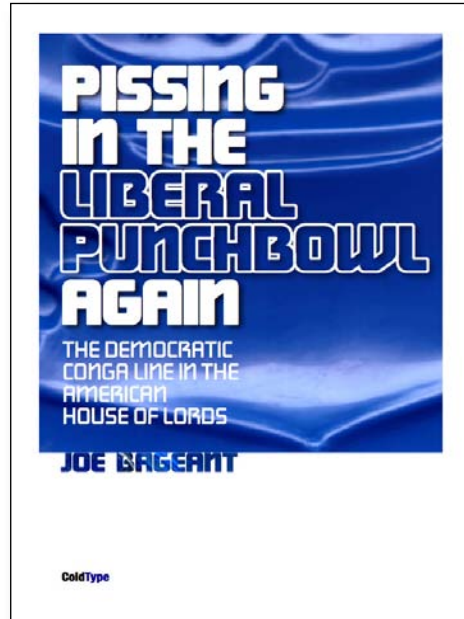


**PISSING
IN THE
LIBERAL
PUNCHBOWL
AGAIN**

THE DEMOCRATIC
CONGA LINE IN
THE AMERICAN
HOUSE OF LORDS

JOE BAGEANT



Joe Bageant is the author of the forthcoming book, **Deer Hunting With Jesus: Dispatches from America's Class War** from Random House Crown on working class America, to be released on April 24, 2007.

A complete archive of his online work, along with the thoughts of many working class Americans on the subject of class may be found at www.joebageant.com.

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Saw the talking heads today, speaking the priestly tongue. Saw them nodding seriously, using words like 'gravitas' and a few others that originated in the bosom of Americana. Heard one of the newly elected basically state that things would be business as usual, don't expect a lot of changes. Rather scornfully and testily the idea of impeaching W was dismissed. Well, why the hell not? No answer, just the satisfied, mildly contemptuous smile. Oh, yes, and there'll be a lot of 'bipartisan' things going on.

– Key Bugle, Internet denizen, retired army seargent

Democrats are dancing around the head of Donald Rumsfeld like a scene from Lord of the Flies, heating up the tar buckets and plucking the goose in eager, nay, wild, anticipation. Personally, I love the smell of tar and feathers in the morning and am quite willing to march on the White House as we speak. I like revenge as well as the next guy. But I also consider myself a compassionate man, one perfectly willing to let Bush's cabinet choose whether they wanna play the mommy or the daddy in the Big House, then move on to the real problems, such as the fact that a gallon of Old Grandad is nearly 50 bucks here in Virginia, or the fact that we are still a nation of people, half of whom were happy to elect a bunch of war criminals – TWICE! – and still are.

Ah, but lo and beshit, the Democrats have rescued us. If you can call running around like chickens with their heads up their asses while the Republicans did what they always do – get caught stealing the national silverware, while bombing the hell out of some miserable piece of dirt as a distraction, thereby self-destructing in 12 years as usual, but getting obscenely rich in the process.

Pardon my cynicism, but the view is pretty damned sorry from here in the cheap seats. From down here it looks like every Yankee liberal north of Virginia seems convinced they are now shitting in such tall cotton, that all they need do from here on out is foist Hillary Clinton on the many poor miserable bastards unfortunate enough to be called heartland Democrats because we don't have the balls to become heavily armed libertarians. Nominating Hillary might just drive us to it.

Meanwhile, we watch the only woman who can give the ambitious Hillary a run for the money when it comes to “the sneer behind the smile,” Nancy Pelosi. (Sorry

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Nancy, I used to get hot in unmentionable body areas when you stepped in front of the cameras, before I saw your financial reports and the shiv in your stockings. Now, call me a chauvinist, but somehow, you come off much the same as Condi Rice and Hillary.) Then it's on to the main act, in which we watch Honey Boy Obama "pass" in elite liberal society as a goddamned negro, for christ sake! Will wretched wonders never end?

I don't know a single black person who is nearly as impressed with Barack Obama as they are with Bill Clinton, and yes, most of them DO understand that Clinton fucked everybody who works for a living with his shell game called NAFTA. Not to mention the cruel farce of "workfare." Obama, the child of a black/white student tryst in Honolulu, (natural daddy was from Kenya and a Harvard man) was raised in Indonesia by a diplomat step-father and white mother, then he was sent off to Punahou School, Hawaii's equivalent of Sidwell Friends in DC, where Chelsea and similar children of royalty go. B.O. just doesn't fool American blacks into believing he sweats bullets every time a police car lights up behind him in the traffic. Unlike Clinton, he does not gain weight easily and does not even attempt to play the sax. To Obama's credit, he does have at least as many body guards as any hip-hop star ... and let's face it, he only has to pass with white urban liberals to be deemed the great mocha hope of urban liberal Americans who swear they have not an ounce of race consciousness.

Aw shit. Now I've gone and pissed in the liberal punch bowl again, so I guess it's no more fancy little water crackers with brie and truffle preserves for me at the next Democratic fundraiser. I'm too fat anyway.

I nevertheless rooted for the Democrats just like everybody else. How could anyone in their right mind and possessing a smidgen of morals not have been pulling for the Democratic Westchester Country Club Pussy Mafia, sheerly out of revulsion for the other choice – a real mafia. It's the old American political pendulum thing, back and forth between parties.

Americans take comfort in the spoonfed "pendulum" theory of politics. No matter that the pendulum smacks them in the goddamned head at either end of the swing, because supposedly, it achieves some democracy preserving balance. To my mind, it merely offers a different faux target for citizen discontent every four years, so the same powers behind the powers can continue to extract wealth and sucker the public into consumer confidence and the latest Wall Street Ponzi scheme, or fighting

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wars to obtain more wealth and to protect what the elites have already piled up. Yet American tolerance for this pendulum bullshit, for this set of fake choices between two powerful groups of political elites who are dancing in the Washington conga line, asshole to belly button pretending they are alternatives to each another, seems endless.

Just what on god's green earth do liberals think the Democrats are going to do after they finish singing "This is the Dawning of the Age of Aquarius?" Really? What to do after they spend a few more years indexing the Republican crimes? The Republicans have the stolen geet, the Dems have a two-year ticket to ride, and the working guy and the middle class are pretending they are not about to get the worst reaming since Herbert Hoover was president. What are the Democrats to do, dear Nelly, pray tell? Well, it would be nice if they would immediately move to dismantle the police state that is so well under construction. And ideally they might begin to address the real problems that constitute the very shaky stage upon our delusional "American lifestyle" movie is being played out – peak oil and the collapse of the environment. When it comes to the peak oil crisis, their best shot seems to be Al Gore telling us to hang our clothes on lines and turn down the thermostats, never once mentioning, much less blaming, the corporations that keep our nation addicted to oil, and are responsible for bankrolling the Bush/Cheney junta that brought us this ongoing national nightmare in the first place.

If Dems have not learned from what nearly happened to America's constitution in the past six years, we are in deep shit. We are still in deep shit even if they did learn, but at least have cause for fresh false hope. But we may assume, until they prove otherwise, that the elites of the Democratic leadership are immune to the real life consequences of their economic and political decisions. I seriously doubt that they will push for any of the things inherent to a civilized post-industrial society, such as ABSOLUTELY FREE universal health care, or ABSOLUTELY FREE universal higher education, or even letting the tens of thousands of poor hapless fucking potheads out of this nation's now privatized prison system. Or kicking McDonald's and Coke out of the nation's school lunch programs. And do you actually think they are going to address America's unspoken class system? Nope! But they will use the word class a bit more, just for its resonance of authenticity, but only should it become absolutely necessary.

On the other hand, the Democrats are going to raise the minimum wage. They will

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do so because even the Republicans are willing to do it now. And they will raise it to somewhere around seven bucks, which is half of what it takes to eat and shit with any regularity in this country, and they will do it in three timid steps stretching out over hell only knows how long.

To be fair here, the Democrats have fifty-one seats. Fifty-one ain't sixty, which is what it takes to accomplish anything by fiat at the syndicate headquarters on East Capitol Street. Still, they can accomplish much if they have enough hair on their asses to fight the good fight. If they get out of their limos and set out on foot without their entourage of royal eunuchs to find the good fight.

Otherwise, they will or will not fight the good fight in the marble royal citadel where three out of every 100 people are homeless. And in a fit of high dudgeon, they will order blanket subpoenas for half the Republican Party to testify, which is not going to put a single blanket over their bruised asses of the nearby homeless as they rustle around on damp cardboard under the watchful eye of the city's several thousands of security cameras, cameras that manage to catch the average DC resident some 250 times a day (nanny cams excluded), cameras that document protesters with facial recognition software, cameras that make 81 percent of residents "feel safer, according to surveys – even though they do not reduce crime, according to the police chief himself. Like the Republicans, the Democrats understand that people now believe their chances of being attacked by swarthy terrorists are greater than their chances of being mugged by the crackhead on the corner. The residual fear of our 12-year ordeal will be there a long time, if it ever disappears at all. Democrats believe they must continue to play to that irrational fear to get elected. Which will only perpetuate the fear. Meanwhile, President Sparky fiddles with his veto pen in the Oval Office, while Rove and Cheney plot to leave the Dems with as many unpaid bills on the table as possible. Nobody said it would be easy.

Internationally speaking, the picture is no better. It's pretty doubtful anyone will publicly fess up to the fact that the whole damned world hates us, and that a recent poll found that just about everybody but the Japanese and the South Koreans consider us far more dangerous than Kim Il Sung's North Korean nuclear zoo. The soon-to-come investigations of Cheney and Rumsfeld may make jolly spectacle for the American public, even entertain the Europeans for a while, with its examination as to how our illegal invasion, complete destruction and occupation of a sovereign country was "mishandled" – if the actions of a rogue nation can be said to be mis-

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handled – which will distract the citizenry for a while longer. But the Democratic Party will never challenge the militarism that has made war the resort of first option so acceptable to so many Americans. Cutting defense spending by half remains unthinkable, even though it would still leave us with one quarter of all the world's weapons and four fifths of the world's viable nuclear firepower. Despite that the savings would rebuild every school in then nation, or send every American child through college or technical school, or wipe out homelessness in one fell swoop, or pay for nationalized health care for all (if the insurance company leeches are dumped in the process), or public transit.

Democrats like being THE liberal party. They like being the only game in town for anyone who thinks that maybe, just maybe, a police state might not be the best idea we can come up with, or that the Bible may not have been written as a physics or biological treatise. For anything to change at all, Democrats are going to have to actually lead the liberal tribes, make liberal Americans understand that there is too much at stake to let the divisiveness of gender, identity, and single issue politics keep us so divided. Otherwise, when the cheap oil fiesta is over, which will be within most people's lifetimes, if not my own, when real economic collapse is on the horizon, Americans will switch on the same reptilian survival brain they did when they elected Bush. Assuming they ever turn it off.

If so many other nations can come to understand what is really at stake in our times, and modify their national programs and ambitions to accommodate the Kyoto Agreements or energy reductions, or cleaner fuel standards, or land mine bans, or the need for a world court on atrocity, or even the Geneva Conventions for crap sake, there is no reason we cannot do the same, other than lack of international leadership by the people we elect (or presume to elect.) Some domestic leadership would be nice, too. Hell, 18 states have a higher minimum wage than the fed standard, 12 states have tried to modify coal fired emission standards on their own (only to be stymied by our elected government). Is there any will at all to do the right thing?

It may be possible the will exists within the American public to do the right thing, a rather dodgy assumption given that they we been fed on a complete diet of supremacy and misinformation for three decades. But even if it is still possible, it will take leadership. And by leadership, we don't mean such crap as "We will deliver a better plan than Bush for the war in Iraq." We bombed the fuck out of a sovereign nation, killed hundreds of thousands of innocents, instituted an illegal occupation

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that makes Germany's French occupation look like a bridge party (Really! Go read about it sometime). And we made the world a more dangerous place in the process. We don't need a fucking plan. We need to admit our guilt to the world, then beg forgiveness and demonstrate our sincerity through reparations. THAT is the right thing to do. But we won't.

The Democratic Party does America not one bit of good by sustaining the hubris that has brought us to the point where our high officials and former officials such as Rumsfeld and Alberto Gonzales (and others yet to be charged, we suspect) cannot travel in countries like Germany because of war crime indictments. Someone has to ask, "How did we come to this?" Ask "How can we not only change our course, but also make amends and prove to the world that we are worthy of trust?" It would be of great help if we were actually worthy of trust.

It ain't gonna happen because, just like George Bush, we as a people never admit our mistakes. Not as long as we are packing more heat than all the rest of the world combined. We are the five percent of the planet consuming a quarter of its resources on the grounds of divine entitlement as Americans. And the heat we pack. Think the Dems are gonna address that? Address that belligerent two-ton rhino in the sand-box called the American Lifestyle? Nobody will, and that refusal will ensure our downfall. Rhinos can be taken down, and you don't have to be Hemingway to do it. Ask any 12-year-old Syrian or Palestinian boy. It's their dream. Any bookie will tell you that odds are good that at least one of those millions of boys will accomplish his dream. Providence is like that.

We haven't got forever. So, come next election, every ordinary working American should ask: "What have Democrats done that made the world better? What have they done to make my life measurably and observably healthier and more humanly secure, reduced my toil and increased my daily happiness?" The answer probably won't be good. And the Democratic leadership will not care anyway, except to the extent that it disrupts the party conga line. Because they know one thing: You don't have any other choice. It's either them or the Republicans, and we all now know what the GOP is capable of, given the opportunity. In the end, it is only our indecisiveness and misinformation, our lack of courage and our willingness to live smaller, morally diminished lives in one political camp or the other, that keeps the American public evenly split into the two non-choices that represent our political system.

We let the Republicans bitch slap the hell out of us for a few years while they pick

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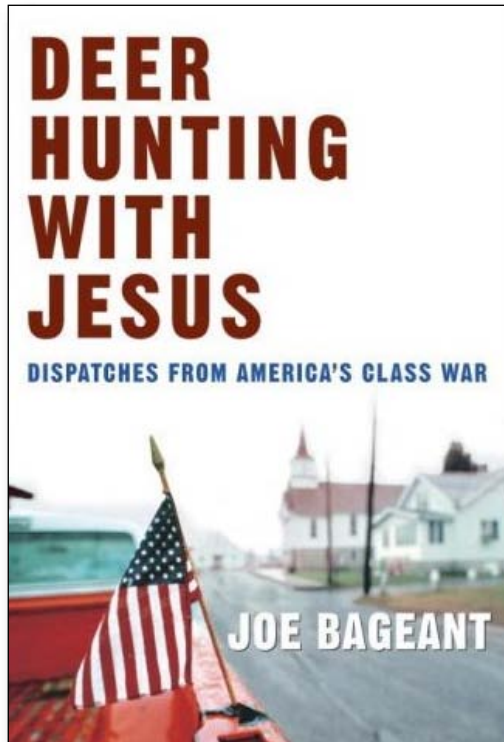
our pockets, then we elect the Democrats who refuse to slap anyone publicly, but allow the same corporate- military- financial gang to continue picking our pockets while we are recuperating.

You know it. I know it. But until we unlearn our gratitude for momentary perceived relief, unlearn our helplessness, until we quit the hypnotic myth of the pendulum, and openly resist the pretense together, regardless of whether we are white, black, queer, middle class or poor, tenured professor or illegal immigrant student, Southern Scots-Irish redneck or well-heeled New York Jewish professional, nothing will change.

Best to forget the conga line up there on the media stage – this ain't the dawning of the Age of Aquarius. It's just another rest stop on the long march toward that too well known destination no free human being ever chose of his or her own accord. Democratic victory or not, Americans still lead ever smaller lives, in belief that a low profile and the right party allegiances will preserve them, and that someone else, someone with less to lose, will take the risks necessary to right some of the most terrible wrongs the world has seen.

Men live small lives because they believe it offers them safety. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Ask any German or Old World Jew.



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DEER HUNTING WITH JESUS: Dispatches From America's Class War

"Many friends and readers will notice that the title has changed to *Deer Hunting With Jesus: Dispatches From America's Class War*. The original title was *Drink, Pray, Fight, Fuck: Dispatches From America's Class War*. Contrary to what one might suspect, the name change had not as much to do with the word "fuck" as it did the fact that a book was recently released with a very similar title. Then too, when I started putting the title "Drink, Pray, Fight, Fuck" on the web, it kicked off some merchandising by small scale entrepreneurs of ball caps, tee-shirts, etc. bearing the four words. Which is no problem with me – I like to see the little guy printing tee-shirts make a buck" – JOE BAGEANT

Pre-order now from www.amazon.com/Deer-Hunting-Jesus-Dispatches-Americas/dp/030733936X/ref=pd_sxp_f_pt/104-7289464-5668749?ie=UTF8

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