

# Rooting For Laundry

I reluctantly have come to believe that most Americans – whether they're members of the chattering class in the media or your next-door neighbor – have lost the ability, and sometimes even the desire, to persuade anyone to change his or her mind on just about any important issue. Too many of us have put a “Do Not Disturb” sign around our necks and don't want to be exposed to any ideas that we don't already hold.

If you think the AR-15 is a weapon that should remain legal, there's nothing anyone on the other side can say that will convince you to change your mind. If you think late-term abortion should be legal, no one on the other side is going to convince you otherwise.

Having strong beliefs and hanging on to your principles is a good thing. But as a friend puts it, it's not beliefs we're hanging on to, it's identity that we cling to; what matters most now is what team we play for.

Take cable TV. We don't watch opinion shows to consider what the other side is saying. We watch to get our own biases validated. If we're on the red team we want conservative opinion. And if we're on the blue team we look for liberal echo chambers that will confirm our progressive ideas. No one is watching the other side to learn something they hadn't already thought of.

And then there are those online videos where an interviewer asks college kids what they think of something President Trump supposedly said. Almost all of them, of course, hate it. But then they're told it wasn't really Donald Trump who made the statement – it was President Obama. Suddenly they don't hate the very same observation anymore. Now that they know it was their team captain who said it, they embrace the remark – usually without even a hint of embarrassment.

And remember when in 2012 at that presidential debate Mitt Romney said that Russia was America's "number one political foe" and President Obama got snarky and said, "The 1980s are now calling to ask for their foreign policy back because the Cold War's been over for 20 years."

When liberals weren't cheering for Mr. Obama they were laughing at Mr. Romney. Now, it's progressives who think Russia is a dangerous threat to our democracy and it's our Republican President who downplays Russia's interference in our presidential election. Here's a man who knows how to be angry but hasn't shown any public anger toward the Russians.

Who cares? Not the liberals who were on Mr. Obama's team and not the conservatives who are on Mr. Trump's.

At least people of deep faith have principles, right? You tell me. Evangelicals would never support a liberal presidential candidate who bragged about grabbing women in a sexual way. But millions of them were more than willing to look the other way when it was someone on their team who made the crude remark.

Liberals are suddenly concerned about the national debt. But when the debt doubled in 8 years under President Obama they yawned. Trump supporters couldn't stop talking about the debt when Mr. Obama was president. Now that their team is loading up on debt, it's Trump acolytes who are yawning.

You can try to run away from this unprincipled nonsense but there aren't a lot of safe havens anymore.

Once upon a time we could escape into the world of entertainment. But try watching one of those awards shows coming out of Hollywood. The glitterati talk a good game about diversity, but it's not diversity of opinion they want. Their minds are made up and nothing anyone on the other team can say or do will make one bit of difference.

As for Mr. Trump's most passionate supporters: They didn't flinch when their hero, rocker and gun enthusiast Ted Nugent told Barack Obama to "suck on my machine gun" or when he said, Mr. Obama and Hillary Clinton "should be tried for treason and hung,"

But when Kathy Griffin showed off a mask depicting a bloody and severed head of Donald Trump, the same hard right that cheered Ted Nugent demanded that Kathy Griffin be banished from civilized society.

Sports used to be another place where a lot of us went to escape the daily barrage of partisan politics. It's one thing for athletes to use their platforms to fight for worthy causes like civil rights. That's a good thing. But saying President Trump "doesn't give a f\*\*\* about the people" and calling him a "bum," as LeBron James did, crosses a line for me. So we get Fox host Laura Ingraham, who wrote a book called "Shut up and Sing" telling LeBron to "shut up and dribble" and then being attacked as a racist. And while we're here, just imagine if a white conservative athlete called Barack Obama a bum and said he didn't give a f\*\*\* about the people. Our outrage depends on what team we're rooting for.

Sports fans cheer for the star player who wears their team's uniform until he decides to put on another uniform and play for a rival that's offering him more money. Then they boo the very same guy. As Jerry Seinfeld said, fans are just cheering for clothes; they're rooting for laundry.

That's what a lot of us are doing – rooting for laundry. So tell me how this is good.