



January 20 is fast approaching, and the expert bloggers at ConversantLife.com are preparing their posts for this special inaugural season, exploring the changes that come with a new president, a new congress, a new set of ideas in Washington. How do we react? What can we expect?

As always, the articles on ConversantLife.com are available for your use and our gifted writers are available for interviews...which you can book last minute! ConversantLife.com hopes to be not only an interesting website full of intriguing Christian talk, but also as a place that can help you find content for your media outlet.

Inaugural messages include:

John Mark Reynolds

Blog Title: One Nation Under God: the American Consensus and President Obama. *(This blog will be posted Monday morning, January 29, and can be seen at*

www.conversantlife.com/johnmarkreynolds)

Blog Description: The election of President Obama is both a joyful break with bigotry in American politics and an affirmation of the best of the American tradition. Every decent citizen will be happy to see one more evidence of redemption from the original American sin of slavery. Another affirmation has been President Obama's acknowledgment of the role of religion in the nation's governance. When he takes the Oath of Office on Lincoln's Bible more than one kind of bigot will be upset, the racists and the secular ideologues, but people of good will in all parties will rejoice.

John Mark is the founder of the Torrey Honors Institute and a Professor of Philosophy at Biola University. He is a frequent guest and occasional guest host of the Frank Pastore program on the Salem Radio Network. His book "Absolute Romance" releases in early 2009. Check out his blog at www.conversantlife.com/johnmarkreynolds

Craig Detweiler -

Blog Title: After The Inauguration: Embracing Dissent (blog at the end of this email, in it's entirety.)

Blog Description: Barack Obama appears poised to call for newfound cooperation. I don't think he expects people to abandon their principles, to set aside significant differences. But the gravity of our current crisis surely forces us to subsume our agendas for the sake of the greater good. There will be plenty of time to argue after we've gotten

out of this mess. Until then, we desperately need to come alongside those who want to forge a future for America.

As seen on ABC's Nightline: Author, Filmmaker, Director of REEL Spirituality and Associate Professor of Theology & Culture at Fuller Seminary, Craig Detweiler is the author of the new book "Purple State of Mind: Finding Middle Ground in a Divided Culture." Craig's blog can be found at www.conversantlife.com/craigdetweiler

Brett McCracken

Blog Title: Obama's Blow to Hipster Cynicism (blog at the end of this email, in it's entirety.)

Blog Description: In a post-Obama world, Christian hipsters are perhaps in a better position to push the culture forward. They, after all, know sincerity. They know it sincerely. It matters not who's in the White House. Hope is not a gimmick or catchphrase to them; it's a way of life, founded on the reality of Jesus Christ's resurrection, the ultimate in subversive hipster acts.

Brett currently works full-time for Biola University as managing editor for Biola magazine. He also writes movie reviews for Christianity Today and contributes frequently to Relevant magazine. He is currently working on his first book for Baker Books, on the topic of hipster Christianity, for which he is traveling around the country visiting America's hippest churches and interviewing various proponents and practitioners of "cool Christianity." www.conversantlife.com/brettmccracken

Stan Jantz

Blog Title: Hoping For Change (blog to be posted this weekend, and can be found at conversantlife.com/stanjantz)

Blog Description: As America peacefully and smoothly inaugurates a new president, unprecedented numbers of people are hoping for change. Big change. What they don't realize is that big change is already here, and the one behind it is far above our new president's pay grade.

Stan Jantz is the co-author of more than 50 books, including I'm Fine With God...It's Christians I Can't Stand. Stan is also the co-founder of Conversantlife.com. Stan's blog can be found at www.conversantlife.com/stanjantz

All of these expert bloggers are available for interviews.

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Thank you -
The team at ConversantLife.com

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For more information on ConversantLife.com or to schedule an interview with one of our expert bloggers, please contact:



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AFTER THE INAUGURATION: EMBRACING DISSENT **By Craig Detweiler**

Last Spring, barnstorming across America with my atheist college roommate and our dialogical documentary film, Purple State of Mind (www.purplestateofmind.com), we felt a bit like presidential candidates. We engaged in heated debates on college campuses. We stopped by churches and synagogues to rally the faithful. We answered phone calls on local radio shows. While Barack and Hillary were swiping at each other, John Marks and I were taking heat from animated audiences.

Skeptics wondered why John seemed so negative, almost acting like a bully. Christians wondered why I took so much abuse from John without punching back. Both sides were disappointed that their representative failed to champion their side with more authority. The crowds wanted a bloody boxing match. Instead, we offered a perverse bit of peace, love and understanding. Tired of the gridlock created by the culture wars, we offered a different way of being, advocating active listening, promoting a purple state of mind.

In an era of red states versus blue states, who proved the most popular and purple candidate? Obama's conciliatory, bridge-building speeches pushed past the divisive politics that preceded him. Every previous election in my lifetime felt like a referendum on the past—the responsibilities of the 1950s versus the freedom of the 1960s. Your opinion of Vietnam, Woodstock and Haight-Ashbury was reflected in your voting record. But Barack came of age after that tumultuous era. His approach to governing felt pragmatic rather than ideological.

A series of challengers tried to rile him. Obama floated above the mire during the Democratic primary. But what about the presidential election? For a brief moment, Sarah Palin managed to reignite her party's faithful. She freshened up an old divide-and-conquer script, begun by Patrick Buchanan, polished by Lee Atwater, perfected by Karl Rove. Palin put a positive spin on negativism. Her candidacy was an entertaining sideshow to the main event: Obama vs. McCain.

Senator McCain garnered the Republican nomination by running toward the middle, building a coalition around unity rather than division. Yet, with Obama running ahead in the polls, McCain abandoned his centrist principles, incorporating some of the scare tactics and whispers that had

been used against him in previous campaigns. Eventually, the depths of the economic depression trumped any attempts to prey upon voters' fears.

Yet, even before the inauguration, the culture war reared its decidedly ugly head. By inviting Pastor Rick Warren to deliver the opening invocation, Obama stepped into the firestorm swirling around gay marriage and California's Proposition 8. Reaching across the aisle only resulted in more flames coming his way. Those who viewed the Warren invocation as a political maneuver found equal calculation in the late addition of Episcopal bishop Gene Robinson to inauguration week. Robinson vowed to offer an inclusive invocation, crafting "a message that everyone in the nation can identify with."

I am thrilled that Obama made room for pastors who not only disagree with each other, but possibly even with him. We desperately need a leader who can listen to his critics, who can bring people together across the ir/religious, political and cultural divide. I embarked on the Purple State project because I need a voice of dissent in my life. The doubts of John Marks make me a better believer. He keeps me honest, keeps me questioning, keeps me from getting comfortable. Can we continue to make room for the loyal opposition, even when it causes complications?

Obama appears poised to call for newfound cooperation. I don't think he expects people to abandon their principles, to set aside significant differences. But the gravity of our current crisis surely forces us to subsume our agendas for the sake of the greater good. There will be plenty of time to argue after we've gotten out of this mess. Until then, we desperately need to come alongside those who want to forge a future for America. We can no longer afford to be entertained by surface distances or ideological divides. It is time to be adults--to work with skeptical neighbors, faithful friends, and disbelieving college roommates.

Obama's Blow to Hipster Cynicism

By Brett McCracken

When Obama won the presidency on November 4, 2008, hipsters everywhere were ecstatic. The vast majority of hipsters (that is: indie-dressing fashionable young anti-establishmentarians) were Obama fans, and those that were not were mostly anarchists or otherwise apolitical or libertarian. But while Obama's election was a proud moment for hipsters, it was also a significant blow to their long-term viability.

Hipsterdom blossomed in the George W. Bush presidency, because he represented everything they were against: conservatism, boots, oil, ranches, patriotism, Neiman Marcus. After 9/11, even while many in the media forecast a new era of sincerity, hipsters became more cynical than ever before, retreating into irony and hedonism despite (probably because of) the government's calls to be patriotic, unified, responsible citizens. Hipsters responded by becoming aggressively apathetic and cheerfully hedonistic. But during his campaign and ultimate victory, Obama unified the youth culture like it hadn't been unified in a long time, and hipsters were called out in droves from their cynicism. Suddenly there was a reason to care about politics, to think good thoughts about America again.

In his post-election article, "The End of Hipster," Joshua Errett wrote in *Now* magazine that following 9/11, today's jaded counterculture "made a statement by making no statement, because no one was listening anyway." That is, until Barack Obama started making his way onto T-shirts,

posters and YouTube. “At some point during Obama’s presidential campaign,” wrote Errett, “an earnest, productive, engaged youth class was born out of a real desire for change. Hipsters essentially became hopesters.”

The same idea was expressed on the website Street Carnage (the thickly hipster site of Vice magazine founder Gavin McInness) following the election, in a blog post entitled “Obama Victory Renders Hipster ‘Movement’ Obsolete.” In the post, Robert Dobbs Jr., a Brooklyn hipster who writes under the name blogn***er, declared that, a week after the election, hipsters must come to terms with the fact that their affection for irony and “neo-cynicism” now look less subversive than stupid and defeatist:

Guess what - Obama has already changed the world by bringing hope and healing to B-B-BILLIONS of people around the globe. Neo-Cynicism [sic] can’t f*** with that - it’s real.

Elsewhere in the post, Dobbs discredits hipsters who allow themselves to believe, “for even a second, that there’s any deeper ‘meaning,’ or ‘movement’ behind our chosen music-and-t-shirt collective.” He’s just admitting what many gloom-and-doom hipster prognosticators have been pointing out for months: that hipsterdom is devoid of any substantial motivating logic. It’s about partying, being fashionable, being cool, and being cynical. The question is: are these things worth anything anymore? The argument is that, in a post-Obama world, hipsters who continue to proudly display the middle finger to all things establishment and all things idealistic are simply made to look the fool. Don’t they know? Earnestness is the new irony.

Well, we shall see. I’m not convinced that irony will ever really go away. I’m not convinced that Obama’s popularity among hipsters will lead them to throw in the towel on their supposedly countercultural existence. There will continue to be hipsters, if for no other reason than because the human desire to be cool has not and will not go away. Hipsters will just have to re-conceive of “cool” in an era when the word is ever more meaningless. They’ll have to forge a new argument for irony at a time when sincere belief in progress seems to be making a comeback. Hipsters will just have to work harder to establish themselves as apathetic revolutionaries because, well, what in Obama’s glistening new world is there to rebel against? But rest-assured: they will find something to define themselves against.

But even if they do, what if Obama really does bring vast and wonderful change to our country and world—what if the hope and rhetoric are proven correct, and our country comes together and pulls itself out of its malaise? If hipsters stay out of the process and continue their “who gives a f***?” approach to civic culture, they’ll just be digging themselves deeper into the hole of irrelevance. But maybe that’s where the hipster wanted to be all along.

Meanwhile, there is this phenomenon of Christian hipsters that I’ve been tracking (and that I’m writing a book about)—young, earnest, idealistic Christ-followers who look and sometimes act just like your regular hipster. They’ve always believed in things, and while still allowing for irony and bits of cynicism, Christian hipsters distinguish themselves from hipsterdom at large because of their sincere belief that things can change and participate in real transformation.

As hipsters in general find themselves increasingly marginalized for their insistence on sarcasm, apathy, and cynicism, and scrambling to build up a new identity that is a better sell in a post-Obama world, Christian hipsters are perhaps in a better position to push the culture forward. They, after all, know sincerity. They know it sincerely. It matters not who’s in the White House. Hope is not a gimmick or catchphrase to them; it’s a way of life, founded on the reality of Jesus Christ’s resurrection, the ultimate in subversive hipster acts.

