



Big Ideas: On truthiness, the Duke porn actress and Common Core

By Joseph Lawler

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Ilya Shapiro and P.J. O'Rourke for the Cato Institute's amicus brief in the case of Susan B. Anthony List vs. Steven Driehaus: In modern times, “truthiness” — a “truth” asserted “from the gut” or because it “feels right,” without regard to evidence or logic — is also a key part of political discourse. It is difficult to imagine life without it, and our political discourse is weakened by Orwellian laws that try to prohibit it.

After all, where would we be without the knowledge that Democrats are pinko-communist flag-burners who want to tax churches and use the money to fund abortions so they can use the fetal stem cells to create pot-smoking lesbian ATF agents who will steal all the guns and invite the UN to take over America? Voters have to decide whether we'd be better off electing Republicans, those hateful, assault-weapon-wielding maniacs who believe that George Washington and Jesus Christ incorporated the nation after a Gettysburg reenactment and that the only thing wrong with the death penalty is that it isn't administered quickly enough to secular-humanist professors of Chicano studies.

Laws like Ohio's here, which criminalize “false” speech, do not replace truthiness, satire and snark with high-minded ideas and “just the facts.” Instead, they chill speech such that spin becomes silence. More importantly, Ohio's ban of lies and damn lies is inconsistent with the First Amendment.

THE TRUTH ABOUT COLLEGE TUITION LAID BARE

Mytheos Holt for the R Street Institute: News that there is a Duke University freshman who acts in pornographic films was always going to make the Internet catch fire. But the recent revelations, which have taken every site from Jezebel to Reason to the Huffington Post by storm, also have offered a frightening picture of the economic choices faced by an entire generation of Americans.

The student in question, calling herself “Lauren” for the sake of protection, told RealClearEducation:

"People have this perception that if you cannot pay for college, financial aid will take care of you, and that perception is wrong. If you are very low income, you can get a full ride to Duke, no problem. If you are middle- or upper-middle class, you will get [slammed] in the process. So many middle-class students have not gotten sufficient financial aid because, on paper, their families look like they have money. Just because I'm not poor doesn't mean I can afford \$60,000 a year for college. Other students from middle- and upper-middle class families have said the same thing ...

"I think it's very poignant that, nowadays, if you're middle class, the only way to pay for college is to take out hundreds of thousands of dollars in loans. We need to provide a better financial future for our students. I shouldn't have to go broke, I shouldn't have to go into debt at 18 years old to pay for an education."

Lauren is eminently correct, and it's sad that it took her being a tabloid curiosity for this narrative to be heard.

We are talking about a girl who made what, from any perspective, is a heroic and responsible choice by refusing to settle for an education that was less than what her academic achievements merit. She got into Duke and, therefore, had every right to go. Some have treated her means of paying for the experience as a scandal. The real scandal is that we have permitted elite educational institutions, which are supposed to be based on merit, to price themselves into luxury goods for anyone who isn't either extremely rich or extremely poor.

THE CORE OF THE DECEPTION

Lindsey Burke for the Heritage Foundation:

*What's in a name? that which we call a rose
By any other name would smell as sweet;
– Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet*

As Juliet reminds us, changing the name of something doesn't change its nature. Yet, in an apparent effort to placate parents, teachers, and taxpayers concerned by the effort to mandate national standards and tests for what every child will learn, several states are considering renaming the Common Core initiative.

Florida is renaming it "Next Generation Sunshine State Standards;" the Hawkeye State is going with "the Iowa Core." Arizona is simply removed the words "Common Core" from its standards altogether, and Louisiana is considering following suit.

To correct the Image problem, "we will probably do something really silly like changing the name of it to something else," Rep. Walt Leger, a Democrat from New Orleans, remarked at a legislative breakfast earlier this month, according to the Times-Picayune. Former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee suggested a similar path to pacify parents during remarks to the Council of Chief State School Officers, advising them to rebrand Common Core, The Washington Post reports.

However, parents and teachers are smart. They know when the wool is being pulled over their eyes.