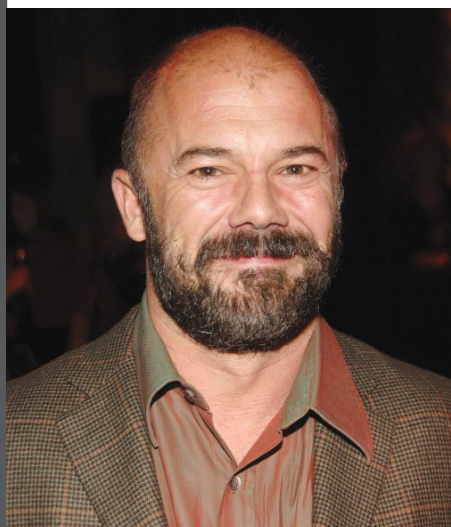


## PROFILES IN CITIZENSHIP: ANDREW SULLIVAN



Andrew H. Walker/Getty Images Entertainment/Getty Images

It's hard not to feel like a stalker when you are meeting a blogger whose work you have followed for a decade. You have seen his wedding pictures, laughed at his dogs' antics, know all about his health status, and keep up with his political views. He, on the other hand, may have read and even answered some of your emails over the years but, really, he has no clue who you are. So, getting the chance to sit down for coffee with Andrew

Sullivan, the founder and editor of the *Daily Dish* ([www.andrewsullivan.com](http://www.andrewsullivan.com)), which marked its ten-year anniversary in 2010, is just a little creepy, in a nice and reassuring way—like meeting a total stranger who has the face of an old friend.

But Sullivan, the man who describes his job as “having a conversation with 1.2 million people a month,” totally gets that. He knows that his job is breaking down traditional boundaries between journalism and political activism, between reporting and analysis, between the personal and the public, and yes, between stranger and friend.

But blogging seems to be a perfect medium for Sullivan, who has in his time aspired to be both politician and writer. He is Oxford educated, with a Ph.D. in government from Harvard, and before turning thirty, he was the editor of the *New Republic*. But his academic heft and considerable brilliance is balanced with a passionate zeal for the issues he cares about. Blogging lets him combine advocacy and fact-sifting in a form of journalism that, when done well, breaks with the old models of news-gathering and dissemination in startling ways.

So, Sullivan is not at all shy about airing his opinions—he is a pro-life Catholic, a conservative, British-born, America-loving, married gay man who is a civil libertarian and a fiscal conservative with a deep thread of compassion and humanitarianism running through it

all. But while opinionated, he is not a partisan (though he claims an affinity for British Toryism). He refuses to appear on partisan cable television shows (though he is a frequent guest on *Real Time With Bill Maher*), and he shows a remarkable ability to change his mind about deeply held views if new evidence appears or he meets a persuasive counterargument. He was a strong supporter of George W. Bush and the Iraq war in its early years, for instance, and then an even stronger opponent of both when he began to doubt the evidence that had brought us to invade Iraq. Likewise, he is pro-life, but when his readers' stories convinced him that his position against late-term abortion was wrong, he changed his position on that, too.

What Sullivan calls his “readership of extraordinarily smart and humane and interesting people” is the lifeblood of his blog. When he seeks information, they provide it; when he is wrong, they correct him; when something is happening in the world that he cares about, they gather round in a virtual community to share the incoming news. After the 2009 Iranian election resulted in streets full of green-garbed protesters demonstrating against the regime, his site became the go-to place for updates on what was happening. Facing local news blackouts, demonstrators blogged, tweeted, and texted information that found its way to Sullivan and, in solidarity with a revolution he supported passionately, he turned his site green for the duration.