



Your Personal Katherine Kersten Defense Kit

**Conservative columnist got you off your feed?
Finally, a program to get you breathing again**

by **Michael Finley**

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Here in legendarily liberal Minnesota, you might think the presence of a single conservative opinion-maker like Katherine Kersten would pass unnoticed. You would also think cats could pass furballs and anacondas can swallow French poodles whole.

Alas, all three assumptions lead to choking and retching.

Kersten, in case you are the sort who cuts straight to the funny pages, writes regular op-ed pieces for the *Star Tribune* and other places. She's a formula writer: no cute stuff, no jokes, and no name-dropping. A serious foot-soldier for the radical right, Kersten follows a dogged but deadly approach:

1. She calls attention to some outré practice in pop or political culture.
2. She attributes the practice to liberalism, feminism, sacrilegious godlessness, or all three.
3. She tars everyone to the left of Hammurabi for allowing the practice to exist.

Katherine Kersten never surprises. You know that by the end of her 800 words she will have buried a hammer in your mastoid. She's an ideological assassin. It's what she does, in the name of goodness and Jesus and all that that entails.

When I was invited to write about Katherine, I knew some exhaustive in-depth research was in order. So I emailed all my liberal friends and asked what Katherine means to them. I'm going to disguise their identities, because my friends are none of your damn business.

Curt, news broadcaster: "I toured Israel with Kersten a few years ago. I liked her. She's smart and tough. But she's very fixated on a few ideas, like collective guilt. She got angry at the Israeli hosts for harping back to the Holocaust, like it was her fault, or America's."

Ed, a CPA: "She makes me want to bang my head against the fireplace until chunks fall down the chimney."

Bradley, a lefty blogger. "Ugh, she makes my skin crawl. Do you know she gets paid twice for her stuff - once from the Center for the American Experiment, and again by the *Star Tribune*. Whereas, if I write a piece for the paper, I don't get paid by anybody. It's so wrong!"

Kay, 4th grade teacher: "When I finish her column, I feel splattered."

August, pre-law college student: "She's the Luca Brasi of truth." [I personally thought this a bit unkind.]

Diana, a university professor: "I try to teach my kids how to make fair arguments, how to do justice to other people's opinions, how to occasionally concede a point to build credibility. Then they bring in a piece by Kersten, and say 'Hey, she doesn't do any of those things.'"

Andrea, homemaker: "I dreamed she took my baby away in a balloon."

That's a lot of *tseuris* from some otherwise nice Minnesotans. And I ask myself, Why? How can she have penetrated our unconscious in such a fashion? What is she doing that makes us so crazy? What can I tell people to ward off the effects of her prose?

Clearly, more intensive research was called for, so I decided to read the last couple of years' worth of her stuff. The project was really starting to get to me.

I dug up an armload of her columns, mostly from her *Star Tribune* column. Here are just a few of the arguments she advanced:

- ✓ Mixed-gender wrestling traumatizes boy wrestlers and is a misguided tactic of the women's liberation movement.
- ✓ Diversity training undercuts our most treasured American values.
- ✓ College professors are predominantly Democrats, which is an insult to the spirit of diversity.

- ✓ Lurid women's magazines at the grocery checkout are part of the whole sex-education-in-the-schools conspiracy.
- ✓ Mothers who allow daughters to wear tube-tops to school are the product of misguided feminist doctrine.
- ✓ The peace movement hates America and seeks its destruction by any means necessary.
- ✓ Islamic culture is repressive and cruel, but you'd never know it from watching the liberal media.

Anyone who's taken an elementary course in logic can pick this stuff apart without a lot of difficulty. It happens that I took that course twice. Behold:

- ✓ Why do a small handful of girls wrestle boys? Cuz there ain't enough girls to wrestle with.
- ✓ If diversity is un-American, why does Kersten want more of it (presumably via an Affirmative Action program for conservative academics who can't get jobs on merit) Logically, wouldn't less diversity be better?
- ✓ Lurid women's magazines exist because people buy 'em and advertisers buy space in 'em. Also, something about a "First Amendment."
- ✓ Mothers (and fathers -- gotcha, Katherine!) have a heck of a time dictating to junior high daughters what they wear to school. Liberals, it turns out, did not invent adolescence.
- ✓ Peace marchers don't take a patriotic backseat to nobody nohow. What's unpatriotic is implying otherwise.
- ✓ Somehow, Kersten has not heard there are some profoundly *conservative* Muslim practices out there, and blames this on collusion by liberal journalism. Burkas there, tube-tops here. I tell you, it's insidious what we do.

Now, for the longest time, I thought it was just me, because I could not eat a sandwich and read Katherine without blowing jam out one nostril and peanut butter out the other.

Hard to say why this is exactly. I'm a Democrat but I've made exceptions over the years for the likes of for John Anderson, Jesse Ventura, Bob Dole, and "Mad Dog" John McCain. I usually tolerate conservative comment without experiencing projectile nasal leakage.

And it's not like there's zero merit to some of her complaints. The things she doesn't like, hardly anybody likes. Nobody wants their daughter to dress like a whore, and we all wish the checkout line didn't

scream headlines at us about J-Lo's ass and Dolly Parton's tits. Points taken!

My guess is, if you sat down a bunch of cultural conservatives and social liberals on the same long divan, they'd all hate most of the same things: cultural artifacts that corrupt the young, rude people burning flags, people wearing twenty pairs of pants to a funeral. No one likes that stuff.

So, you are wondering, why am I fulminating like this? Is it because I wish to deny Katherine her constitutional right to have her opinion heard in the marketplace of ideas? Not for a hemidemisemiquaver would I wish such a thing. Twouldn't be liberal.

No, my concern is for the four million people who live in Minnesota and think thoughts a micron to the left of Kersten or more. Definitely have Katherine keep writing and speaking out on all the queer stuff that's going on.

But liberals have rights, too, so I have created this kit of practical suggestions - I call it the Katherine Kersten Kit, or just KKK - to help beleaguered liberals cope with Kersten, in the event their liberalism prevents them from making a cross with two fingers in an emergency.

Prepare yourself. Never read her while standing or operating heavy equipment. Find a place of repose that has happy associations for you. Just getting under the covers helps a lot of people. Don't slug down a drink. Do take a Percoset.

Count to 10. Lot of liberals aren't religious, so conventional prayer's no good. But try this non-denominational prayer approved by both the World Council of Agnosticism and the American Cafeteria Board: "What I wouldn't give right now for the serenity to respect the ideas of others, the courage to articulate my own, and a bazooka to fire off a letter to the editor."

Don't try to do it by yourself. All across our great state, people are meeting in coffeehouses church basements to discuss their feelings and to plan for the common defense. At tikes like this, it's comforting just to know there are others who feel the same way. Like I said, about 4 million of 'em.

Find someone in even greater pain. Sometimes the best way to overcome a problem is to reach out to others. If you're on the bus and see someone bug-eyed with an opened newspaper trembling in their hands, speak up. "I felt sorry for myself because I had no shoes. And then I met a man who had no socks."

Sidebar:

How to Write like Katherine Kersten

- 1) **Start with an outlier.** Somewhere in today's headlines someone is doing something that, with a bit of tweaking by you, everyone will really, really hate. The trick is, the outlier has to be easily repainted so as to be 100% contemptible. An obnoxious high-school protester, a weapons inspector who belongs to an S&M club, a chimp who throws shit at people at the zoo, a presidential candidate who never said he invented the Internet - but don't let that stop you.
- 2) **Lump things together.** Hey kids, it's bait and switch time! Create a false sense of association between things that have no demonstrable relationship. Segue seamlessly from Cosmo covers to sex education in the schools, and sneakily imply they spring from the same font. Not everyone will buy it. But dumb people vote too. Some of 'em.
- 3) **Fun with fuzzy numbers.** In one story, Kersten calculates that 95% of university professors are registered Democrats ("of the number we were able to confirm"). That sure seems like a high number, until you realize maybe she was only able to confirm a sampling of 20 out of 500. What was it Mark Twain said about statistics?
- 4) **Divide and conquer.** If you have an idea you want to trash, attach it to people no one wants to embrace: reporters, professors, college students, uppity lesbians, soulless atheists and dark-complected foreigners. In logic this is called the *fallacy of affiliation*, but what the heck, prejudice is American pie.
- 5) **Scare folks.** Suggest that America is about to be bankrupted by slavery reparation. That women will be court-ordered to use the men's room from now on. Hunters will have their guns confiscated by vindictive deer. Openly gay people will be allowed to hold down jobs and earn a living unhindered. Intolerable notions like that.
- 6) **Cartoonify the opposition.** The flag burner, the welfare Cadillac, the hysterical professor, the Muslim suicide bomber, the black rapist, the old lady in tennis shoes. They are funny, aren't they? Just not quite human.
- 7) **Tell the lie, tell it again, tell it again,** and have everyone else on your side tell it until even people that know it's not true. A Mighty Wurlitzer of other commentators - there's a Katherine Kersten in every town, the lucky ones have two or three - will back you up all the way.

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