

## **A Year Without Politics - Month 1**

**by Anna Davey - Monday, November 03, 2014**

<https://politicsrespun.org/2014/11/a-year-without-politics-month-1/>

Just after 9am on October 1st, I sat down at my computer, left every political group I was a member of, unfollowed every political page I was a fan of (except PRS, because I write here), and hid every political post in my newsfeed posted in the previous 12 hours. I ended up hiding 16 posts, including almost every post made by one of my favourite people... and the bulk of those 12 hours were overnight.

I found myself questioning what constituted "political" an awful lot. This study that shows children who grow up on dairy farms have 1/10th the risk of developing allergies is basically just science, but the underlying issues of how and where we live is political. This post about how we should just teach kids that sex is about pleasure is a parenting concern, but attitudes toward sexual education have political ties.

There are political overtones to articles about parenting as a member of Generation X, articles about Ebola, articles about food. Where does the line get drawn? Eventually I decided that if someone without a lot of political awareness wouldn't consider the political ties to a subject, it could probably stay. But man, my news feed was boring. Quizzes, petty complaints, videos of funny cats, and knitting patterns.

Unsure of what to read, or where to read it, I turned to BuzzFeed. But even BuzzFeed was a political landmine. A sampling of the front page headlines brought:

- Hong Kong Walk to Freedom
- 16 Women Entrepreneurs Who Are Changing the Way Business is done in the Arab world
- Coming Thursday: When Battered women are treated as criminals
- Russia Suspends U.S. Exchange Program, Claiming Student Was Illegally Adopted By Same-Sex Couple
- Facebook Requires LGBT People To Use Real Names Even In Countries Where Homosexuality Is A Crime
- Nation's Largest Teachers Union Plans To Spend More Than \$40 Million In 2014
- Mayor Of L.A. Suburb Fatally Shot By Wife, Officials Say
- FCC Considering Whether To Ban Broadcasters From Using "Redskins"
- Lawmakers Urge Obama To Include LGBT Protections In Immigration Executive Action
- This One Photo Perfectly Sums Up Why Climate Change Is Real
- The "totally ridiculous" Romney Boomlet
- 17 Celebrities Who have the right idea about feminism
- David Cameron Just got called evil in a rather unfortunate tweet

After the first few rough days, I started to gain an awareness of how futile it was to try to feign political ignorance. It was like trying to pretend I didn't know where the streets in my neighbourhood went. Politics are as much a feature of my mental landscape as the streets are of my physical landscape. The only thing I could do was try to keep my head down and hope nobody asked me for directions.

That didn't work, by the way.

With a municipal election looming for most of the month, it seemed impossible to avoid political discussions, especially when my children asked me questions like "Why is Dad voting for that candidate?" A lawn sign supporting a candidate for city council that went up before my political abstention started just raised more questions. "Why do we have a sign for him on our front lawn? Why do you like him?"

*Well, because he represents a change in political culture that I've been waiting a long time to see in this city. Because he's been fighting for this ward on his own time for years. Because he's kind of a friend of mine, because when you're politically active, you're kind of friends with everyone who is politically active in this city.*

Which is another problem in and of itself. To divorce myself from politics is to divorce myself from my entire social circle. I get invited to voter engagement brainstorming meetings (because a 34% turnout is bullshit and everybody knows it), and I accept because why wouldn't I? Not only am I interested, but all my friends are going and it's a cheap morning out. I get invited to educational workshops about urban planning and modes of transit, and I accept because knowledge is beautiful and all my friends are going. I have coffee with friends and we talk politics. I stand around on the playground after school and my friends are talking politics. I screw around on the computer after my children are in bed and my friends are talking politics on Facebook, and my husband is talking politics with his mouth.

I thought this whole political vacation was going to be easy, because all I had to do was stop doing something. It turns out that the inertia of decades of political awareness and activism makes just stopping almost impossible.

Let's see what November brings.