

O P I N I O N



Rachel Marsden

American Voices

PARIS — One of the most alarming things about Islamic State terrorists is how effective they've become at creating propaganda — slickly produced videos depicting violent acts against their captives, paired with various denunciations of Western foreign policy and related demands. In some cases these videos feature recruits from Western nations attempting to reach out to vulnerable youth. And judging by the estimated hundreds (and counting) who have been lured from the comfort of democratic Western states into battlefields in the Middle East, the recruiting effort seems to be working. But why?

Propaganda is most effective when it's able to skirt the radar of logic, reason and self-awareness. It only loses its power once people can see the manipulation. Manipulation detection is a skill. The underdevelopment of that skill is why some people get all misty-eyed when they see Toyota's "My Bold Dad" ad, featuring a father sending his daughter off to military service. A healthier reaction would be to get annoyed at the blatant manipulation, with Toyota playing on your love of family and country in order to sell you a Camry.

And it's telling that when the same ad was recently spoofed in a "Saturday Night Live" skit, with the dad sending his daughter off to join the Islamic State, many viewers who connected with the Toyota ad got angry at "SNL" and defensive of the original manipulation.

The most brilliant thing about the "SNL" skit was that it evoked a public reaction illustrating precisely why Western nations are such fertile recruiting grounds for the Islamic State. We have become far too emotional and far too vulnerable — to the exclusion of reason and logic. Critical thinking is the antidote to propagandist subversion, but we live in a culture that rarely rewards thought anymore.

Instead, an increasing number of us are easily excited by simplistic appeals to base emotion, like viral videos of cats, interpersonal

drama depicted on reality television shows, or even the idea of a "Bush vs. Clinton" showdown in the next U.S. presidential race.

The Islamic State has access to the same media as the rest of the world. They see the so-called leaders in the U.S. Congress acting like petulant children over the visit of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. They see Republican senators firing off a letter to Iranian leaders, letting them know that President Obama is wasting his time on a potential nuclear agreement. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to see that this kind of insecure emoting projects a collective weakness that's ripe for exploitation.

So where the West is showing weakness — aside from its inability to wipe out the Islamic State in short order despite all the high-powered defense and intelligence resources available — the Islamic State is using its videos to project its illusion of strength, primarily by appealing to emotion.

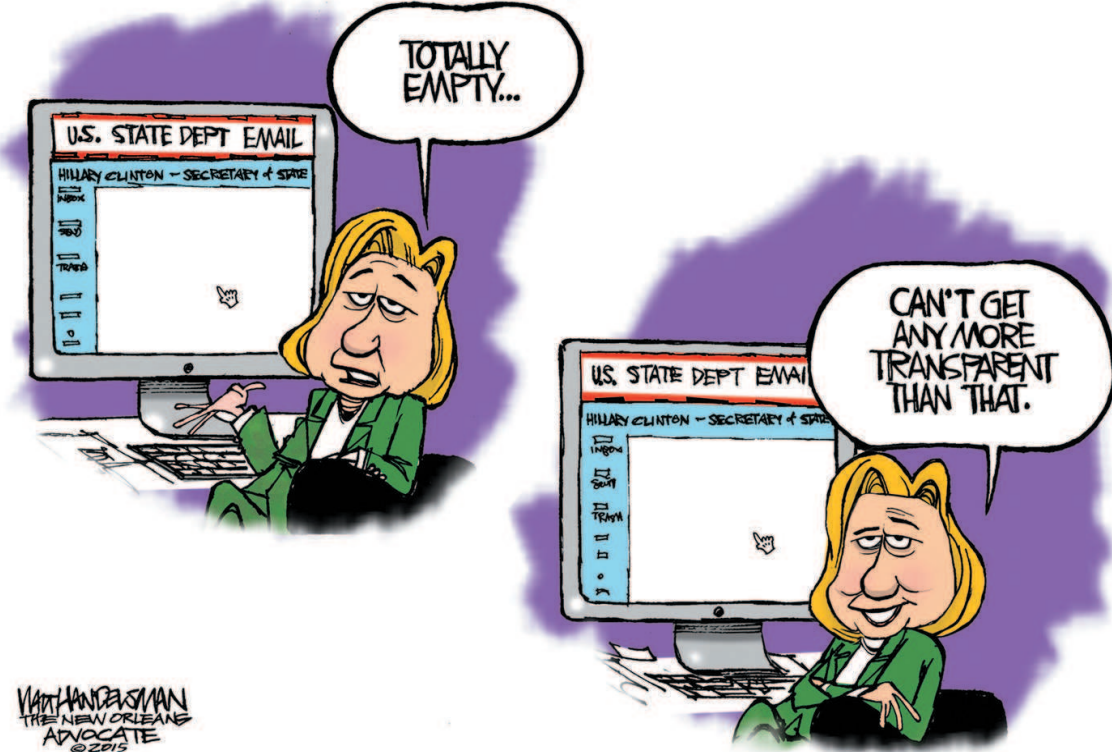
One might ask how a violent organization that lops off people's heads could successfully appeal to anyone on such an irrational level. The answer lies in what we — that is, Western society — have allowed ourselves to become over the past few decades.

As KGB propaganda expert turned Soviet defector Yuri Bezmenov explained during a talk in Los Angeles in 1983, people become vulnerable to subversion when their education moves away from science, math, physics and foreign languages toward less rigorous studies like, as Bezmenov enumerated, "history of urban warfare, natural foods, home economics and sexuality."

We have largely unburdened ourselves from the rigors of critical thinking in favor of "feeling." We have emotional leaders, emotional entertainment and emotional debates. We vote for the nice guys rather than the smart ones. The good news is that it's reversible — but we have to first recognize and admit to having this problem.

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Matt Hansen
THE NEW ORLEANS
ADVOCATE
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Letters to the Editor...

The Nugget welcomes contributions from its readers, which must include the writer's name, address and phone number. Letters to the Editor is an open forum for the community and contains unsolicited opinions not necessarily shared by the Editor. The Nugget reserves the right to edit, omit, respond or ask for a response to letters submitted to the Editor. Letters should be no longer than 300 words. Unpublished items are not acknowledged or returned. The deadline for all letters is noon Monday.

To the Editor:

The Nugget article "Truckers take on 'roundabout rodeo'" (The Nugget, March 4, page 1) presumes that the roundabout is a done deal.

According to ODOT there is going to be a public forum this spring in Sisters. I sincerely hope that *The Nugget* keeps all of us informed of the dates and times.

Carin Baker



To the Editor:

I read in *The Nugget* that a mockup of the proposed Highway 20/Barclay Drive roundabout was tested by professional truck drivers and they approved of it.

Good, but it got me to thinking: when will the promised community meeting be held? It seems that the citizens who will be paying for this and will have to live with it should

also have some say in this project. Isn't the purpose of the meeting to help the community learn more and voice their opinions on having a roundabout or a traffic signal at that location? City Council, please schedule the meeting that you promised.

Pat Norman



To The Editor:

I know I'm not alone in saying a BIG "Yahoo!" to the end of the insane back in parking. Just another thumbs up to common sense.

Kelsey Collins



To the Editor:

I believe *The Nugget* has a done an

See **LETTERS** on page 26

Sisters Weather Forecast

Courtesy of the National Weather Service, Pendleton, Oregon

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday
Sunny 61/25	Partly sunny 66/31	Partly sunny 62/33	Partly sunny 53/25	Partly sunny 61/30	Mostly cloudy 53/na

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