

# POLITICS AS USUAL: Lost on the Irony Challenged

By Alison Collins-Mrakas

Following the recent presidential debate, among the more bizarre news items making the rounds is a new conspiracy theory about Hillary Clinton's winning debate performance; that somehow her victory was the result of 'help' from an unknown source who was allegedly feeding her things to say via a cleverly hidden microphone.

I am not making this up.

This is all based on a photo that's making the rounds of the internet of a wrinkle in the back of her jacket.

The fevered minds posit that the wrinkle is actually a mic cord under her jacket. Aha! Proof positive that Clinton literally had a bug in her ear.

This, of course, negates the fact that there is absolutely not even a scintilla of evidence to support this crazy conspiracy theory. She was photographed from every angle on the debate stage, not one shows her with a piece in her ear. It's Loony Toons time to suggest otherwise.

(And lest our Democratic friends get all smug about this, they should well remember that they posited the same crazy 'bug in the ear' theory about George W Bush, during his debate performance against Kerry)

But my point is that we are talking about it at all!

How bananas is that?

Our political discourse these days is too often dominated by sussing out the validity of the latest crazy claim of some aggrieved blogger. It's tiresome and anti-democratic. We are wasting our time with trivial distractions; fiddling while Rome burns (yes, Nero was plying a lute?no need to fact check me!)

Use of social media ? Facebook, twitter, Instagram, sub-Reddit, and on and on ? is responsible for propagating some of the most outlandish and odious conspiracy theories, or outright lies depending on your political leanings or mental competency.

On any given political topic, there is always at least one nut out there popping off, spewing nonsense, virtual spittle flying all over the place. And, sadly, the nut usually has a trusty little gang of followers too; hanging on every unhinged word.

Politics and conspiracy theories seem to go hand in hand. With every new election cycle, there is a new allegation of deep, dark shenanigans of some sort or other. Most of the time, the spurious charges strain credulity but sometimes there is enough of a grain of plausibility to them that charges stick - at least in the minds of some voters. And if winning and losing is separated by a mere fraction of a percentage point, then anything that gets voters to swing to your side ? regardless of how baseless ? or base - the accusation, then some feel it's fair game to do so.

You see it at every level of politics ? from dogcatcher to president, local councillor to premier. Nasty innuendo. False claims of crimes and misdemeanors. Twisting facts until they're word pretzels. The campaign for office is often a treacherous road filled with folks throwing rocks, usually from within glass houses.

Unfortunately, the hilarious hypocrisy of it all seems lost on the irony-challenged. Pity.