

Book Review

The Savage Nation:

Saving America from the Liberal Assault on Our Borders, Language, and Culture

Michael Savage

WND Books, 2002

The “Michael Savage Show” has grown to become one of today’s major talk shows in the United States, featured on over 300 stations and heard by between three and five million listeners each week. Michael Savage, the grandson of an immigrant from Russia, is highly educated, with two masters degrees and a Ph.D from the University of California-Berkeley. As with so many others, he has made the switch from a leftward orientation as a young man to what has been described as “independent conservatism.”

Despite his education, his appeal to his audience is in his stridency. Conservatives in the United States have long found a considerable appetite among Americans for a “red meat” presentation that points with alarm in a rising crescendo of anger and disillusionment. It is in satisfying this demand that Savage finds his niche. Those of any persuasion who wish to convince others are well advised to welcome voices that will make the appeal at a variety of levels – voices that will carry to the lowest common denominator as well as those that are articulated in nuanced fashion to the most thoughtful. Savage does not attempt to do this.

Savage skillfully selects issues of current importance. He decries the growing decadence and the clamor for false causes; assesses that “our borders, our language, and our culture are under siege”; criticizes the gay rights movement as a “celebration of sodomy,” and speaks of feminist fanatics; opposes the “developing mandarin class” that now, as an oligarchy, rules America and finds willing spokesmen in both political parties; and would stop the tax funding of degenerate artists. At the same time he opposes both abortion and the cloning of embryos; supports Israel, and praises Martin Luther King, Jr., as a “great leader of

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the civil rights movement.”

There is, however, a fundamentally unrestrained, anti-conservative aspect in his tone, which can only cause more balanced listeners to reject his arguments. His style is replete with such exclamations as “I hated his guts,” “Who are these traitors? Every rotten, radical left-winger in this country, that’s who”; “the left-wing pinko vermin in high places”; and others too endless to mention. There is no philosophical depth to his argumentation, which is all expletive. Nor is there any civility. Sharp dichotomies between Good and Evil are his stock in trade, as when he says “two Americas are emerging... the Rats and the Eagles.”

We live in a time when the divisions within American society are becoming more and more marked. Americans have, indeed, barely begun to see the sources of division, even though it seems the ideological and cultural chasms are already extreme. It is likely that economic displacement, the clashes over the bio-medical revolution (that are likely to make the argument over abortion seem mild in comparison), the animosities that portend to arise out of ethnic balkanization, and the social tearing that will come out of America’s newly-affirmed role of world intervention will combine to heighten those divisions far beyond anything Americans now experience.

A paradox is that in this context “civility” looms as both far more essential and far less attainable. If people can’t “hear each other out” and remain in civil society with each other, we enter a Hobbesian world of “all against all” – or, unless Americans are very lucky, a time comparable to the first century B.C. in Rome when civil war rent the social fabric and destroyed the Republic. Every breach of civility exacerbates the problem, heating passions and lessening the chance of living together in a social order.

The paradox is further heightened by the fact that the needed civility must not mute the expression of vital opinion. A civility born out of apathy or a flight toward continuing comfort can’t face up to the monumental issues that challenge Americans (indeed, all of Western civilization) today. What is imperative is a combination of passion, careful analysis and insight, and (at the same time) a compassionate respect for those one sees as “plainly wrong.” Michael Savage is strong

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on the passion; but he is abysmally bad on analysis and civility, and as such denigrates the causes he claims to espouse. If as time passes he were to learn to combine the needed elements, his voice might be more constructively significant than it now is.

Dwight D. Murphey

**The Majesty of the Law:
Reflections of a Supreme Court Justice**

Sandra Day O'Connor

Random House, 2003

This book by Justice O'Connor will no doubt be enjoyed by many readers as a readable and not very heavy discussion of the United States Supreme Court, highlights of its history and personalities, and personal details about O'Connor's own experiences on the Court as the first woman appointed to it.

At this level, the book must be credited as "recommended reading." It contains a number of worthwhile and instructive elements, such as a history of habeas corpus, of Magna Carta, of the jury system, of the "reporter system" early in the Court's history through which its decisions were published, of the women's movement in the United States, and of the role of the privy council in the colonies before the American Revolution.

O'Connor makes a number of valuable suggestions, say, for improving the jury system, such as that jurors should be allowed to take notes and that it shouldn't automatically disqualify a juror to have heard something about the case. She recommends that jurors should be instructed generally about the law applying the case before they hear the testimony, so that they will have a conceptual framework into which to fit the testimony as they hear it. As a lawyer, I have thought for many years that the courts' failure to give jurors such a road map reflected an odd anti-conceptualism, as though ideas don't count. So I am pleased to see her recommendation.

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