



### [The Village Voice is dead, long live Nat Hentoff](#)

Posted by [William A. Jacobson](#) Saturday, August 18, 2012 at 3:15pm

**Hentoff 2009: “I think Obama is possibly the most dangerous and destructive president we have ever had”**

[BuzzFeed Politics](#) has word that The Village Voice is on life support, if not already dead:

Alt-weeklies are always dying. But the news Friday that four editorial staffers [were laid off](#) or had their hours cut to part-time at The *Village Voice* — two features writers, a news blogger and a listings editor — makes the sad fact of that paper’s eventual demise, evident for years, seems more immediate. The paper now has one news blogger, two features writers, a music editor, a few people working on listings and one critic, aided by a couple contributors, writing about food.

The layoffs at the *Voice* weren’t the only ones: papers across the *Village Voice* Media company, which owns more or less every notable alternative weekly nowadays, experienced layoffs, I’ve learned, including those in Minneapolis, Phoenix, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Dallas, and Broward-Palm Beach. The *Voice* itself is planning to move out of its iconic East Village office space in the near future, as I and other staff members found out last year. There have been many ends of an era for a paper that always prided itself at being on the vanguard, but this one seems permanent and final ....

The Village Voice isn’t dying. It’s been dead since it fired Nat Hentoff at the end of 2008 (although later he wrote occasionally for it), leading to a very favorable (to Hentoff) major article in [The New York Times](#):

Across his 83 years, his three dozen books and his countless newspaper columns and magazine articles, Mr. Hentoff has championed free speech and opposed censorship of any kind, whether by liberals or conservatives. Few have more assiduously and consistently defended the right of people to express their views, no matter how objectionable. In that vein, he opposes hate-crime laws as wrongly — no, make that dangerously — punishing thought.

He is unalterably opposed to abortion, but he cares about life beyond the womb, so he is against capital punishment.

He supported going to war in Iraq, but denounces the Bush administration's resorting to interrogation methods regarded by much of the world as torture. He also has his doubts about President-elect [Barack Obama](#), who, for all the adulation that we hear, "needs watching — like everybody."

That last line is the perfect segue.

As The Village Voice has been a walking zombie, Hentoff has hit a stride worthy of great civil libertarians and libertarians.

Hentoff is now a [Senior Fellow](#) at the CATO institute, and has become one of the most prophetic voices against Obama, as I noted in [December 2009](#).

In the hot summer of 2009, when Obamacare protesters were packing town halls and being called terrorists by Democrats, [Hentoff wrote](#) (emphasis mine):

I was not intimidated during J. Edgar Hoover's FBI hunt for reporters like me who criticized him. I railed against the Bush-Cheney war on the Bill of Rights without blinking. ***But now I am finally scared of a White House administration.*** President Obama's desired health care reform intends that a federal board (similar to the British model) — as in the Center for Health Outcomes Research and Evaluation in a current Democratic bill — decides whether your quality of life, regardless of your political party, merits government-controlled funds to keep you alive.

As passage of Obamacare approached in December 2009, Hentoff [spoke out forcefully](#) (noting the same dangerous self-aggrandizing phoniness your humble correspondent saw back in [October 2008](#))(emphasis mine):

***I try to avoid hyperbole, but I think Obama is possibly the most dangerous and destructive president we have ever had.*** An example is ObamaCare, which is now embattled in the Senate. If that goes through the way Obama wants, we will have something very much like the British system. If the American people have their health care paid for by the

government, depending on their age and their condition, they will be subject to a health commission just like in England which will decide if their lives are worth living much longer...

So in answer to your question, ***I am beginning to think that this guy is a phony.*** Obama seems to have no firm principles that I can discern that he will adhere to. ***His only principle is his own aggrandizement.*** This is a very dangerous mindset for a president to have.

Hentoff continues also to speak out against the encroachment of political correctness and politics on our civil liberties through the proliferation of "hate" crimes laws, a solemn reminder in a week in which the SPLC's "hate group" list is in the news:

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