

# The Self-Martyrdom of John Harwood



I probably spend too much time on Twitter.

That's an admission I would have never envisioned myself making about three years ago, when I had absolutely no interest in the popular social media service. I didn't get its appeal, I didn't understand the point of using it, and I was honestly kind of irritated by its repeated mention on practically every news and entertainment show I watched.

When my first book was in the process of being published, however, my publisher emphasized to me the importance of self-branding and public engagement. They explained that if I wasn't on Twitter, I was ignoring an important marketing tool. So, I gave it a whirl.

It took me a while to get used to the culture. I didn't like it very much. A lot of what I read was either self-congratulatory drivel or angry rants about trivial topics. Eventually, I figured out which accounts were worth following and which ones weren't, and I've come to appreciate and enjoy the daily banter ever since.

With my obvious interest in politics, I've found myself drawn

to the thoughts of national reporters and commentators, who are often more candid, outspoken, and entertaining on Twitter than they are on-air and in their columns. They're also more likely to react to public criticism of their job performance in a 140-character tweet than in a prepared statement.

So, following the widespread criticism of the CNBC moderators in Wednesday night's Republican presidential debate, I was curious if John Harwood (the snarkiest one of the bunch) would comment on his conduct on Twitter. The next morning, he did just that. Well, kind of:

*"Moderating GOP debate in 2015 enriched my understanding of challenges @SpeakerBoehner has faced and @RepPaulRyan will face."*

In other words: *I did nothing wrong. Those mindless, irrational conservatives are skewering me for simply doing my job.*

And in case I somehow misinterpreted Harwood's meaning, he solidified his sentiment with this retweet:

*"RNC can bash moderators all they want. The real problem with these debates is there are too many damn people on stage."*

You see, it's not Harwood's fault for lacing debate questions with insulting personal commentary, interrupting candidates mid-sentence, and heckling their responses. The problem was with the sheer number of candidates that had to deal with it.

Unbelievable.

Media bias is everywhere. It's nothing new, but the problem has grown far worse over the years. You would think that at a time in our country's history when the news media is respected even less than our politicians, there would be a conscious attempt by old-school journalists like Harwood to exercise a little self-discipline – especially when it comes to something

as important as a nationally-televised presidential debate.

I suppose it all goes back to an analogy for media bias that Bernie Goldberg often uses: Journalists don't look at themselves as being biased, just like fish don't look at themselves as being wet. A fish doesn't have the frame of reference to recognize what "wet" is. Neither does someone like Harwood, apparently.



Breaking: Presidential candidate Donald Trump endorses John A. Daly's new novel.

Amazingly, Harwood even took it a step further in a later tweet regarding the GOP debate:

*"Last night reminded me of '88 Indiana trip when Bush campaign put our press avail w/Quayle on loudspeakers so hometown crowd could boo us."*

Oh John... you brave, self-sacrificing soldier for your profession. The things you must endure. Talk about a martyr complex!

A man named David Burge, who responded to the tweet, perhaps summed it up best:

*“Every man is the hero of his own story; it takes someone special to be Jesus of his own Passion Play.”*

Amen.

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**UPDATE:** A couple of hours after this column was posted, Mr. Harwood responded to the below tweet directed at him:

*“Who seriously imagines John Harwood is not a straight-down-the-middle interviewer, moderator?”*

Harwood’s reply?

*“A lot of people on Twitter, evidently! (but they’re wrong)”*

You can’t make it up, folks! Enjoy your Halloween weekend!

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## The CNBC Debate – a Media Hit Job



If you know anything about how the so-called mainstream media operate, you know that liberal journalists will run over their grandmothers with a tractor-trailer truck to get a by-line or some face time on television, but will always salivate more when going after a Republican than a Democrat. And in the CNBC Republican presidential debate, we got the latest example of that.

For the record, I'm all for tough questions. Journalists have a responsibility to hold candidates for president responsible for their policy positions. They have an obligation to put them in the hot seat. But the overall tone of the debate wasn't tough so much as it was snarky. And one of the moderators – John Harwood – was downright smug.

At one point Harwood asked Mike Huckabee about the cultural divide in America –but only in hopes of starting a food fight between Huckabee and Donald Trump.

“Governor Huckabee,” he began, “you’ve written about the huge divide in values between middle America and the big coastal cities like New York and Los Angeles. As a preacher as well as a politician you know the president needs moral authority to bring the country together. The leading Republican candidate when you look at the average of national polls now is Donald Trump. When you look at him do you see someone who has the moral authority to run the country?”

When was the last time Harwood asked if Hillary Clinton had the moral authority to run the country? After all, in poll after poll a majority of the American people say they don't trust her. In one survey the words most associated with her were “liar” and “dishonest” and “untrustworthy.”

And after Harwood asked a few more questions that might as well have been written by Debbie Wasserman Schultz and her Democratic National Committee, Ted Cruz laid into him with what turned out to be the line of the night.

“You know let me say something at the outset,” Cruz said. “The questions that have been asked so far in this debate illustrate why the American people don't trust the media.”

Big applause from the audience.

“This is not a cage match,” he said. “And you look at the questions—Donald Trump, are you a comic book villain? Ben

Carson, can you do math? John Kasich will you insult two people over here? Marco Rubio, why don't you resign? Jeb Bush, why have your numbers fallen? Why don't you talk about the substantive issues people care about?

More loud applause.

Marco Rubio got a few good shots in too. Much of the media, he said, was portraying Hillary Clinton as a big hero after the Benghazi hearing – despite the fact that she was shown to be a liar when she said the violence at the consulate that left four Americans dead was the result of an anti-Muslim video, when her own emails proved she knew that wasn't true.

The reaction from Brent Bozell, president of the conservative Media Research Center, may have been predictable, but it was legitimate nonetheless.

“The CNBC moderators acted less like journalists and more like Clinton campaign operatives,” he said. “What was supposed to be a serious debate about the many issues plaguing our economy was given up for one Democratic talking point after another served up by the so-call ‘moderators.’ They clearly war-gamed this thinking that a relentless series of personal attacks on the candidates would somehow drive their ratings and help Hillary Clinton.”

After the debate Bill O'Reilly asked me if NBC, the news organization that oversees CNBC, was in on the drive-by. I told him there was no conspiracy. No one met in a dark room, gave the secret handshake and salute, and said, “Let's screw those Republicans.”

Actually, it's worse than that. It's groupthink. They're liberal. They think pretty much alike. That's the nature of liberal bias in the media: too many people thinking the same way. They don't need marching orders to put out hits on Republican candidates for president. It just comes naturally to them.

But even though there's a good chance the folks at CNBC are busy congratulating themselves on how wonderful they were, most "civilians" know the obvious truth: Liberal journalists don't treat Democrats the way they treat Republicans. They slobbered over Barack Obama and they'll slobber over Hillary Clinton. They'll treat her campaign like a coronation and they'll treat the Republican campaign like an anti-abortion rally.

Republicans don't need an excuse to believe that liberal journalists are out to get them. Republicans have plenty of reasons not to trust the media. And the CNBC debate was only the latest one.