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COMMENT: Trump and Palin exist in an alternative universe of knowledge denial

[Dr Randall J Stephens](#), Reader in History and American Studies at Northumbria University, explains why Donald Trump and Sarah Palin exist

in an alternative universe of knowledge denial. Originally published in [The Independent](#).

Welcome to the know-nothing GOP reality show, where ignorance equals votes from the all-important Christian evangelicals and fundamentalists.

His hands grasping the podium, Donald Trump was subdued last night in Ames, Iowa. He spoke in strangely hushed tones as he introduced the celebrity mama grizzly, and former vice presidential candidate for the GOP Sarah Palin.

Palin roared into a rambling speech. To her it was a dose of hard, honest truth. To anyone familiar with the rules of grammar and syntax it sounded like a drunken rant.

She hit on the familiar theme that has become her trademark. Trump was the right man for the presidency because he told unvarnished truths, he was a successful businessman, he thumbed his nose at elites, and he could kick ass. He would support the military. “He is from the private sector. Not a politician,” she said, followed by, “can I get a hallelujah?!”

When Palin and Trump mock the media, rail against the establishment, or challenge intellectuals, their supporters shout back a hearty, ear-shattering “HALLELUJAH!!” Millions of Americans believe, perhaps as never before, that the wisdom of experts, the pronouncements of career politicians in DC, and the accumulated knowledge of science are wrong and worth fighting against. Intellectuals and weak officials had made the USA ineffective and insecure.

“To win that war” on terrorism, Palin shouted from the stage to Tea Partiers in a Nashville banquet hall in 2010, “we need a commander-in-chief, not a professor of law standing at the lectern.” In Iowa last night she elaborated a little more to shouts of support: “Are you ready for a commander-in-chief . . . you ready for a commander-in-chief who will let our warriors do their job and go kick ISIS' ass?”

Diplomacy is more about chest thumping and fist shaking, and the promise of carpet bombing, than it is about knowing anything about other cultures, societies, and the complicated dynamics of geopolitics. Why would anyone want to venture into all that boring, academic work, when a good old ass-kicking would do the trick?

Trump and Palin apply this same populist, plain folk logic to almost every political issue, from immigration to the economy. Build a wall around the southern border, Trump blusters, and make Mexico pay for it. Palin assures her supporters that anyone who can manage their own household finances could manage the US economy.

In this alternate universe of knowledge denial: vaccinations cause autism;

homosexuals can be “repaired” and made straight; global warming is a hoax; and God created humans in their present form 10,000 years ago...

To read the full article visit *The Independent* website [here](#).

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