



Meet President MSNBC

BY KATHLEEN PARKER

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CHARLOTTE, N.C. — They came, they were adored, they conquered.

No, not the president, his family or the numerous actors and political heirs who spoke glowingly of Barack Obama during the Democratic National Convention.

I'm talking about the media — and especially MSNBC, whose presence and influence in Charlotte were nearly as grand as the president's.

No one pretends anymore that MSNBC is an objective observer to the news. Obviously, the decision was made to be aggressively progressive. With the exception of "Morning Joe,"

where Joe Scarborough and Mika Brzezinski co-host a roundtable of commentators, politicians and actors who dispense praise and criticism equally to Democrats and Republicans, the cable network's other political shows are unapologetically pro-Democratic, pro-Obama.

Thus, the powers that be correctly imagined themselves as co-players at the Democratic convention. A section of downtown Charlotte was reinvented as MSNBC Plaza, which included an open-air studio, a cafe, a lounge and the "MSNBC Experience," for which fans stood in long lines to enter, cheering as their favorite stars appeared. A looming tower above the outdoor stage featured huge headshots of the well-known anchors. The president's visage on T-shirts here and there was a mere comma to the anchor's exclamation points.

But that's show biz! MSNBC's charming and self-aware Willie Geist compared the bling, tchotchkes and network-branded paraphernalia to North Korean propaganda.

I happened to be in the MSNBC Plaza during a daytime concert when the lead singer announced, "Chris Matthews is in the hall, Chris Matthews!" All I could think was, good thing Obama didn't show up at the same time. He might have been ignored. Matthews gamely pushed through the admiring throng, smiling and trying his best to reach the door and refuge of his workspace.

Brzezinski told The New York Times she was accosted by a fan in the restroom who insisted on a photo and spoke to her even when she was no longer in the common area.

In fairness to the anchors, most are reluctant participants in this strange pas de deux. With fame comes a certain responsibility to engage fans, though this is an uncomfortable role for those who first consider themselves journalists. Exceptions to this rule would include people such as Al Sharpton, who were never journalists but now get to play one on TV while advancing their personal politi-

cal agendas and, conveniently, that of the Democratic president and party.

That television personalities are also celebrities is, alas, unavoidable. We naturally feel a bond with people who are in our kitchens and living rooms every day. Producers count on this connection. What is not counted on by casual consumers is the merging of a television personality's politics and the viewer's understanding of the world.

The blending of news and opinion isn't new, but activism posing as journalism is a cancer on the body politic. While some viewers may be savvy enough to understand the difference and choose their medicine accordingly, many are not.

Perhaps the answer is a more honest approach and greater transparency. Surrendering pretensions to objectivity, news organizations (including Fox) can declare their political objectives and make the best case. In a sense, this is what Rachel Maddow does with her nightly monologues. She builds a case for her point of view. As such, she is essentially a televised opinion columnist.

Just to be clear, opinion columnists are supposed to be opinionated. It's what they're paid to do. But this arrangement is understood between writer and reader. Thus, transparency is the critical ingredient, sometimes missing in our "Hollywood Squares" approach to discourse, in which all participants are presented as equal players. Rarely is this the case.

What was clear in Charlotte is that Democrats attending their convention consider MSNBC to be their ally and mouthpiece. The network's presence wasn't nearly so prominent or ubiquitous in Tampa during the Republican convention. As one Charlotte fan quoted in the Times put it, "I feel they are part of this convention. They are in tune with the people here."

You could say that.

The opinion-as-news contagion is not yet complete. Some television news organizations still make an attempt to be balanced. But the larger observation remains: TV journalists risk becoming the event themselves rather than the events they cover. And news consumers are increasingly less likely to get the impartial information they need to make smart decisions.

No longer do we get what we pay for, as the adage goes. We get what the activists want — and we all pay for it.

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Kathleen PARKER

The Rez of the Story

Party Platforms And Our Duty

BY VINCE TWO EAGLES

Hau Mitakuepi (Greetings My Relatives), Thomas Merton was an Anglo-American writer and mystic (1915-1968) who once wrote, "We must be true inside, true to ourselves, before we can know the truth that is outside us."

And contemporary American authors Karen Casey and Martha Vanceburg tell us, "Integrity is not a given in everyone's life. It is the result of self-discipline, inner trust, and a decision to be relentlessly honest in our response to all situations in our lives. We are quick to recognize this quality in others, and hope to acquire it ourselves. However, we must cultivate risk taking and cast off fears of rejection and derision if we're to discover the serenity a fully integral life offers.

"Recognition of truth in others, realization of the appropriateness of decisions or the aptness of choices is made easier when we're certain of the truth of our own lives. The inner turmoil dissipates and we are quiet within when we choose to live lives full of truth. And in the quiet we discern all truths. How much softer the edges of experience when we're guided by truth. How much easier every decision, every choice, when we've committed ourselves to a course of total honesty."

Now that the two major political parties have held their national conventions wherein they both posited their respective ideologies, the voting public is left to come to an answer as to who gets our individual vote as president and perhaps which party platform we as individual citizens will choose to accept as the truth.

The 2012 Republican platform in part states, "Today [the] American Dream is at risk. Our nation faces unprecedented uncertainty with great fiscal and economic challenges, and under the current Administration has suffered through the longest and most severe economic downturn since the Great Depression.

"Many Americans have experienced the burden of lost jobs, lost homes and lost hopes. Our middle class has felt that burden most acutely. Meanwhile, the federal government has expanded its size and scope, its borrowing and spending, its debt and deficit. Federalism is

threatened and liberty retreats.

"For the world, this has been four years of lost American leadership, leadership that depends upon economic vitality and peace through strength.... Jefferson's vision of a 'wise and frugal government' must be restored."

The Democrats, on the other hand, have adopted in part, "Four years ago, Democrats, independents and many Republicans came together as Americans to move our country forward. We were in the midst of the greatest economic crisis since the Great Depression, the previous administration had put two wars on our national credit card, and the American Dream had slipped out of the reach for too many."

"Today our economy is growing again, al-Qaeda is weaker than at any point since 9/11, and our manufacturing sector is growing for the first time in more than a decade. But there is more we need to do, and so we come together again to continue what we started. We gather to reclaim the basic bargain that built the largest middle class and most prosperous nation on Earth — the simple principle that built America, hard work should pay-off, responsibility should be rewarded, and each one of us should be able to go as far as our talent and drive take us.

"We Democrats offer America the opportunity to move our country forward by creating an economy built to last and built from the middle out. Mitt Romney and the Republican Party have a drastically different vision. They still believe the best way to grow the economy is from the top down — the same approach that benefited the wealthy few but crushed the economy and crushed the middle class."

So the debate continues. The ideological disparity between the two major political parties has never more stark than now. Our choice as citizens depends upon the credibility of each respective party and candidates. They can't both be right, so compromise, diplomacy and bipartisanship is the order of the day. We the People must prevail and insist on honest, truthful leadership at all times. Hechetaudo! It is so!

And now you know the rez of the story. Doksha (later) ...



Vince TWO EAGLES

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OPINION | OTHER THOUGHTS

Wildfires Scorch The Earth With Tragedy

SCOTTSBLUFF (Neb.) STAR HERALD (Sept. 4): The numbers are staggering. Three raging wildfires, charring about 260 square miles across two states, including much of the northern Panhandle.

More than 50 structures damaged, including 10 homes. Nearly 500 firefighters from 35 volunteer fire departments working with the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency and federal incident command teams.

About 400 people evacuated from their homes. One person dead, of an apparent heart attack. It could have been worse. Fire crews stopped the flames from reaching Chadron, where a fire burned to the edge of town in 2006. By Monday morning, authorities had lifted evacuation orders for residents whose homes had been in the path of the fires.

The Douthit fire northwest of Fort Robinson was nearly contained and had charred about 47 square miles by Sunday night. The West Ash Creek fire, which started south of Crawford and burned toward Chadron, had blackened more than 91 square miles. They were about half contained by Saturday night.

The Wellnitz Fire, burning farther east near Rushville, was still raging and only 20 percent contained as of midday. It had spread to the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota.

The weather forecast Monday called for a high in the 90s in Chadron, with winds of 5 to 15 mph. No rain was predicted until Thursday night.

The fires are believed to have been started by so-called dry lightning. Some of the same land had burned six years ago and was loaded with dead vegetation. The entire Pine Ridge forest is tinder dry, having seen little rain since last year.

As Chadron Fire Chief Pat Gould put it, "Firefighters have put more water on the ground than Mother Nature this year."

The worst impact lies ahead for many of the fire's victims. The cattle industry is the backbone of western Nebraska's agricultural economy, and ranchers lost not only cattle but pasture grass and hay to feed the survivors.

It was bad even before the fires. Buying hay to feed animals is an expensive proposition when it is in such short supply.

Lonnie Douthit, a longtime rancher and owner of the property where the fire started, said prices have skyrocketed. These days, he said, hay is going for about \$250 per ton. Last year, his best hay went for \$70 per ton. Feeding one cow for a year could require a ton and a half of hay. Douthit got about 90 bales of hay off his 350 acres this year. Normally, he gets about 500 bales.

It's encouraging that offers of donations of hay, grain and animal feed started coming in from residents around the area. Still, it will take years for the area to recover, longer if there's no break in the hot, dry weather that has much of the nation in its grip.

Our hearts go out to the landowners who face an uphill climb to recover, and our gratitude to the brave firefighters who worked so hard to prevent an even bigger tragedy.

ONLINE OPINION

The results of the most recent Internet poll on the Press & Dakotan's Web site are as follows:

LATEST RESULTS:

Do you support the Corps of Engineers' plan to charge for the use of stored water from the Missouri River?

Yes18%
 No72%
 Not Sure10%

TOTAL VOTES CAST411

The Press & Dakotan Internet poll is not a scientific survey and reflects the opinions only of those who choose to participate. The results should not be construed as an accurate representation or scientific measurement of public opinion.

CURRENT QUESTION:

A new study has found that repealing "don't ask, don't tell" did not harm the military. Now that it's a year since the repeal occurred, do you support the policy change?

To vote in the Press & Dakotan's Internet poll, log on to our website at www.yankton.net.

TODAY IN HISTORY

By The Associated Press

Today is Tuesday, Sept. 11, the 255th day of 2012. There are 111 days left in the year. This is Patriot Day.

Today's Highlight in History: On Sept. 11, 2001, nearly 3,000 people were killed on America's worst day of terrorism as 19 al-Qaeda terrorists hijacked four passenger jetliners. Two planes smashed into New York's World Trade Center, causing the twin towers to fall; one plowed into the Pentagon; and the fourth was crashed into a field in western Pennsylvania.

On this date: In 1777, during the American Revolution, forces under Gen. George Washington were defeated by the British in the Battle of Brandywine.

In 1814, an American fleet scored a decisive victory over the British in the Battle of Lake Champlain in the War of 1812.

In 1857, the Mountain Meadows Massacre took place in present-day southern Utah as a 120-member Arkansas immigrant party was slaughtered by Mormon militiamen aided by Paiute Indians.

In 1862, short-story writer William Sydney Porter, better known as "O. Henry," was born in Greensboro, N.C.

In 1922, the British Mandate for Palestine went into effect.

In 1936, Boulder Dam (now Hoover Dam) began operation as President Franklin D. Roosevelt pressed a key in Washington to signal the startup of the dam's first hydroelectric generator.

In 1941, groundbreaking took place for the Pentagon, now headquarters of the U.S. Department of Defense. In a speech that drew accusations of anti-Semitism, Charles A. Lindbergh told an America First rally in Des Moines, Iowa, "the British, the Jewish and the Roosevelt administration" were pushing the United States toward war.

In 1954, the Miss America pageant made its network TV debut on ABC; Miss California, Lee Meriwether, was crowned the winner.

In 1962, The Beatles completed their first single for EMI, "Love Me Do" and "P.S. I Love You," at EMI studios in London.

In 1971, former Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev died at age 77.

In 1972, the troubled Munich Summer Olympics ended. Northern California's Bay Area Rapid Transit system began operations.

In 1987, the movie thriller "Fatal Attraction," starring Michael Douglas and Glenn Close, premiered.

Ten years ago: With words of comfort and resolve, President George W. Bush joined the nation in remembering "how it began and who fell first" in the terrorist attacks of one year earlier. Defiant Palestinian legislators forced the resignation of Yasser Arafat's 21-member Cabinet. Death claimed

actress Kim Hunter at age 79 and football Hall of Famer Johnny Unitas at age 69.

Five years ago: Russian state television reported that Russia's military had successfully tested what it described as the world's most powerful non-nuclear air-delivered bomb, nicknamed the "dad of all bombs." A militant group called Islamic Jihad Union claimed responsibility for foiled bombings that targeted Ramstein U.S. Air Base as well as U.S. and Uzbek consulates in Germany. A new Osama bin Laden videotape was released on the sixth anniversary of the Sept. 11 attacks. China signed an agreement to prohibit the use of lead paint on toys exported to the United States.

One year ago: The nation, and the world, paused to remember the 10th anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. In New York, a tree-covered memorial plaza at ground zero opened to the families of the victims for the first time. President Barack Obama, after visiting the sites where terrorists struck, declared: "It will be said of us that we kept that faith; that we took a painful blow, and emerged stronger." Australian Sam Stosur beat Serena Williams, pulling off a 6-2, 6-3 upset in the U.S. Open for her first Grand Slam title.

Today's Birthdays: Actress Betsy Drake is 89. Sen. Daniel Akaka, D-Hawaii, is 88. Actor Earl Holliman is 84. Comedian Tom Dreesen is 73. Movie director Brian De Palma is 72. Rock singer-musician Jack Ely (The Kingsmen) is 69. Rock musician Mickey Hart (The Dead) is 69. Singer-musician Leo Kottke is 67. Actor Phillip Alford is 64. Actress Amy Madigan is 62. Rock singer-musician Tommy Shaw (Styx) is 59. Sports reporter Lesley Visser is 59. Actor Reed Birney is 58. Singer-songwriter Diane Warren is 56. Musician Jon Moss (Culture Club) is 55. Actor Scott Patterson is 54. Rock musician Mick Talbot (The Style Council) is 54. Actress Roxann Dawson is 54. Actor John Hawkes is 53. Actress Anne Ramsay is 52. Actress Virginia Madsen is 51. Actress Kristy McNichol is 50. Musician-composer Moby is 47. Business reporter Maria Bartiromo is 45. Singer Harry Connick Jr. is 45. Rock musician Bart Van Der Zeeuw is 44. Actress Taraji P. Henson is 42. Actress Laura Wright is 42. Rock musician Jeremy Popoff (Lit) is 41. Blogger Markos Moulitsas is 41. Singer Brad Fischetti (LFO) is 37. Rapper Mr. Black is 35. Rock musician Jon Buckland (Coldplay) is 35. Rapper Ludacris is 35. Rock singer Ben Lee is 34. Actor Ryan Slattery is 34. Country singer Charles Kelley (Lady Antebellum) is 31. Actor Tyler Hoechlin is 25.

Thought for Today: "Each of us, when our day's work is done, must seek our ideal, whether it be love or pinocchio or lobster a la Newburg, or the sweet silence of the musty bookshelves." — O. Henry (1862-1910).

YOUR LETTERS

Successful Benefit

Amber Johnson, Yankton

The benefit for Daniel Herrera was a success. We'd like to thank the following businesses from Yankton and Vermillion for their generosity and contributions: The Bluffs Golf Course, Charlie's Pizza House, Fryn' Pan, Embroidery and Screen Works, Godfather's Pizza, Graham Tire, Silk Road, Ice House, El Tapatio, Red Steakhouse, Walmart, Cakes by Monica, Cafe Brule, Bonanza, Profile

FROM THE BIBLE

God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. 1 John 4:16. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis

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