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COMMENT: Ted Cruz, human dog whistle: Evangelicals — those “courageous conservatives” — know exactly what he is talking about

[Randall J Stephens](#), Reader in History (American Studies) at Northumbria, writes about Ted Cruz for The Salon.

Donald Trump is right: Everybody does hate Ted Cruz. Except for evangelicals. He knows just how to talk to them.

“God bless the great state of Iowa!” the junior senator from Texas shouted into a hand-held mic at a victory rally on Monday. Ted Cruz followed that with, “Let me, first of all, say, to God be the glory.” To any evangelical with ears to hear it was an allusion to Fanny Crosby’s popular 19th century hymn of the same name. “Choose Cruz” signs fluttered with excitement in front of him. He responded with his trademark smirk that masquerades as a smile. His wife, Heidi, stood by his side, looking like a beaming wax figurine. “Courageous conservatives,” a code word for evangelical, had made it all possible, he shouted. Indeed, Cruz is poised to reap the rewards of the evangelical vote like few others. That’s no small matter. The movement claims approximately [25 percent of the country’s population](#).

True, Texas Sen. Ted Cruz has strong supporters. His handy Iowa victory over Trump, with 28 percent of the vote, proves as much. But he has many more critics. Pundits, politicians and comedians have heaped on descriptors like “arrogant,” “smug,” “smarmy” and “creepy.” At the head of the pack of haters stands Donald Trump. When not questioning Cruz’s national origins and eligibility to run, Trump likes to repeat the mantra “Everybody hates Ted.” But there is a kernel of truth in Trump’s damning words.

Trump is certainly not alone in his Cruz hating. Among fellow Republicans Sen. Cruz is about as popular as fire ants or bed bugs. The former senator and GOP candidate for the presidency Bob Dole calls him an “extremist.” “I question his allegiance to the party,” Dole complains. John McCain, another GOP senator and one-time Republican presidential nominee, called Cruz and his fellow Tea Partyers “wacko birds.” The Republican governor of Iowa had hoped to see Cruz lose big in Iowa. (Cruz committed the cardinal sin of not bowing at the altar of ethanol.) Republican senator from Utah and president pro tempore of the Senate, Orrin Hatch, says bluntly, “I think we’ll lose if he’s our nominee.”

Cruz rose to national fame/infamy for his quixotic effort to defund Obamacare in 2013. His ham-handed efforts to shut down the government also won him the distinction as one of the most hated politicians in the Beltway. It’s not hard to imagine him burning down a house to make a dogmatic point about fire safety. For Cruz, a disciple of the far right, the blessed words of St. Reagan still ring as true today as they did in 1981, “Government is not the solution to our problem, government is the problem.”

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