

The Popping Fart: Converses on the Political Landscape

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It is universally well known,
That in digesting our common Food,
there is created or produced in the Bowels
of human Creatures, a great Quantity of Wind.
Benjamin Franklin
Fart Proudly

In 1781, Benjamin Franklin wrote a tongue-in-cheek proposal to the Royal Academy suggesting the study of the effluvium of flatulence. This and other pieces were assembled in a paperback called *Fart Proudly: Writings of Benjamin Franklin You Never Read in School*, edited by Carl Japikse. A copy of the particular fart missive can be found on the "[Humor in America](#)" blog.

Unlike the Founding Father's olfactory focus of the fart, herein the focus is on the disturbing stench in human *converse*. Linguists please note that *converse* is a well-chosen word that refers to both speaking and opposites. The "popping fart" was chosen as a catchy idiom to reflect a tendency to quickly and automatically state a contrary position to every statement of an opponent.

The popping fart is a concoction to illustrate that if the opponent's fart popped, the opposition would make a case that it *should have* squeaked. I need to refrain from providing real-life examples, because to do so would elate half my audience and rile the other half because the popping fart is particularly apparent in political theater.

Effects of Cyberspace and Technology

While partisans emitted tenuous ridicule for ages, in the past they had limited audiences. Now, derision spreads like wildfire. When people form a quip they think is funny or harmful, it can instantly be entered into the electronic ether through a blog posting or Twitter. Thus, criticism metastasizes within minutes.

A fast-paced 24-hour news cycle increases the thirst for news items. Correspondents quote each other without checking sources. There was a time when journalists were limited by the slower print cycle allowing time for reporters and editors to filter out spurious comments.

I first noticed the *converse* reactions during a time when critics were churning out derogatory quips on a daily basis. The large quantity of output diluted the quality of the many creations. Being deluged with an inane series of indignation and self-righteous pronouncements, I began to transform them into witty and ribald metaphors in my mind.

The "popping fart" became my favorite metaphor as it conjured up humor, silliness, and minor shock so as to light-heartedly tolerate and illustrate a phenomenon.

Sociability and Farts

My intent is not to disgust and I refrained from writing this for years. I am aware of the cultural reluctance to discuss scatology. To wit, when I was being prepped for my colonoscopy, the nurses used obscure innuendo and confused me; I had asked them if they meant to fart. Passing gas is a necessary physiological need and my gastroenterologist complemented me each time I did so.

Two and a half men has interjected fart humor into its highly rated television program frequently in many ways. Nevertheless, the FCC in protecting societal sensibilities, come out, in 2004, against fart sounds over the airwaves. It appears that farts are funny to some people and offensive to others, particularly old men (i.e., "old farts").

For the tolerant, herein is a proposal for a new saying that stemmed from my listening to daily *converses* over a period of years. Everything uttered by a politician who was unpopular with part of the population was attacked within seconds after it was uttered, or at least by the next morning. It dawned on me that if a popping fart was emitted there would be a *converse* ridicule claiming a squeaking fart would have been more appropriate.

Please note that there are dozens of farts listed on the Internet and these couple of names were taken to make a point. I am not a fartologist and do not know if there a odorous difference between the two, and do not care. If an argument is reflexive and ludicrous, it is a popping fart, no matter how aromatic or smelly it may be. Identification is in the eyes, ears, and mind of the beholder—not the nose.

Possible Mellowing with Humor

For years, this served as inside humor among my circle of friends. They were rascals from all sides of the political spectrum and it became a game to point out popping farts. Admittedly, it is a lot easier to identify the absurd when it is not in the heat of a highly contested election season.

There's a reason they call campaigns silly season. The popping fart was often recognized but interviewers used facile, unimportant, irrelevant, and a host of other tame terms in questioning candidates and their spokespersons. At times there are vicious name calling condemnations, but an adversary's parentage is another subject.

Proverbs have a way of getting at the essence of a meaning, and I am proposing "popping fart" as a latter-day aphorism. It is highly unlikely that a saying can change the tenor of disagreements toward political discourse but may change attitude. Sometimes, in the absence of considered conversation, humor can be helpful. Mirth may contribute to preserving friendship, health, and sanity.

If you are not prone to publically discussing "popping farts," however, compare daily coverage of "news" items posted on the *Drudge Report* and *Huffington Post*. Their "reporting" and interpretation of political and social events often illustrate the nature of *converse*.