

**THE BLOG**

Time Warner: Brown Is The New Gay

By Marty Kaplan

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When I read the funny Saturday morning take-down of me in HuffPo by Bill Robinson, the brother of CNN PR boss Christa Robinson, my immediate reaction was, Jeebus, do I now have to apologize to Dana Perino's brother for being mean to her, too?

Here's Bill Robinson's point: "You want to protest CNN's debate? Conspiracy theories about YouTube videos ain't gonna do it, they just got the highest ratings ever for a political program. Besting the record set by their last debate. No, if you want to get to CNN, then unplug your Time Warner Cable."

He's right. Follow the money - or in this case, the Nielsens. The contradictory doublespeak by the doublestandard-bearers of the best political team on television is merely a wonky journalism sideshow; it's the ka-ching that really counts. After all, when CNN domestic president Jon Klein, and CNN political director Sam Feist, were asked to defend CNN's choice of YouTube questions by the *New York Times* and the *Los Angeles Times*, they both ended up giving the same answer: Wheee! Lookit the ratings! Move over, General Motors; in the age of Big Media, what's good for Time Warner is good for the country. Say goodnight, ladies of the League of Women's Voters; Joe Klein's stock options are back on top, baby!

But now that I've read Tim Rutten's "Corrupt News Network" column in Saturday morning's *LATimes*, what had been hidden in plain sight has hit me like a ton of bits. Before the debate, I'd been skeptical about CNN's making the Republican presidential candidates face the many YouTubed-in questions about homophobia, the wedge issue driven deep into the country by the reckless Bush-Rove GOP. But Rutten made me realize how 2006 (and 2004 and 2002 and 2000) I was being. In 2007 and 2008, illegal immigrants are the new Other.

That's why, as Rutten points out, the first 35 minutes of the debate were devoted to immigration, despite the fact that (as Pew polls show) 96 percent of Americans don't think immigration is the most important issue confronting the country. But Broken Borders is the ratings-pumping battle cry for CNN's house demagogue, Lou Dobbs, and its ticket to besting the bullies over at Fox. (Glenn Beck, CNN's pet psycho, also does a damn fine job of demonizing darkies.)

The reason Rutten calls CNN corrupt is the collateral damage to American democracy of the network's campaign to convince advertisers that the eyeballs watching the most trusted name in news think *Mexicans Gone Wild* is a sexier

topic for our country to fight about in 2007 and 2008 than health care, education, the environment, energy, and all the other issues that got shockingly short shrift at the YouTubaganza.

So forget it, faigelahs. Move over, Muslims. For Republicans - and the networks who sell Viagra to them - brown is the new gay.

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Marty Kaplan 

USC Annenberg professor and Norman Lear Center director