

THE PERISCOPE POST

CGI Jon Stewart

Opinion-makers: Who to read today. **1. Taiwanese animation studio skewers Jon Stewart's rally** This Halloween weekend will see a site far more frightening to conservative eyes than any witch, ghoul, or Michael Jackson Thriller costume – Jon Stewart's [Rally to Restore Sanity](#) in Washington, DC on October 30. Stewart, host of comedy Central's **The Daily Show** and liberal avatar, says that the rally is open to moderates of all stripes: “We’re looking for the people who think shouting is annoying, counterproductive, and terrible for your throat; who feel that the loudest voices shouldn’t be the only ones that get heard; and who believe that the only time it’s appropriate to draw a Hitler mustache on someone is when that person is actually Hitler. Or Charlie Chaplin in certain roles.” Next Media Animation, the Taiwan-based animation studio that has been taking stories from the news, using CGI to dramatise them, and plastering them all over YouTube, thinks that’s just funny. **2. Is the Tea Party right – America is being taken over by a New Elite?** The New Elite may sound like a 1980s synth band, but it is in fact the Tea Party’s greatest fear: That [America is being taken over by a “New Elite”](#), people who just aren’t like “regular people” and are in fact very removed from them. Charles Murray, author W.H. Brady scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, thinks maybe that Tea Party has something. In an op-ed for **The Washington Post** that has since caused a bit of outrage in punditry circles, Murray claimed that entre into the New Elite is through the gateway of prestigious higher education, the hallowed halls of Ivy League schools such as Harvard and Yale. Many of those who pass through those halls are from the upper middle class and “who have never been the outside of the bubble of privilege”. And they never leave that bubble: “There are so many quintessentially American things that few members of the New Elite have experienced.” (Notably, however, Murray counts attending a meeting to a Rotary Club among those experiences and, judging by membership numbers and books like *Bowling Alone*, that’s an experience that few Americans of any stripe are having.) So, concluded Murray, “When the tea party says the New Elite doesn't get America, there is some truth in the accusation.... The bubble that encases the New Elite crosses ideological lines and includes far too many of the people who have influence, great or small, on the course of the nation. They are not defective in their patriotism or lacking a generous spirit toward their fellow citizens. They are merely isolated and ignorant. The members of the New Elite may love America, but, increasingly, they are not of it.” **3. Tea Party isn’t right – it’s deluded** “The Tea Party movement is remarkable in two respects. It is one of the biggest exercises in false consciousness the world has seen – and the [biggest Astroturf operation in history](#),” declared writer George Mobiot, in an op-ed for the **Guardian**. “These accomplishments are closely related.” An Astroturf campaign,

Monbiot explained, is one that looks grassroots, but is actually founded, funded and bolstered by elite interests – in the Tea Party’s case, it’s the Koch brothers, Charles and David, who are behind the whole thing. The brothers own 84 percent of Koch Industries, the second largest private company in the US, running oil refineries, chemical plants, and logging firms. The Koch brothers have denied any involvement with the Tea Party, but a recent film by Taki Oldham, called (Astro)Turf Wars says different: The Koch brothers funded Americans for Prosperity, the group that initially organized opposition to the Obama Administration’s health care reform and the spark that ignited the Tea Party. And that’s only one of the Koch brothers organizations – they also set up the Cato Institute, a libertarian think tank, and are major funders for around 30 other “free market” advocacy groups. Said Monbiot, “Most of these bodies call themselves “free-market thinktanks”, but their trick – as (Astro)Turf Wars points out – is to conflate crony capitalism with free enterprise, and free enterprise with personal liberty. Between them they have constructed the philosophy that informs the Tea Party movement: its members mobilise for freedom, unaware that the freedom they demand is freedom for corporations to trample them into the dirt.”

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