

# Message to Ann

Ann Coulter should listen to me. But she doesn't listen to anyone, so that's not going to happen. In the past, I've told Ms. Coulter that using personal attacks to make ideological points is short-term gain but not long-term pain. You can make money doing that, but respect in the mass market will elude you.

There is hypocrisy running wild in the Coulter controversy. The same media voices that embrace the smear tactics routinely used by the far-left Air America radio network and displayed daily on the nutty political blogs, are all huffy about Ms. Coulter attacking a group of 9/11 widows called the 'Jersey Girls.' I mean, give me a break, the vicious Al Franken-Michael Moore crowd is now appalled by Coulter? That's like Hulk Hogan being offended by Barry Bonds.

However, bad behavior does not justify other bad behavior, and if conservatives support the personal attacks that Ann Coulter trades in, then they must accept them from the "Bush lied" crew.

But back to Ann. Having spoken with her a number of times, I can tell you a few things. She likes the attention. She is a true believer; that is, her disdain for the left is not an act. She is rigid in her scorched-earth approach, believing that just about any tactic is legitimate when it comes to marginalizing liberals. In other words, she is Howard Dean extreme and just as wild as he is.

But like Governor Dean, Ms. Coulter can only sing to her soul mates. Most Americans are not ideological and respond to logic, not politically-driven emotion. Whether you agree with the liberal politics of the Jersey Girls or not, few people want to see these women harmed in any way. Thus, many unaligned people will now never be persuaded by Ann Coulter

about anything because they think she's mean.

Ms. Coulter's primary point about the left using people like the Jersey Girls to attack conservatives is valid. That was on display in my dust-up with David Letterman. Last January on his program, I said Cindy Sheehan was wrong to call insurgents in Iraq "freedom fighters." Mr. Letterman contended I had no right to criticize Ms. Sheehan about anything because she had a son killed on the battlefield.

Coulter picked up on that and other examples of left-wing exploitation of tragedy. But, interestingly, the right does it as well. How many times have we seen President Bush in photo-ops with supporters who have lost loved ones in the war on terror?

In the current media jungle, vicious attacks can bring down prey. Both the left and the right use them. But I truly believe that, ultimately, the winners in the war of ideas will be those who out-reason their opponents, not out-smear them. Again, Americans have always admired fairness along with perseverance and honesty. There are plenty of ways to criticize the Jersey Girls without bringing their dead husbands into it.

But Ann Coulter is not going to listen to me, and neither will others who delight in using personal attacks against those with whom they disagree. They won't listen because they are being celebrated by their chorus, and are being well paid by corporations who are more than happy to light their flaming arrows.

Welcome to the ideological jungle. It is not a nice place.