

The Democrats' Epistemic Echo Chamber: Informed, Enlightened and Losing

By Patrick Keeney

In the third season of the acclaimed HBO series *White Lotus*, three lifelong friends—now middle-aged women—reunite for a lavish wellness retreat in Thailand. Hailing from Los Angeles, New York, and Austin, Texas, their long-anticipated getaway takes an unexpected turn when the coastal pair discovers, to their astonishment, that their Texan friend attends church. The revelation jolts their secular sensibilities. The further discovery that her husband may have voted for Trump is even more disturbing.



The scene effectively illuminates the cultural fissures that shape American life today; divisions rooted not just in geography, but also in worldview, identity, and the self-anointed moral ascendancy of the coastal elites.

This widening chasm between lived experience and ideological allegiance was underscored in a recent episode of *Real Time with Bill Maher*, where Ezra Klein, the *New York Times* columnist and podcast host, reflected on the growing correlation between media consumption and voting behaviour in American politics. “If you follow the news, you voted for the [Democrats](#), by and large,” Klein remarked. “If you don’t follow the news, you voted for [Trump](#).”

Klein’s formulation suggests a binary division within the electorate: on one side, informed and enlightened consumers of news align with the Democratic Party; on the other, the so-

called “low-information” voters, whose disengagement from the news is linked to support for Donald Trump.

The subtext here is unmistakable, echoing a familiar refrain in [progressive discourse](#). To distill Klein’s observation into its bluntest form, one might say that Republicans are ignorant, while Democrats are discerning. Or, to borrow an evocative word from [Hillary Clinton’s ill-fated 2016 campaign](#), Republican voters are “deplorable”.

While this reductive framing may be satisfying to Democrats, it invites scrutiny concerning its intellectual coherence and political consequences.

Klein’s assertion rests on an unspoken premise: that “following the news” is synonymous with rationality, critical thought, and, by extension, moral superiority. In this view, following the news serves as a kind of epistemic baptism, cleansing its adherents of the provincialism, ignorance, and prejudice that supposedly define the great unwashed masses.

Such a premise is not self-evident. The modern news ecosystem—fragmented, sensationalized, and increasingly tailored to ideological preferences—hardly guarantees an untainted encounter with rationality and truth. Those who “follow the news” diligently are likely to be trapped in self-affirming echo chambers, remaining no more enlightened than those who avoid the news altogether, a point that Klein’s neat dichotomy overlooks.

Moreover, portraying Republican voters as disengaged from the news oversimplifies the intricate landscape of contemporary information consumption. The rise of alternative media platforms, from [podcasts](#) to social media networks like [X](#), has democratized access to political discourse in ways that defy the traditional gatekeeping of legacy outlets, such as Klein’s own The [New York Times](#).

To dismiss any tranche of voters as “low-information”

overlooks the possibility that they are, in fact, highly informed, albeit through channels that do not align with the cosmopolitan sensibilities of the coastal commentariat. The question then becomes not whether one “follows the news,” but rather which news one chooses to follow.

The more profound quandary facing the Democratic Party transcends mere messaging failures and cuts to the heart of its self-conception. Despite all the hand-wringing among party officials and lamentations about their inability to “get the message across” to a recalcitrant electorate, there is little evidence to suggest that their message has failed to reach the intended audience.

On the contrary, one suspects the Democrats’ message has been received with crystalline clarity: “We are the party of enlightened thought, the custodians of correct opinion; those who deviate from our intellectual orthodoxy are not merely mistaken in their policy preferences, but are morally defective ignoramuses.” This is not a failure of communication but a triumph of it, one that has proven [electorally disastrous](#).

The Democratic posture, as expressed through popular culture, Ezra Klein’s remark, and Hillary Clinton’s earlier pronouncement, reveals an elitist and exclusionary worldview. It presupposes a moral and intellectual hierarchy in which the news-consuming faithful occupy the apex, while the Trump-voting rabble languish in a benighted abyss.

Such a stance, however, carries a steep cost. By portraying their opponents not as fellow citizens with differing priorities but as contemptible symbols of ignorance, Democrats risk alienating the very constituencies they claim to support: the working-class voter, the rural skeptic, the immigrant, young men, and the disaffected independent. Such voters are not inhabitants of some premodern darkness but rational actors navigating a political landscape in which one of the two major

parties increasingly views them with disdain.

In this light, Klein's observation is less a diagnosis of voter behaviour than a symptom of a progressive tendency to conflate information with virtue, and dissent with deficiency. This cultural malaise has fueled [polarization](#).

The real problem for Democrats is not that their message has been lost in translation, but that it has been understood only too well. It is the smug and condescending style of politics; it is adopting a demeanour that poisons the political landscape by declaring that one's opponents are not merely misguided in advancing their policies but uninformed, ignorant, and morally bankrupt.

In their zeal to proclaim their intellectual primacy, Democrats have underwritten their party's path to political ruin.