

Wr...? I'm never wr...!



For over seven years and more than 800 posts I've scrupulously avoided blogging about anything controversial (except for one post about a dog owner that earned me a Facebook troll).

This year's presidential election process is like nothing I've ever seen before and it's shattered my restraint on one of the most sensitive of topics: politics.

So, for today and the following four, welcome to "Controversy Week" on the JMD blog!

When I was young, there was an immensely popular sitcom called Happy Days. To measure how popular, you need only look up how many spin-offs were produced from the original show.

The star of the comedy was a biker dude named Fonzie. He was almost always seen with his jeans, white t-shirt and black leather jacket. He had two famous characteristics: he would "thumbs up" people while saying "Ayyy" (like "hey" without the "h") and he could not say he was wrong.

Literally. Not just couldn't admit it; he couldn't actually get the word out of his mouth. It was always "Wr...wr...".

Flash forward 40 years and "Fonzie" is running for president.

I'm sorry, that's really unfair to Fonzie. At least he was always polite and courteous in his own comedic way. Not so the current GOP frontrunner.

While I've been content to fume within my circle of friends and family about the behavior of this candidate specifically (and both parties in general), the actions over this weekend left me dumbfounded.

But not speechless (or blogless, in this case).

Let's clear up some preliminaries first.

Fact: The protesters who engaged in violent actions to support their efforts were flat-out wrong. It's likely they were already predisposed to fighting. Sorry, that's no way to hold an effective protest, if for no other reason than it allows those you protest against to cast themselves as victims.

Fact: Free speech must apply to all in America or it means nothing. There are limitations for the common good; "Fire" in the crowded theater being the regular example (unless, of course, there actually is a fire). But everything else, including hate speak, love speak, support and protest are allowed and encouraged.

So, with those facts in mind, the protesters were wrong at that Chicago rally. Not for what they believed in or voicing their beliefs but in the manner with which they infringed on others rights to assemble and support *their* own beliefs.

Got that? Good. Now let's look at the other side of the coin.

Since free speech protects the speaker's rights to say what he wants, it's perfectly fair to say things like "I want to punch him in the face" or to long for the days when they took out protesters "on a stretcher" or even to offer to pay the legal bills for any supporter who wants to take down a protester violently. Totally protected because it's not technically an

incitement to riot.

It is absolutely an incitement to violence, though, and that is wrong. Further, to deny that fact and refuse to recant those statements is also wrong.

Let me be clear. Having someone from the campaign staff make a quiet announcement before a rally about a preference for no violence is disingenuous when the candidate gains the podium and immediately celebrates the very rhetoric that stirred the violence (and violent response) in the first place.

It strikes me as cowardice that someone cannot admit they are wrong. Is the image projected by this candidate so fragile that his support would be shattered by merely saying "We shouldn't be fighting with each other; we're all Americans"?

It's difficult for me to believe an intelligent man, which he most surely is, would think he could say such powerful and provocative statements and not have his faithful followers react to the subtext of his comments. I have to hope he doesn't actually want such a reaction. He should not want to be a "Bully-in -Chief".

It's been a difficult primary season. Bad enough to watch and hear the negative reactions to our candidates from the world around us, but to hear it now from within is truly dismaying.

There is no doubt that the GOP frontrunner is an agent of action. Those who would support him and those who would oppose him are passionate in their response. It would be nice to see all that passion turned into hope and search for common ground.

I am convinced that goal could be realized if the leading Republican candidate were able to admit when he is wrong. He just doesn't seem to be able to get that one word out of his mouth.

Happy Days are here again.

Tune in tomorrow for: Constitution or bust