



THE BLOG

Where Is the League of Women Voters When We Need Them?

By Marty Kaplan

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Would someone please get the networks out of the presidential debate business?

The networks and the national press love their gotchas, their -gates, their “controversies,” their heat. They, alas, are not the grownups in the political process. The grownups are the voters, who — lamely, in the mind of the political class — are troubled by the war, the economy and boring stuff like that. Stuff that networks think make for lousy television.

I don't blame news producers for doing what they think their job is, which is scoring bragworthy Nielsens. I don't blame political talking heads for being infatuated with the narratives that they themselves create and market. Blaming them would be like blaming babies for banging their spoons on their highchairs, or addicts for wanting their fix.

But I do blame the candidates, the campaigns and the parties for being complicit with the corporate politainment circus. The first ten people in the phone book could do a better job of asking candidates questions that voters care about. There is no freaking reason in the world to grant the networks a rotating monopoly on staffing and broadcasting these debates. The whole media political system we now suffer from is tilted entirely toward trivial combat, pathetic niggling over words, ridiculous sideshows, and inside baseball. Now that we know how awful it can be, are we really powerless to stop it from continuing to waste our time and turning our political process into a third-rate version of a condescending reality show?

Sorry, I've just got to get a grip on this bitter thing.

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