knew some might even find it repugnant.”

Repugnant?

Why would Ms. Couric use such a loaded word? If a pro-choice person delivered a commentary on CBS News, would Katie have used the “R” word? I don’t think so, because there would have been no controversy. The pro-choice position is standard issue at almost every media operation in America.

But it’s not among the folks. A recent CNN poll says that 45% of Americans believe abortion should be outlawed unless the mother’s life is threatened. That’s almost half the country. But, trust me, those people are not sipping cocktails with the media elite.

In the toney world of the national media, a pro-life American who believes that God deserves some academic exposure is a commoner, a groundling, a prole. If you question a woman’s “reproductive rights,” there will be few party invitations for you. Believing that secularism has, indeed, led to social problems would melt your “cocktail party cred” quicker than a snowman in Aruba.

The truth is that the national media is dominated by a “groupthink” that does, indeed, find Brian Rohrbaugh’s analysis repugnant. I do not believe Katie Couric meant to offend Mr. Rohrbaugh, I think she just couldn’t believe what

he said. I may be wrong, but in her social circles that kind of world view is rarely if ever heard.

So listen closely. The American media is now addicted to politically correct discourse garnished with brie and whatever tartare. Brian Rohrbaugh may speak for millions of everyday Americans, but to the press poobahs he is from another planet. At one time in this country the media was supposed to respect and look out for the folks. But that was then and this is now.

Another cocktail, anyone?