

EDITORIAL

Miss Leftist Manners' Guide to Excruciatingly Correct Communication with Right-Wingers

The editors of Progressive Librarian have been inundated with mail from Our Readers, beseeching us for advice in matters of professional communication with some of our similarly politically-engaged colleagues ...on the Right. None of our dear readers felt qualified to engage in the delicate matters of proper and polite communications with The Other of our Hallowed Profession, so they engaged my services (and properly so) – Miss Leftist Manners. Fortunately MLM (as she refers to herself) is quite familiar with all the newfangled aspects of our field – dreadfully and familiarly called information technology – as well as the honored traditions of organizing and housing and actually reading ink applied to paper. So, We put ourselves at the disposal of this honorable journal's Gentle Readers, with the following results:

Dear Miss Leftist Manners,

Recently I innocently wrote an observation about a “news” website for our field – basically saying that the website operator outright characterized librarianship as too “liberal” and thereby shifting (or veering) his site very much toward a right-wing take on the field – supporting forms of censorship and all provisions of the Patriot Act, attacking activism as a professional diversion, and calling the ALA “radical” of all things. All the while this “news” site still maintained a claim of neutrality and an unbiased, evenhanded take on the field. I wrote that the stated reasons for heading rightward were pretty thin and could have holes poked in the argument pretty easily, and I did so in rather modest terms. Most librarians are moderately liberal and mainstream compared to a really Left vision of the field and, yet, even the moderates were tarred by the site as “radical” (really, a complement I happen to think). I touched off quite a donnybrook, with me signing my name to all my replies, but my critics remaining anonymous. It was all quite vicious and unnerving.

Was I wrong and impolite to do this?

Questioning in California

Dear Questioning,

What on Earth are you doing in California? Don't you know that that blighted state elected yet another vapid and rich right-wing "actor" from its culturally bankrupt celluloid industry? Please, save yourself. Now that we have dispensed with this essential matter, MLM must answer forthrightly: No! You most certainly were not impolite or wrong to make your keen observations. We regret that our current political climate is such that these kinds of "populist" positions have taken firm root in our media. AM talk radio and Fox (Faux) "News" spring to mind, and it appears to us that this "site" (how MLM dreads the diminution of language by our culture, but we must use the current terms of art...) is emulating its Right Wing Big Media Brothers. Let me guess, they mischaracterized your argument, took quotations out of context, and misdirected the argument to somehow focus on your personality and personal flaws (in their eyes). Correct? It seems to me that you conducted yourself with honor and dignity, and they merely demeaned themselves. Since they cannot argue coherently as ethical librarians - supporting as they do secrecy and spying and censorship by the site they must wallow in the filth of what remains of their minds. MLM supports you fully, *quaking*, and she feels Our Enemies deserve their isolated, anonymous fates. Besides, you *can't* have a battle of wits with unarmed adversaries.

Yours,
MLM

Dear Miss Leftist Manners,

I came to the defense of two colleagues who were attacked by right-wing "library" websites and weblogs. Basically, I thought the one guy in California did a pretty "fair and balanced" analysis of the rightward lurch of the one library "news" site, and I thought two other websites did a hatchet job on a good and decent colleague minding her own business on her website and weblog where she works in the "land of the hanging-chad." She felt threatened, and I wanted to help them both. I waded in full force calling the Righties chicken sh*t anonymous weasels, and making fun of their anonymous "handles" with references to their (lacking) manhood and some dumb pooh-pooh puns. I also thought their comparisons of themselves to Madison, et. al. and their anonymous writing of the *Federalist Papers* was absurdly funny, and said so. Lastly, the biggest anonymous (some are admittedly semi-anonymous: you can find their identities if you dig hard enough) wing-nut defended his remaining so for fear of losing his administrative position to marauding liberals in the field. This inflamed and amused me, needless to say.

Did I go too far in defending honorable Left colleagues?

Jaded in Jersey

Dear Jaded,

MLM is deeply troubled by any pooh-pooh language – or reference to fecal matter from domestic fowl if I decode your letter correctly. Our culture is already running at the moron level, and such language representing our Fair Principles cannot but trouble sensitive souls such as myself and our Gentle Readers. Your motivations – defending friends and colleagues – are faultless, of course. This is a difficult situation. You represent yourself as a sort of Left Merry Trickster, tweaking the brutes that deserve it so. They deserve it if only for comparing themselves to the deeply flawed geniuses of American Democracy. In MLM's humble opinion – but perhaps not our Gentle Readers' – the comparison is such patent pomposity of the highest order, that it cries out to be pricked. Rather, what is truly troubling in all of this is that the Righties deliberately sought out your hanging-chad friend to harass. MLM herself might well become inflamed in such a case. MLM suggests you search the inner reaches of your soul to see if you brought the defense of your friends into the cultural gutter, or was it there already and you merely utilized extant terms of art to be understood in their 'hood. (MLM *can* adopt modern modes of expression when it is required for clarity's sake.) If, Jaded, you can say in the clear light of reasoned reflection that the language of the moron and the gutter was *required* for the benighted and anonymous Right to understand you clearly in defense of your friends and colleagues, then MLM feels you deserve her absolution, but not her approval. Pray, try and refrain from pooh-pooh and lacking-manhood references in future (however essentially true they might be). However, even MLM must confess to the desire, every now and then, to give an atomic wedgie to the likes of Ann Coulter or Bill O'Reilly or some prominent Righties in our Fair Profession – ah, such are the indulgences of an wandering mind.

Yours truly,

MLM [aka John Buschman]