

PROFILES IN CITIZENSHIP: HOW TO KEEP THE REPUBLIC



Andrew H. Walker/Getty Images Entertainment/Getty

Andrew Sullivan

Andrew Sullivan is a writer, editor, and blogger who, as founder and editor of the *Daily Dish* (www.andrewsullivan.com), pioneered political blogging at the turn of the millennium and never looked back. 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, Sullivan combines advocacy and fact-sifting in a form of journalism that breaks with the old models of news-gathering and dissemination in startling ways. Sullivan spoke with us in August 2010. Here is some of what he had to say.

On patriotism:

It's not the same thing as nationalism. It is not that your country is always right. . . . I think at some level it is simply loving—and I mean that in a deep sense—the culture, tradition, constitution, and people of the place you call

home. In a way I must say I have two patriotisms—of the country I came from and the country I'm still trying to become a citizen of. And patriotism, yes, does mean sometimes dissenting from one's country's leadership, but I think it's too facile to say it's the highest form. I think another equally valid form is supporting your country when the chips are down, even when it isn't perfect, even when it does make mistakes, because it's yours.

On keeping the republic:

America is actually in I think a quite extraordinary crisis right now—spiritually, politically, and economically. I don't think it's been this acute since maybe the late 70s or 60s. . . . I do think people have to understand if they are not there the discourse will be captured by someone else. And you have a responsibility—I've lived long enough to understand that. And it's easy to insulate oneself and delude oneself into thinking it doesn't really matter or I don't have to do something—but in fact you do.

One of the ways this really struck home for me was, personally, in the late 80s, early 90s, the AIDS crisis. I realized if I didn't help these people who were dying no one would. . . . And then when I contracted it, and thought I was given a few years, I sat down and wrote [his book] *Virtually Normal*, because I wanted to leave behind a contribution to an argument [about gay rights]. . . . I had nothing to lose because I thought I was going to die. But why should I have had to get to that point? So imagine that you have a couple of years left on this Earth, what are you waiting for?