

Perspectives:

Interview with

Lisa Bloom



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[This interview with Lisa Bloom was conducted in early December 2003.]

BW: What do you consider the defining moment of your generation and what event or experience has most shaped your life?

LB: Short answer: defining moment for my (our?) generation is surely 9/11, which forced a level of gravitas upon us, required us to open our eyes to international issues, and certainly changed American politics for the foreseeable future. Defining moment for me personally: births of my two children (now 14 and 12).

BW: How do you view the American political spectrum and where do you fall in that spectrum?

LB: I'm answering this first because it strikes my fancy today as I sit by the fire on a Vermont ski weekend with a knee injury. Here goes:

My *Court TV* viewers angrily tell me both that I'm too right-wing and too left-wing, which amuses me. You tell me where I fall on the spectrum.

I believe that most people charged with crimes are guilty, and that defense lawyers get away with much too much nonsense in the courtroom. Violent criminals should be incarcerated for lengthy prison terms, and some murderers should get the death penalty.

I have found Republicans in general to be more polite, better mannered, and better parents than Democrats. Republicans' strong belief in personal responsibility is essential. I think Republicans are often better educated on the issues and are more likely to have done their homework and washed behind their ears.

I have never voted Republican, but I would given an election where the Republican was the better candidate. I have rarely voted for the winning candidate in any election. I did vote for President Clinton twice, but I also supported his impeachment once it was clear he'd lied under oath in a sexual harassment case. I think sexual harassment cases are important to women's equality and that he was arrogant and criminal to put himself above the law. I think Paula Jones probably had a strong case that should have gone to trial.

Liberals' insistence on looking for root causes of social problems strikes me as the best long-term strategy for solving complex ills like racism, AIDS or child abuse. I think liberals genuinely care more about helping the poor and disadvantaged, and that helping the rich generally only helps the rich. Trickle down is a cruel joke.

Protecting the environment should be a core American value, and that means sometimes business must suffer for the long-term good of our planet. Equality should be a core American value, and that means gays and lesbians cannot be denied the hundreds of statutory benefits married heterosexuals get. I'm quite sure that those who oppose gay rights in 2003 will be viewed by history in the same negative light as those who opposed civil rights for blacks in 1953.

I would remove all guns from America in an instant. Short of that, I would punish adults who allow their guns to fall into the hands of children, not the children who commit crimes with them. I am appalled that we prosecute children as adults when we are a nation filled with adults who act like children.

All children should have health insurance and good schools. I do not understand how anyone can possibly oppose this. Children cannot help being born into a poor family. They cannot work and improve their situation. Without medical care and a strong education, we are treating millions of kids cruelly and guaranteeing costly future problems. I would get the money for this by legalizing all drugs. The savings from this would be roughly \$50 billion, depending on which study you believe. I wouldn't lock up Rush Limbaugh nor any of the others who simply made bad choices as to what they put into their own bodies.

I am a lifelong vegetarian and a single mother of two adolescents. I don't own a car; I take NYC public transportation most of the time which allows me to be sanctimonious about people who drive SUVs. I have no tolerance for healthy people of sound mind who don't work, who whine, or who don't appreciate the beauty and bounty of 21st century life in the United States.

I think that most people do not take parenting seriously enough, and that children of affluent parents in particular are often raised with all the wrong values. My children are clear on the fact that the most important thing for them to do in any situation is the right thing. We spent a lot of time talking about what that means at school, in the family, and in the world. Some of my proudest moments as a mom were when my 10-year-old son was the only one in the subway car to stand and offer his seat to an elderly woman boarding the train, and when my 12-year-old daughter told me that any kid who used the word "fag" as a schoolyard insult was unworthy of her friendship.

BW: What are your religious beliefs and how do they inform your ideological worldview?

LB: I am a Reconstructionist Jew. We believe that there is wisdom and guidance in thousands of years of Jewish theology, but that religion can evolve. We believe in total equality of all people, and that we create the existence of God in the world through our good acts. I celebrate Jewish holidays and my son will be bar mitzvahed next year.

My rabbi summarized our religion in welcoming the kindergartners to religious school, by kneeling down so as to be eye-to-eye with them, saying: "What you say matters, what you do matters, who you are matters." I love that.

One of the hallmarks of Judaism is that asking tough questions is highly encouraged. I've seen my rabbi debate the existence of God with adolescents. In other religions this would not be tolerated. I was raised to question authority and, more importantly, to think for myself at all times.

Finally, Reconstructionist Judaism emphasizes action, not just thoughts or words. We have an affirmative obligation to perform mitzvahs, such as helping the poor or visiting the sick. It is not enough to simply have a good heart; action is required. I have worked in soup kitchens, convalescent homes and battered women's shelters; I have spent much of my career representing abused children. If I can help someone in need it's my religious obligation to act, simple as that.

Unlike 99.9% of all attorneys, I only took cases I believed in and only took positions on those cases that I believed in. If a conflict arose my client would have to find a new lawyer. Lawyers make moral choices just like everyone else.

Lisa Bloom says that she has "a passion for justice" (<http://www.lisabloom.com/>). Her website bio states: Award-winning journalist and trial attorney Lisa Bloom hosted a daily, live, national television on Court TV from 2001-9, covering the hottest trials and crime and justice stories in the news. She's now CBS News Legal Analyst, appearing frequently on *The Early Show*, and CNN Legal Analyst, appearing daily on CNN and HLN prime time shows. She's a regular legal expert on The Dr. Phil Show. In the last year alone, Lisa has guest hosted *Larry King Live*, *The Early Show*, and *Showbiz Tonight*. As a commentator Lisa averages 3-5 television appearances per day."