

# Election Special: To Hell With Civility by Rob Bokkon

I'm so tired of re-writing this article.

The drafts kept piling up and piling up and piling up, one after the other. I'd think I was done, and then—here comes the goddamn news again.

Shock. Anger. Horror.

And again.

And again.

And again, but way worse this time.

I'm beginning to feel like a character in a Borges story, or a Lev Grossman novel. A chronicler fated to write the same story over and over again, only to find that he has to begin it all over, once more, as soon as he reaches the end.

Because the atrocities just *will not stop*.

As of this writing, bombs are still traveling through the mail to “the enemy of the people,” the media. You know, like the headquarters of CNN. Those are words, you may recall, said by the sitting President of the United States. You probably forgot that quote, given the torrent of appalling things he says daily. This most recent bomb came on the heels of many other potentially deadly packages sent to the leaders of the Democratic Party, including two former Presidents.



Poster found on Purdue campus this past week. Photo: Patrick Johanns.

As of this writing, two black grandparents are dead in my home state of Kentucky, shot down in the produce section of a Kroger by an avowed white supremacist who was heard telling another person of his race, "whites don't kill whites." The shooter was a white supremacist who had attempted to gain access to an African-American church just minutes before shooting up the grocery store.

As of this writing, a synagogue in Pittsburgh has lost eleven of its congregation. They were shot, by a Nazi, in the United States of America, in the year 2018.

The worst thing is: by now you're almost OK with it.

Stop. I don't mean you condone it. I don't even mean you accept it. But I do mean that you're becoming, more and more each day, *used to it*.

The nature of fascist violence, fascist politics, fascist ideology, is not insidious. It is not subtle. It is not clever.

Fascism is brassy. Loud. Bombastic.

Overwhelming.

Eventually, you start to tune it out. Whether from compassion fatigue or a sincere desire to protect your own mental health or just sheer exhaustion, you start to push it aside. Ignore it. Convince yourself that someone else is doing something about it, just so you can focus on the important stuff like getting dinner ready or taking out the garbage or your kid's grades.

Which is, unfortunately, exactly what fascists want.

They are counting on you to be overwhelmed. They are counting on you to change the channel. They are counting on you to see so much hateful rhetoric, so much ethnic violence, so much anti-LGBT+ legislation that you just can't anymore.

And so this, gentle reader, is where we are. We have actual Nazis marching the streets. We have a government that refuses to do anything about it, that is known to cultivate them for votes and political support, that only makes the most terse and backhanded of statements "condemning" them.

We have a Supreme Court likely to deliver the death knell to the last vestiges of a woman's right to choose, in the United States of America.

We have an executive branch making determined and deliberate assaults on LGBT+ rights on a scale literally never before seen. The rabble-rousing polemics of the George W. Bush administration, the casual hatred of Reagan: these are nothing compared to the systemic offenses committed by Trump, Pence and their evangelical cronies. The transgender military ban,

the attacks on title IX, the effort to ban the same-sex spouses of diplomats from entering the USA—all a product of Trump's America.

See? You're tired already. You've heard it all, or if you haven't, you're not surprised.

There are worse things than being tired, though.

Actively encouraging this stuff, for example. Those people, though—the ones who still support Trump, the ones who think his plan to end birthright citizenship (and with it the Fourteenth Amendment) is a great idea, the ones who believed the Democrats actually mailed bombs to themselves—those people are lost to any rational appeal. We can't count on them anymore. They've been given the opportunity to regret their decision, to show some basic decency, and they're not going to do it.

And yet, we have among us those who are, to my mind, even worse than the Trumpites. That would be the legions of people standing around wringing their hands and wondering aloud why we can't all get along. The people yelling about “the discourse.” The people who inevitably seem to lecture the left on something called “civility” while utterly ignoring the actual fascists marching in the streets.

These would be that lofty political class known as “the moderates.” I say “lofty” because every single last one of them will tell you, at some length, about their moral superiority to “extremists.” They “don't vote party, they vote for candidates.” They “refuse to condemn someone over something as trivial as politics.” They “remember when there was a spirit of bipartisanship in this country.” And what's more, they will tell you in no uncertain terms why you're what's wrong with this nation, and how it doesn't help to call Nazis what they are, and...I'm making myself sick writing this.

I just don't understand. Twenty or thirty years ago, maybe, I

could see that sort of thinking. Back when the GOP wasn't entirely composed of homophobes and plutocrats. Back when the Democratic Party still nurtured a few nasty Dixiecrat types. Back when neither party much cared about LGBT rights. Back when the GOP still believed in the social safety net. But now?

Now, in this day and age, you're telling me "you vote candidate over party" when the party platform of the GOP is explicitly anti-LGBT? You're telling me that you're sometimes OK with taking away a woman's right to choose? You're telling me that you're sometimes OK with dismantling the entirety of the New Deal and the Great Society? You're telling me that you're sometimes OK with a brutal and xenophobic, to say nothing of racist, immigration policy?

You're *sometimes* OK with the guy who was endorsed by Nazis?

Fuck that. And fuck the calls for "civility" from these very same, amoral people. These people will tie themselves in knots over Mitch McConnell getting his dinner interrupted, but then blithely ignore the fact that he is actively seeking to remove health care from millions upon millions of aged and poor people. They get upset when people shout at Sarah Sanders, but ignore the fact that she lies for, and repeats the lies of, a man who is actively placing children in cages because their parents had the audacity to seek asylum in the United States of America.

When they say "civility" they don't even know what they mean by it. They think they're calling for politeness. They think they're calling for decorum. But you cannot be polite to someone who is actively seeking to disenfranchise, dehumanize or otherwise harm you through the apparatus of the state. You cannot afford common social graces to people who, through their hateful rhetoric, inspire acts of terror against marginalized groups. You cannot extend greater consideration for those who would oppress you than they would extend to you.

Because to do so is to cede power. To do so is to say, “You are deserving of better treatment than I am.” To do so is to prop up the very power structures that are currently aimed at us like weapons, to be complicit in our own ruin.

Martin Luther King did not sit down with the leaders of the KKK. Gandhi did not concede that the British Raj “had some ideas worth considering”. And Marsha P. Johnson was not worried about respect, or civility, or decorum when she threw the first brick at the NYPD during the Stonewall riots. She was worried about her survival. Her right to exist. Her right to be a fully recognized human being.

So no, I won’t be civil to these fascists. Not now. Not ever. And you shouldn’t either.

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## Bernie Sanders Wins in Iowa!



dit: J. David Ake, AP.  
Senator Bernie Sanders and  
his wife, Jane.

Regardless of what the official results might say, Bernie

Sanders won the night in Iowa. The margin reported by most media outlets shows Hillary Clinton at 49.8% and Sanders at 49.6%, but there have been enough reports of [shenanigans](#), [voter fraud](#), and [missing results](#) from various precincts to call into question the value of the caucus process in showing the people's choice for the Democratic nominee. What is abundantly clear, however, is that Bernie Sanders is no fringe candidate. The showing by the Sanders campaign in Iowa could be exactly what Bernie Sanders needs to [shake and bake](#) right past Hillary Clinton in the race to be the Democratic Party's nominee.

So without further ado, here are the top three reasons why Bernie Sanders was the real winner in the Iowa Caucus.

#### **Bernie Sanders Has All the Momentum**

Clinton gained nothing of value, and Sanders won the surprise of pundits and coverage from the mainstream media machine. Bernie Sanders was expected to lose, but his campaign is [energized](#) and Clinton's campaign is [scared](#). She may have won by 0.02% according to most mainstream reports, but Hillary Clinton won a [Pyrrhic](#) victory, and it's one she will not easily recover from.

Sanders and Clinton virtually tied, and Iowa's delegates are not awarded on a winner-take-all basis, so the tie goes to the candidate who exceeded expectations, clearly Sanders. At the Democratic National Convention, Sanders and Clinton will receive the [same number of delegates](#) from the state of Iowa, so Sanders has lost nothing. Clinton, on the other hand, has lost the air of invincibility that carried her months ago.

Bernie Sanders will now move into New Hampshire as an even stronger favorite. Sanders is out of the gate garnering nearly 50% of the vote in Iowa when just months ago Sanders was in [single digits](#) in the polls. A tie in Iowa and a win in New Hampshire just may give Sanders the momentum he needs to gain

the backing of more establishment Democrats.

#### **Bernie Sanders Showed the Nation that Hillary Clinton Can Lose**

[Ruth Marcus](#) asked the perfect question when trying to decide who won the tie: “Which campaign was celebrating Monday night, and which was trying to figure out what went wrong?” Hillary Clinton has long been the presumptive nominee, and the mainstream media has viewed Bernie Sanders as nothing more than a modern-day Ross Perot. Far from being an outlier to shake up the political conversation, Bernie Sanders demonstrated his mass appeal and ability to contend.

At best, the media made it seem like Bernie Sanders was simply pulling Hillary Clinton [further left](#), but he had no chance to actually win the nomination. In Iowa last night, Bernie Sanders showed the world that [Hillary Clinton can be beaten](#). Considering many have shied away from Bernie Sanders because they view him as unelectable, the clear fallibility Clinton exhibited in her “win” will do nothing but give reluctant Sanders supporters the push they need to really feel the Bern.

#### **Bernie Sanders Established Himself as the Voice of the Future**

In a bit of an ironic turn, the old white man gained the most votes from the younger and more progressive generation. Among the Democratic voter age groups, Sanders pulled the following [overwhelming numbers](#):

- Under 25: Sanders won 86% of the vote.
- 25-39: Sanders won 81% of the vote.
- 31-39: Sanders won 65% of the vote.

Just as the younger voters carried Barack Obama in crushing Hillary Clinton’s presidential dreams, there is no reason younger voters won’t do the same for Bernie Sanders. John Cassidy summed it up perfectly in [The New Yorker](#): “When you are so heavily reliant on support from older voters, it is tricky to project yourself as the voice of the future.”



The thing is, Sanders wants voters to have the power—as they should. As such, he’s demonstrated integrity no one in our younger generation has ever seen from a politician, refusing to take money from PACs and big businesses. His reward has manifested itself in [broken fundraising records](#) that show no sign of slowing. His fundraising has come from individual donors, which means far more voters are personally invested in Bernie Sanders than in any other candidate. Win or lose, it shows that there is hope yet for our system of democracy.

Matt Shuham wrote in [The Independent](#), “In a post-*Citizens United* era...the Sanders camp is placing a bet that rarely pays off in American politics: that absent mega-donors, PACs or the support of a party establishment, the machinery of public opinion can run on conviction alone.” Even with a technical loss in Iowa, Sanders won the Iowa caucus. In a democratic-republic in which the voting public shows up en masse and ensures the system runs on conviction alone and not on the whims of mega-donors and media moguls, everyone wins.