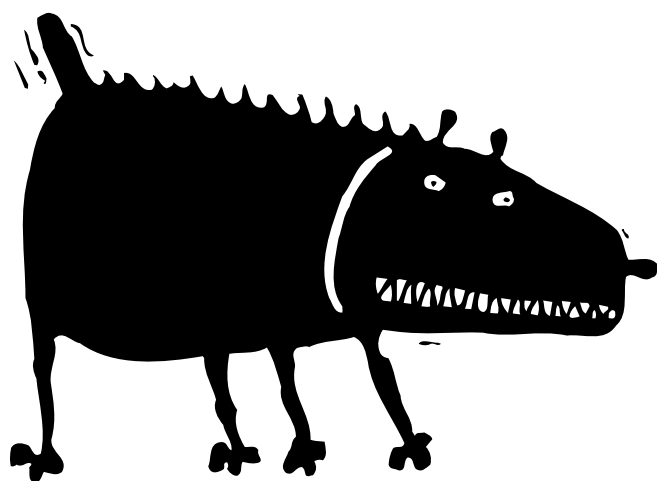
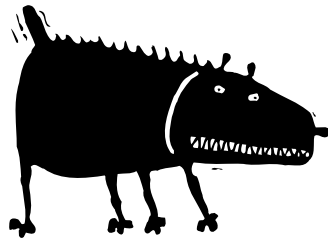


ONE  
LAST KICK  
AT THE  
LIBERAL  
DOG



JOE BAGEANT

**ONE  
LAST KICK  
AT THE  
LIBERAL  
DOG**



**JOE BAGEANT**

© Joe Bageant 2005

**ColdType**

WRITING WORTH READING FROM AROUND THE WORLD  
[www.coldtype.net](http://www.coldtype.net)

## JOE BAGEANT / ONE LAST KICK AT THE LIBERAL DOG

*“Why do you rope-belted redneck mouthbreathers assume that if a liberal drinks a glass of wine they are going to attack people like you? You know, it is just possible that someone can eat a piece of cheese for some other reason than hating rednecks.”*  
– Posted on Smirking Chimp website by Wile E Chimp Supergenius



any American liberals believe working class conservatives see them as the enemy—that they stereotype liberals as a bunch of over-educated quasi-queers sucking down cappuccinos at Starbucks or spreading brie at some at a self-help book signing...or something like that. We can thank television for such ignorance.

Yet it is no small liberal hubris that assumes working class conservative voters are as obsessed with liberals as liberals are with themselves. Not to pop progressive bubbles, but the working class people I know seldom ever think about liberals. Or conservatives. Hell, they seldom even think about politics. True, most people born working class experience some class resentment when they see the college educated middle class liberals on television. But that is about all.

It is understandable that liberals are touchy these days. Having recently had their noses broken in a rigged election by the Bushista brownshirts, well, that would make anyone hysterical and paranoid. Or depressed. But it helps to remember this: It is not the blue collars, but the business and professional class neo-conservatives who do all the damned yapping about evil liberal values. Put your political ear to the ground and you will notice that the noise is coming from the religious nutjobs and the neo-con professional and semi-professional classes. You'll never believe me but I'm gonna say it anyway: Ordinary working class people do not care about abortion, gay marriage, stem cell research, or any of the other happy horse shit the pundits sling around (except gun control.) They really don't. If you ask them about it they will

## **JOE BAGEANT / ONE LAST KICK AT THE LIBERAL DOG**

reflexively puke up what they heard on talk radio. But they truly don't care because they are too busy making a living and trying to have a little fun along the way. Not to mention evading the same unpleasant truths as liberals, such as peak oil, or the fact that all Americans are part of the world's worst problems because we consume way too much of everything.

Why the political choices of the working classes at the polls are so thoughtlessly and poorly shaped is another matter, and has almost entirely to do with education...more on that later. One thing is for sure: The Republicans won their votes as much by Democratic default as by the neo-cons' carefully organized demonization of all things leftward. And they were much helped when the Democratic leadership shot its own feet off by nominating the sad sack John Kerry and neutering the approximately populist John Edwards. Yes, yes, I know it's water under the bridge...but we need to learn from it. Overall, the Republicans won because the sorry assed Democratic leadership does live that foppy latte sipping, European vacationing, summer home, kids off at college, smelly cheese eating hundred dollar an hour lifestyle that the Repugs made such hay over (even as many gopper elites live it themselves). Working people should have seen the big schnickle coming back when one of Bill Clinton's main men said, "Working class? There is no working class."

If you stand back and look, it is easy to see that the liberal stereotype is mainly false. Very few rank and file liberals I know make gobs of money. So why can they so easily be labeled that way? Well, the poor bastards apparently think even the worst label is better than no label. With nothing constructive to offer and no counter plan to Bush's corporate sponsored Christian gulag, they appear happy to be associated with any sort of image or celebrity that will attach to them. Thus they seem satisfied to let the Jane Fondas and such addled twits as the Al Frankens of the world represent them publicly. Why liberals do not kick Jane Fonda off the island is beyond me. Don't get me wrong, I still admire her trip to Hanoi, even if she was a mindless little rich girl. (And besides, hotties in my age group are scarce as hell.) However, now that she has gutlessly renounced her Hanoi trip so she can sell more books, I am thinking of shifting my fantasy life to the "Over 50" amateur porn websites...none of which have ever let their constituencies down morally or ethically, as far as I know.

Why liberals think a hysterical urban wimp version of Rush Limbaugh in the form of Al Franken is the solution to anything is also way beyond me. If I thought Al

## **JOE BAGEANT / ONE LAST KICK AT THE LIBERAL DOG**

Franken for one moment represented American liberalism, I would kiss Dick Cheney's ass and wash his car for free. One thing for sure. It is symptomatic of a complete lack of ideas, inspiration and leadership. Just once I would like to see some liberal icon, say Ted Kennedy, stand up with an sawed-off 12-gauge and say, "You can pry this gun from my cold dead hands *after* I have taken out Sean Hannity and Grover Nordquist!" Seriously, liberals gotta heavy up, or they are going to be just another substance to be scraped off Republican shoes. Perhaps they already are.

What are the Democrats offering working class folks? Do they dare say: "Your health care is non-existent so we're gonna fix it by completely socializing all health care, period. Fuck the upper middle class medical racketeers." Do they stand up and say, "We are going to completely stop the outsourcing of American jobs?" Or that those goddamned fraud elections are over and will never happen again? Are they out there door to door educating the people, connecting the dots for them? Hell no. Instead they field, as one of my readers put it, "*...cheerleaders for exactly the kind of global corporate suck down that is leaving the working class shattered and more vulnerable every day. In the wake of the Kerry disaster, who is now the front-runner for 2008? Hillary.*"

Holy mother of hip hop Jesus, give me strength! Could they possibly have found a more chilly and unappealing wonk bitch in the eyes of working people? Look, she may have tried to fix health care at one time. But trying ain't doing. She will get points for it but just because the hack party machinery can get her elected in New York does not mean the rest of the country is going to let her off so easily.

I am told by historians that working Americans in general have never been liberals, and have voted against their own best interests many times since the first congressional candidates rolled out the barrels of rum to liquor up the voters. But thoughtful liberals have nonetheless been able to generate enough civilized social consciousness to keep us from devolving back into the pack of murderous hyenas that is our national inclination. And if we can pull it off one more time we will be left with the biggest mess ever seen in this country. I've said it before: If we do manage to stave off a GOP totalitarian state, somebody is going have to pick up the working class roadkill with bare hands. But before we will even be allowed to do that dirty job, some of us will have to get out there and do the hard work of educating the people and spelling it out for them and moving hearts and minds. It will not be easy. Poorly educated people who have been screwed hard for decades are prone to cog-

## **JOE BAGEANT / ONE LAST KICK AT THE LIBERAL DOG**

nitive dissonance, which means you will be blamed for all their troubles. We will have to suck it in. Set our precious egos aside and work for something larger and more important than ourselves. It will be ugly. But it won't be all ugliness.

One of the reasons Republicans win is because our nation was founded on terminal self-interest. Everyone responds to greed. Outside of church walls, average Americans, particularly white ones, ultimately do not give a rip about brotherhood or idealism, the environment or their neighbors. Our ancestors came here so they could own more stuff and get richer. And our idea of freedom is centered on some twisted notion of "the freedom to get rich," the freedom to walk over anybody to make your million if you can get away with it. That is the kernel of our national culture. Perhaps it is the only culture such a diverse horde of immigrants could have created. Enough to eat and a fistful of folding cash were the only things the poor suffering bastards could agree upon when they arrived. That kind of struggle makes you mean. And the meaner we get the more likely we are to vote for the meanest candidate (because we something of ourselves in them.) When it comes to meanness, Republicans have never been in short supply. It might even be that the Republicans represent the party of durable meanness in our black/white American psyche. Americans have been a mean assed people for a long time, though nobody will admit it. Add to that the current social splintering into narrower interest, ethnic and economic tribes and you have the very soup of meanness. Rednecks don't like blacks. Urban Jews hold rednecks in contempt. Arabs hate Jews. Jews hate'm right back. And the largest voting group of all, the cornpone Christians, ever on the lookout for fresh enemies as they act out their vengeful god fable, hate just about everybody, thereby making them the handiest tool of all for the political party of exclusion and loathing.

Fat slick suburban Anglo-Americans and seedy rednecks are not the only putty in GOP paws. Self interested people come in every stripe imaginable, including black, yellow and red. I've watched good Hindus and Muslims and Jews come to this country as decent pious souls, and then after making some real dough for a change, turn into the most disgusting, mindless, bigoted consumers that ever clawed the isles of Wal-Mart or Bonwit Teller. One of my doctors is from Eritrea. Grew up poor in a remote village. But now that he is shitting in the tall cotton of the medical racket here in the States, he tells me that his people are really going to have to "suffer much, much more so they can learn the practical lessons of capitalism, thereby joining the

## **JOE BAGEANT / ONE LAST KICK AT THE LIBERAL DOG**

modern world.” Now this is a guy who grew up burning goat meat on a stick, yet the “American Dream” transformed him into a Republican asshole. Go figure. I changed doctors.

Bullshit media pundits and neo-conservative scam artists alike claim we have a classless society. The former do it because they are naïve coiffed twits, the latter because this national lie serves them well. However, if there is not a class system in this country, then “grits ain’t groceries, eggs ain’t poultry and the Mona Lisa was a man!” Yep, class hatred in this country is real. Just ask any African American. Ask the Scots Irish trailer trash. Ask the Jamaican janitor with three jobs. Just ask me. Obviously, I write these things out of class resentment. It comes with human society. It’s in the hard wiring. When those first Assyrian towns – the basis of future civilization – came into being about 700 BC, class hatred probably came right along with them. The Assyrians with the most weapons and biggest granaries put their homes at the top of the hill and let the sewerage flow in ditches right down to the little progenitors of Levittown that sprawled below. (“Goddammit Tiglat, those snotty Sargons on the hill are partying and throwing their empty wine skins in our yard!”) About the only new twist is that today’s rich have found a way to stoke the fires of class resentment to warm their own interests, constituting some sort of dark genius, for sure.

Still, the main denominator of the American class system is not money. Many blue-collar working people earn the same as, or more than, say schoolteachers. It is education that makes the difference in lives, not to mention the fate of nations. That is why repressive neo-conservatives have been so busy dismantling our public educational systems. An educated public would never put up with their shit.

The neo-cons can get away with it because they have no real opposition. Because Democrats are pussies. Given that the liberal elements of our materially blessed society have not insisted upon equal free and universal education for every citizen at any and all cost – as does nearly every other civilized industrial nation – they are now paying the price of their own self-interest. For thirty years the behavior and actions of rank and file liberals have spoken for them, even if their mouths have not: “Hey, my family gets everyone through college, so fuck the rednecks over there in Dogpatch!” That worked fine for a while. A very long while. But now that working class resentments are stoked by the ultracon media, political and entertainment elite, well, liberals are genuinely fucked. I don’t know a single one who acknowledges

## **JOE BAGEANT / ONE LAST KICK AT THE LIBERAL DOG**

the real seat of the problem – lack of universal education and programs to stimulate and inspire youth toward it. Our ideas of education are as Darwinian and ruthless as our notions of work and pay. It should not be that way for the kids.

However, most liberals at this writing prefer to believe that evil masterminds in the Bush administration are stage managing it all. Which they are as best they can. But the educated American left's refusal to be its laboring brother's keeper, its lack of militancy in general, is at the root of the current inter-class wars that the elites on both sides have dubbed "culture wars," in an effort to keep the debate on their own mutually elitist terms and to avoid dealing with working people's needs. It is easier to deal with "cultural matters" than to get off our asses and fix things or cough up the fortunes it will take just to have a voice in media at all, now that it is owned by the pigs we let out of the pen when we fell asleep after the 1970s.

The other way to escape our progressive responsibility is to scorn the supposed stupidity of the millions of fellow Americans who voted for President Sparky. They are the wrong targets. We in the United States are easily the most brainwashed population on earth, when it comes to being exposed to an extremely sophisticated flood of calculated misinformation. Without changing that, we can never win.

Sure, it is true that America's working people have devolved into a nation of beer soaked sports slobs and Wal-Mart bots. Having been raised among them, married to and divorced from a couple of them, I think I can safely say that, much like the Bush family, my people probably should not be allowed to reproduce. Yet liberalism is supposed to be about leveling the playing field, which in this society means education. And as added bonus, education does a helluva lot toward alleviating the aforementioned meanness. I can personally testify that, even though I've worked many crap jobs for lousy money under the fists of some of the worst assholes American management has to offer, I was able to survive it and grow because I had broadened my interior horizons through education. An autodidactic from birth, knowledge saved me from becoming mean enough to join the Republican Party. Which requires an unusual blend of meanness, stupidity and obliviousness to all things not involving money; I may not have had the right stuff anyway, but happily, I will never know.

I had a guy jump me on some internet bulletin board the other day, Smirking Chimp I believe it was, who said: "*But your friends hate education. Be honest about that. How are you going to educate kids whose parents don't value it? You yourself show*



## **JOE BAGEANT / ONE LAST KICK AT THE LIBERAL DOG**

*deep resentment towards educated people – and you are one. Imagine how much you'd hate people like me if you weren't educated."*

To which I respectfully say: "Batcrap!" My working class people do not hate education; they don't even know what the hell it is because nobody in their families has ever had one. It's the class they hate, not education. Don't you think people in my very family wouldn't be proud as hell to say "My son is an insurance lawyer!" instead of "Kenny empties piss-bags and mows the lawn over at the nursing home for five bucks an hour." Do you think they enjoy saying "My 35-year old daughter who once made straight As in school now waits tables at the Holiday Inn?" Nobody down here is against education. They've just never known anyone in their crowd who managed to get one. However, they "*do indeed hate education, in the sense that they think it makes some people affected (and some, it does). But on the other hand, they are TOO respectful of people with a college degree, thinking those folks are bound to know more than they do.*" (thanks to Ms. Grizz for that observation.)

My critic went on to say, "*Your meanness is more important to you than your place in life.*" Which goes to show how blind even educated people can sometimes be. The meanness, my friend, is because of our place in life, the place right at the bottom of that Assyrian hill, just downwind from the Tysons chicken plant, right around the corner from the check cashing joint that charges 120% effective interest on a payday loan.

Anyway, our online tussle ended with, believe it or not, a nasty liberal threat! Dear, honest to god folks, I shit you not! This cheered me immensely because it showed that liberals may yet be capable of brutal spite. To wit:

*"So try to suck it up enjoy life getting worse. It will. Much, much worse. Maybe so bad that you guys will start re-populating North Eastern cities looking for a better life and opportunity – like those "wetbacks" you love to slander all the time. Your life isn't bad enough for that yet, though. It's nowhere near miserable enough to get your lazy ilk to act. So what I'm hearing from you is that we need to ratchet up the pressure. Maybe pass a couple more of those credit-card lobby's laws for them. Maybe legalize unions. Maybe make military service — or some sort of government labor camps mandatory for counties under some average per capita income level."*

## **JOE BAGEANT / ONE LAST KICK AT THE LIBERAL DOG**

While we are on the subject, here are some of my favorite questions from readers and an attempt at answering them:

*“Sure, you hate Dubya’s policies, but you’d rather throw back an icy cold one with him at the church picnic than one of us, would’t ya, Cooter?”*

Yup! He’s stupid, but at least he’s fun. Sort of. I’ll bet John Kerry can’t light farts in the dark with a match.

*“I never hated working rural people until I started reading Bageant’s articles.”*

Hell, you’d hate us more if you bothered come down here and to meet us. Ever watch NASCAR, or eat boiled peanuts or spend four straight hours in a Pentecostal church?

*“The working class will not vote Democrat. It simply won’t happen.”*

Sounds like an excuse not to do the hard work of winning hearts and minds.

*“People don’t vote for people they hate, plain and simple. The right has spent quite literally billions of dollars branding Democrats as the enemy to working class culture.”*

We don’t hate people we have never met. Actually, that is impossible from a pure logic standpoint. We hate people we know, like the blacks down the street and the Iranian at the deli. (Just kidding. But we are still suspicious of anyone different.) The problem is that the only media messages out there are all Republican. What if the Dems bothered to get out in the streets and educate working people? Counteract Republican lies with the fighting truth and a taste of justice? Is that too radical?

*“Answer me this – why should I care about Bageant and his ilk? They don’t care about me! They aren’t advocating anything for us. Us city people are in real need right now. More than you guys realize. I don’t see you guys out there supporting us.”*

We do not know you are suffering. We get all our information from television...and on TV you all look like regular rich urban white folks.

*“And the meanness? I don’t know that anything short of the humiliation on the scale of losing a world war would do anything for that. Worked for Germany. Nice folks over there. Now. My guess is that life for your liberal hating friends is going to have to get much, much more desperate before your meanness is less important to you than your place in life. Right now, you guys value meanness over any other trait. Nothing will save you until that is cured. Nothing. No one is going to advocate for the plight of the mean*

## **JOE BAGEANT / ONE LAST KICK AT THE LIBERAL DOG**

*people. And that's all you are – the mean people”.*

Yew got a point thar fella! We just gonna have to work on that one. Together. Through e-d-u-c-a-t-i-o-n.

Here is an analysis of what we are up against from yet another online reader who said: *“In order for to win anything, the Republicans would have to voluntarily re-draw the voting districts to their own disadvantage. There is literally no mechanism that could make a Democrat win. We don't have the numbers.”*

It scares the piss out of me when I stop to consider this guy may be right. Which means all that we really have to work with is our bodies, our belief and our valuable time.

Yet, when you think about it, that is exactly the stuff that wins hearts and minds.

*Joe Bageant is a writer and magazine editor living in Winchester Virginia.*

*He may be contacted at [bageantjb@netscape.net](mailto:bageantjb@netscape.net). Copyright 2005 by Joe Bageant.*

# READ MORE ESSAYS BY JOE BAGEANT

Download all of Joe Bageant's satirical essays, plus many more books, booklets, essays, newspapers and magazines – all in pdf format – all free of charge, at

[www.coldtype.net](http://www.coldtype.net)

*(Click on this link to enter web site)*

**COLDTYPE**

WRITING WORTH READING FROM AROUND THE WORLD