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March 28, 2006
BELTWAY BLOGROLL

Of Davids And Gate-Crashers

In the days of **Julius Caesar** (as imagined by **William Shakespeare**), a soothsayer warned the Roman emperor to "beware the ides of March." Caesar dismissed that "dreamer," but his warning proved prophetic: Caesar was assassinated in 44 B.C. on March 15 -- the ides of March.

In the days of Instapundit, the Blog Father and Kos, the leaders of the American republic have something else to beware: the blog books of March. There are two of them on the shelves now, and both paint scenarios that are unfriendly, if not downright hostile, toward the folks who run the government, the media and more.

Instapundit **Glenn Reynolds** got his book, "An Army of Davids: How Markets and Technology Empower Ordinary People to Beat Big Media, Big Government and Other Goliaths," on store shelves first. He was in Washington, D.C., earlier this month to promote it.

This week, "Crashing The Gate: Netroots, Grassroots, and the Rise of People-Powered Politics" is officially released, and it is openly billed as a "shot across the bow at the political establishment in Washington." The authors -- **Markos Moulitsas Zuniga** of Daily Kos and his blog father, **Jerome Armstrong** of MyDD -- were in the capital city yesterday to start a promotional tour.

Both books are about an ongoing information revolution that is being driven in part by bloggers, but each takes a different approach.

"An Army of Davids" is the more sweeping of the two. Reynolds covers everything from home-brewed beer and blogging (always a volatile mix) to nanotechnology and human settlement of Mars (the things you think about after consuming too many home-brewed beers).

His book also is both less political and defiant than "Crashing The Gate." Reynolds is not so much fomenting rebellion as he is reporting on the technologically enhanced changes well under way across society.

He provides plenty of evidence: retailers that offer a "third place" where people can work and play via their wireless Internet connections; tools that make it easier for individuals to publish their own commentary, record their own music or "podcast" their own news; and video games that can train the next generation of soldiers or even teach teenagers about the realities of life.

The sudden emergence of the World Wide Web into a dominant political and cultural force buttresses the thesis of the book. That the Internet is so flush with information in such a relatively short time, Reynolds says, is a tribute to "the power of millions of amateurs doing things because they wanted to do them, not because they were told to. It was an Army of Davids, doing what the Goliaths never could have managed."

By Reynolds' account, however, the revolution is far from complete, especially in the public sector. Government remains largely clueless to the power it could gain by embracing that army of citizens -- by thinking of them as a pack rather than as a herd that needs to be led. "Government wants to keep this sort of power to themselves," he wrote.

To hear Armstrong and Moulitsas tell it, the Democratic Party is just as willfully ignorant when it comes to the grassroots political army at its disposal. And as the leaders of that army, they say it's time for the peasants with pitchforks to crash the gate.

They never quite make clear whether they want to awaken the Democratic establishment or overthrow it, but readers may get the sense that they would be happy with either result -- so long as it means Republicans lose.

The authors' contempt for Republicans is obvious from the first sentence, which resurrects the charge that the GOP stole the 2000 presidential election. The opening chapter, furthermore, is dedicated to bashing every brand of conservatism, including the "theocons" of the religious right and the corporate "cons" who seek government subsidies and fight government regulation.

Amid all that animosity for Republican philosophy, though, Armstrong and Moulitsas offer an abundance of praise for Republican political strategy. They clearly hate Republican values, but they just as clearly envy how effectively Republicans have been at convincing voters that those values are best for America.

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Salt Sensibility
Save The Internet
ShopFloor
Sierra Club
Social Security Choice
Stop Violence Against Women

Their answer, in essence, is for Democrats to behave more like Republicans: Stop kowtowing to liberal groups that focus on single issues like abortion, gun control and the environment. Start funding think tanks and media outlets that work together and mentor young Democrats. Stop wasting money on political consultants with losing records and tired ideas of how to run campaigns. And start capitalizing on modern technology to target and persuade voters.

Neither an "Army of Davids" nor "Crashing The Gate" dedicates much space to blogging, yet the authors give their blogging brethren due praise. Reynolds sees "the blog phenomenon" as a serious threat to the power of Big Media. And Armstrong and Moulitsas note the impact bloggers have had in raising money for candidates ignored or spurned by the Democratic establishment.

The entrenched political powers of today do have one advantage over Julius Caesar: The Davids and gate-crashers of today are quite open about their mutiny against the powers that be. Now we'll just have to wait and see how this power play ends.

Posted by | 07:14 AM

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Comments

when 'a buttload of bubbas' hits them shelfs y'all get the REEL wurd on innernet pire!

bubba | 03.28.06 12:42 PM

Blogs suck.

DanRather | 03.28.06 02:13 PM

Dan:

Dude, let it go. You tried, and I appreciated you effort. Let's MoveOn.

JohnKerry | 03.28.06 02:14 PM

Easy for you to say. You got to keep YOUR job.

DanRather | 03.28.06 02:16 PM

I'm a bit surprised to hear that Kos say the Democrats should "stop wasting money on political consultants with losing records.": It's refreshingly honest from the guy who, at my last count, has backed 18 or 19 straight losers. He makes Bob Shrum look like Karl Rove.

Eh... in his own words, "Screw them."

J.

Jay Tea | 03.28.06 03:48 PM

If I were to put my own money on either Reynolds or Zuniga, I'd put it on Reynolds. Zuniga seethes over the fact that the center-right blogs brought down MSM titans Dan Rather and Eason Jordan and the corrupt Canadian Liberal Party. The best the lefty blogs can claim is a McCarthyite campaign against Dick Cheyney waged by the Durantyite New York Times and the Washington Post over a insignificant CIA analyst named Valerie Plame whose supposed "undercover" status was revealed by columnist Bob Novak. Zuniga plays to the theatre of the absurd, Reynolds deals with reality in the 21st century.

Mescalero | 03.28.06 11:58 PM

Actually Markos and Glenn just have different perspectives, and not just politically (obviously). Glenn portrays himself as more of an aloof, more-or-less neutral observer of politics (and everything) while Markos is quite open as to his goals of being an active political force.

Chaos | 03.29.06 01:05 PM

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"Beltway Blogroll" is K. Daniel Glover's bi-weekly look at the growing number of policy blogs shaping Washington debates. It publishes every other Monday, although additional updates will be made when events warrant.

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